

The *Merkavah* Tradition and the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism

From Temple to *Merkavah*, from *Hekhal* to *Hekhalot*,
from Priestly Opposition to Gazing upon the *Merkavah*

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In the Shrine he made two *cherubim*. . . . He placed the *cherubim* inside the inner chamber. The wings of the *cherubim* were extended. . . . He overlaid the *cherubim* with gold

—I Kings 6:23-28

And the gold for the pattern of the *merkavah*—the *cherubim*—those with outspread wings screening the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord

—I Chronicles 28:18

Ezekiel saw a vision and he recounted the varieties of *merkavah*

—Ben Sira 49:8

The pattern of the *merkavah* do they bless (which is) above the firmament of the *cherubim*

—*Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 4Q405

Rabbi Ishmael said: These songs are recited by whoever wishes to gaze upon the *merkavah*

—*Hekhalot Rabbati* 1

Said Rabbi Ishmael: When I ascended on high to gaze upon the *merkavah*, I entered six *hekhalot*, one chamber inside the other, and when I reached the door of the seventh *hekhal*. . .

—*Sefer Hekhalot* 1

It is forbidden for three persons to discuss the laws of sexual offenses, for two persons to discuss *Ma'aseh Bereshit*, and for a single person to discuss *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, unless [that person] is learned and intelligent

—*Mishnah, Hagigah*, ch. 2

The formative stages of Jewish mystical thought in antiquity and the transition from the first stages in the late Second Temple period to their sequel in the first centuries C.E. still await thorough investigation. Scholars concerned with pseudepigrapha, apocalypics and Qumran literature¹ have

1. Most of the literature subsumed under the headings of apocryphal, pseudepigraphic and apocalyptic has survived, not in its original Hebrew or Aramaic, but in translations made under the aegis of the Christian church—into Greek, Latin, Ethiopic, Church Slavonic and Armenian. This literature, including inter alia the Ethiopic Book of Enoch, the *Book of Jubilees*, the Slavonic Book of Enoch and the *Testament of Levi*, has been published in English under the editorship of James H. Charlesworth, in two volumes entitled *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (London, 1983). It has been translated into Hebrew: Abraham Kahana, ed., *Ha-Sefarim ha-Hizonim*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem, 1960).

Parts of this body of literature were discovered in the original languages at Qumran; it seems probable that the *Book of Jubilees*, Enoch, *Miqsat Ma'asei Torah* and the *Temple Scroll*—possibly also the *Damascus Covenant*—were held to be sacred, authoritative texts on a par with the books of the Bible. The fragments of the apocryphal and other literature found at Qumran have been published in the series *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* 1–28 (Oxford, 1955–98) and in J. T. Milik's *The Books of Enoch – Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford, 1976).

The various literary works known collectively as The Dead Sea Scrolls or Qumran literature, comprising fragments of some eight hundred scrolls found at or near Qumran in the Judean Desert, were written between the middle of the third century B.C.E. and the year 70 C.E. They reflect an unprecedented textual diversity: besides approximately two hundred biblical works, they include many works which had been unknown until their discovery fifty years ago. Most of Qumran literature has been published in scholarly editions. Most worthy of mention in the context of this article are: M. Broshi and E. Qimron, *Berit Dameseq. The Damascus Document Reconsidered* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1992); J. Licht, *The Hodayot Scroll* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1957); Licht, *The Rule Scroll from the Judean Desert Scrolls* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1965); C. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition*, Harvard Semitic Studies 27, Atlanta, 1985; B. Nitzan, *The Pesher Habakkuk Scroll of the Judean Desert Scrolls* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1986); Qimron, *The Temple Scroll. A Critical Edition with Extensive Reconstructions* (in Hebrew) (Beersheba, 1996); Qimron and J. Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4. V. Miqsat Ma'ase ha-Torah (DJD V)* (Oxford, 1994); J. A. Sanders, *The Psalm Scroll of Qumran Cave II (DJD IV)* (Oxford, 1965); Y. Yadin, ed., *The Temple Scroll. The Hidden Law of the Dead Sea Sect* (London, 1985); Yadin, ed., *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness*, trans. B. and Ch. Rabin (London, 1962); and the works, fragmentary and otherwise, still being published in *DJD*. Some of the English translations in this article are quoted from G. Vermes, trans. and ed., *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London, 1997).

For apocalyptic and pseudepigraphic literature, see Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*; A. Y. Collins, "The Seven Heavens in Jewish and Christian Apocalypse," in *Death, Ecstasy and Other Worldly Journeys*, ed. J. J. Collins and M. Fishbane (New York, 1995); J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (New York, 1984); J. J. Collins, *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, *Semiotica* 14 (1979); J. Greenfield, and M. E. Stone, "The Enochic Pentateuch and the Date of the Similitudes," *Harvard Theological Review* 70 (1977), 51–65; P. D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia, 1975); D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia, 1964), 104–39; C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study in Apocalypticism in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London, 1982); M. E. Stone, "The Books of Enoch and Judaism in the Third Century B.C.E.," *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 40 (1978): 479; Stone, ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (Philadelphia, 1984); Stone, "Enoch, Aramaic Levi and Sectarian Origins," in *Selected Studies in Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha with Special Reference to the Armenian Tradition*, SVTP 9 (Leiden, 1991); Stone, *Scriptures, Sects and Visions* (Philadelphia, 1980); J. C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition*, CBQMS 16 (Washington, 1984); VanderKam, "The Jubilees Fragments from Qumran Cave 4," in *The Madrid Qumran Congress, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah XI/2*, ed. J. T. Barrera and L. V. Montaner (Leiden, 1992); VanderKam, *Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees*, HSM 14 (Missoula, 1977); VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees – a Critical Text*, CSCO (Louvain, 1989), 510–11; VanderKam, "The Temple Scroll and the Book of Jubilees," *Temple Scroll Studies*,

occasionally pointed out conceptual and verbal affinities between those literatures and the *hekhalot* and *merkavah* literature,² and some students of Jewish mysticism have noted the conceptual continuity between the *hekhalot* literature of the first centuries C.E. and apocryphal and Qumran literature of the last centuries B.C.E.;³ but the relationship between the basic features of the diverse mystical literatures composed toward the end of antiquity has yet to be determined and the meaning of the basic affinities explained.

The underlying assumption of this study is that the early Jewish mystical literature associated with the tradition of the *merkavah*, the divine chariot-throne, was composed with reference to three Temples which were destroyed or desecrated, and to three priestly classes which were barred from performing their sacral duties—in three distinct but clearly interrelated stages. First came the vision of the exiled priest Ezekiel, prophesying during the destruction of the first Temple, envisioning the transformation of the ruined Temple into the *merkavah*.⁴ The next stage was the mystical vision of seceding priestly circles, who were barred from serving in the Second Temple in the final centuries B.C.E. because of basic disagreements about the sanctity of time and place and polemical disputes in relation to the Sabbath and the festivals, the calendar and the ritual.⁵ The controversy led to the

ed. G. J. Brook, JPS Supplement Series 7 (Sheffield, 1989), 211–36; VanderKam and J. T. Milik, “4Q Jub c(4Q218) and 4Q Jub e(4Q220): A Preliminary Edition,” *Textus* 17 (1994).

2. *Hekhalot* and *merkavah* literature, which comprises, inter alia, *Hekhalot Rabbati*, *Hekhalot Zutarti*, *Sefer Hekhalot* (3 Enoch), *Shivhei Metatron*, *Merkavah Rabbah*, *Ma'aseh Merkavah* and *She'ur Qomah*, is available in Hebrew and Aramaic in two collections by P. Schafer: *Geniza Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen, 1984) and *Synopse Zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen, 1981). These collections are divided into consecutively numbered sections to which all references relate. Both collections include alphabetical concordances indexed by section number.

3. On the relationship between Qumran, pseudepigraphic and apocryphal literature, on one hand, and *Hekhalot* literature, on the other, see I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden and Cologne, 1980); Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism* (Leiden and Frankfurt, 1988); Newsom, *Songs*; L. H. [Y.] Schiffman, “*Hekhalot* Literature and the Qumran Writings” (in Hebrew) in *Proceedings of the Conference on the History of Ancient Jewish Mysticism*, Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought 6, ed. Y. Dan (Jerusalem, 1987), 121–38; G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkavah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1965).

4. For mystical exegesis of Ezekiel's vision, see R. Elior, “From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines. Prayer and Sacred Song in the *Hekhalot* Literature and Its Relation to Temple Traditions,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (1997): 217–67; D. J. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot* (Tübingen, 1988); Newsom, “*Merkavah* Exegesis in the Qumran Sabbath *Shirot*,” *JJS* 38 (1987): 11–30.

5. On the calendar, see J. M. Baumgarten, “The Calendar of the Book of Jubilees and the Bible” (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 32 (1963); Z. Ben-Shahar, “The Calendar of the Judean Desert Sect” (in Hebrew) (Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv University, 1975); Elior, “The Jewish Calendar and Mystical Time” (in Hebrew), *The Jewish Calendar*, President's House Circle on Bible and Judaic Sources 5 (Jerusalem, 1996), 22–42; M. Hayutin, *The War of the Calendars in the Second Temple Period* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv, 1993); A. Jaubert, “Le calendrier des Jubilées et les jours liturgiques de la semaine,” *VT* 7 (1957): 35–61; Licht, “The Temporal Doctrine of the Judean Desert Sect and of Other Eschatologists” (in Hebrew), *Eretz-Israel* 8 (Jerusalem, 1967): 63–70; S. Talmon, “The Calendar of the Covenanters of the Judean Desert,” in *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Scripta Hierosolymitana 4)*, ed. Ch. Rabin and Yadin (Jerusalem, 1958), 162; Talmon and I. Knohl, “A Calendrical Scroll from a Qumran Cave: Mishmarot B^a, 4Q321,” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. D. P. Wright et al. (Winona Lake IN, 1995), 267–302.

secession from the earthly Temple of these circles, who called themselves "sons of Zadok, the priests." In their vision, they served in a heavenly chariot inspired by Ezekiel's chariot-throne, together with mystical-angelic counterparts to whom they referred as "priests of the inner sanctum (*kohanei qorev*) who serve before the King of holiest holiness," "Priests of the inner sanctum in His royal sanctuary, ministers of the Presence in His glorious *devir* (Holy of Holies, inner sanctum)," "Angels of Holiness" and "Chief Princes." Human and angelic priests together, they sang the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* and the *Kedushah* (*Sanctus*) prayers (see Isa. 6:3).⁶

The last stage of ancient mystical literature was envisioned by certain circles of priestly affiliation known as the Authors of the *Hekhalot* and Descenders of the Chariot. Active in the first centuries C.E. after the destruction of the Second Temple, they aimed to perpetuate through their vision the destroyed Temple and its rites by descending to the chariot-throne and ascending to the supernal *hekhalot*—that is, heavenly palaces, sanctuaries or temples. There they met their mystical counterparts: the Ministering Angels, the Angels of Glory and the Angels on High, who bathe and purify themselves, recite songs of praise and *Kedushah*, exalt, bless and raise fiery flames, thus perpetuating the priestly and Temple rites in the seven supernal sanctuaries, the *hekhalot*.⁷

6. On *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, see Baumgarten, "The Qumran Sabbath *Shirot* and Rabbinic *Merkabah* Tradition," *Revue de Qumran* 13 (1988); Newsom, *Songs*; Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer and Poetry* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1997) (bibliog. updated to the early 1990s on 376–90); Schiffman, "Merkavah Speculation at Qumran," in *Mystics, Philosophers and Politicians, Essays in Jewish Intellectual History in Honor of Alexander Altmann*, ed. J Reinharz et al. (Durham, 1982), 24–35; Strugnell, "The Angelic Liturgy at Qumran," *VT* suppl. 7 (1960).

7. On *Hekhalot* literature, see M. Bar-Ilan, *The Mysteries of Prayer and Hekhalot* (in Hebrew) (Ramat-Gan, 1987); I. Chernus, "Visions of God in *Merkabah* Mysticism," *JSJ* 13 (1982): 123–46; Chernus, "The Pilgrimage to the *Merkavah*," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6 (1987): 1–35; J. Dan, *The Ancient Jewish Mysticism* (Tel Aviv, 1993); Dan, "Chambers of the *Merkavah*" (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 47 (1978): 463–83; *Proceedings of the Conference on the History of Ancient Jewish Mysticism*, *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6, Dan, ed. (Jerusalem, 1987); R. Elijor, "From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines. Prayer and Sacred Song in the *Hekhalot* Literature and Its Relation to Temple Traditions," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (1997): 217–67; *Hekhalot Zutarti*, *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, Addendum 1, Elijor, ed. (Jerusalem, 1982); Elijor, "Merkabah Mysticism, A Critical Review [of D. Halperin's *The Faces of the Chariot*]," *NUMEN* 73 (1990): 233–63; Elijor, "Mysticism, Magic and Angelology – The Perception of Angels in *Hekhalot* Literature," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 1 (1993): 3–53; Elijor, "The Uniqueness of the Religious Phenomenon in *Hekhalot* Literature, the Figure of God and the Expansion of the Limits of Apprehension" (in Hebrew), *Proceedings of Conference on the History of Ancient Jewish Mysticism*, *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6 (1987), 13–46; Gruenwald, "Angelic Song, *Kedushah* and the Question of the Composition of *Hekhalot* Literature" (in Hebrew), in *Chapters in the History of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period: A. Schalit Memorial Volume*, ed. A. Oppenheimer, U. Rappaport and M. Stern (Jerusalem, 1981), 459–79; Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden and Cologne, 1980); Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism* (Leiden and Frankfurt, 1988); Gruenwald, "The Place of Priestly Traditions in the Creation of the Mysticism of the *Merkavah* and of *She'ur Qomah*" (in Hebrew), *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6 (1987), 65–119; Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*; Schafer, *Geniza Fragments*; Schafer, *Synopse Zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen, 1981); Shafer, *The Hidden and Manifested God: Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Albany, 1992); Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*;

Scholars are divided as to the chronological-historical identity and the social, religious and cultural venue of the various circles which were associated at different times in antiquity with *merkavah* and *hekhlat* traditions, the mystical priesthood and the angels, the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, the heavenly *Kedushah* and the songs of the Ministering Angels.⁸ However, sizable excerpts from the highly diverse literary opus of these circles, setting out their views and their self-perception, are now available and invite discussion and investigation. This study may be seen as an outline of a more detailed work currently in preparation that deals with the formation and evolution of the mystical tradition in antiquity. This tradition was, as we have intimated, associated with visionary versions of the earthly Temple and priesthood, which had been destroyed or desecrated but were now perpetuated in an ideal, utopian guise through the heavenly *merkavah* and the angelic priesthood ministering in the heavenly *hekhlat*.

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This study maintains the thesis that an uninterrupted line can be drawn from the religious-literary activity of the last centuries B.C.E., associated directly and indirectly with the *merkavah* tradition, to the mystical works of the first centuries C.E. known as *hekhlat* and *merkavah* literature. This line begins with the *merkavah* visions of Ezekiel ben Buzi the priest (Ezek. 1:1-

Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1967); M. Smith, "Observation on *Hekhalot Rabbati*," in *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, 1963).

8. On the historical and political background to the Second Temple period and the Hasmonean period, as well as the place of the Temple, see M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (Philadelphia, 1974); M. D. Herr, "Jerusalem, the Temple and the Sacred Service in Reality and Consciousness in the Second Temple Period" (in Hebrew), in *Chapters in the History of Jerusalem*, ed. Oppenheimer, Rappaport and Stern, 166-77; I. Levin, "The Political Struggle between the Pharisees and the Sadducees in the Hasmonean Period" (in Hebrew), in *Chapters in the History of Jerusalem*, 61-83; S. Safrai, *Pilgrimage at the Time of the Second Temple* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv, 1965) [German translation: *Die Wallfahrt im Zeitalter des zweiten Tempels* (Forschungen zum jüdischen-christlichen Dialog 3) (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1981)]; D. R. Schwartz, "Between Sages and Priests in Second Temple Times" (in Hebrew), in *A Variety of Views and Opinions in Jewish Culture*, ed. D. Kerem (Tel Aviv, 1992), 63-79; Schwartz, "Desert and Temple: On Religion and Politics in Judea in Second Temple Times" (in Hebrew), in *Priesthood and Monarchy: Relationship of Religion and State in Israel and the Nations*, ed. Y. Gafni and G. Motzkin (Jerusalem, 1987), 61-78; Schwartz, "Priesthood, Temple, Sacrifices: Opposition and Spiritualization in the Late Second Temple Period" (Ph. D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1981); Schwartz, "Qumran Between Priesthood and Christianity" (in Hebrew), in *The Judean Desert Scrolls - Forty Years of Research*, ed. M. Broshi et al. (Jerusalem, 1992), 176-81; Schwartz, ed., *Studies in Jewish History in the Second Temple Period. Selected Articles* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1996); Schwartz, "Law and Truth: On Qumran-Sadducean and Rabbinic Views of Law," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls - Forty Years of Research*, ed. D. Dimant and U. Rappaport (Leiden, 1992); B. Bar-Kochva, *Judas Maccabeus. The Jewish Struggle against the Seleucids* (Cambridge, 1988); E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-135 A.D.)*, ed. G. Vermes, F. Millar, M. Black and M. Goodman, 3 vols., rev. ed. (Edinburgh 1973, 1986); M. Stern, "Aspects of Jewish Society: The Priesthood and Other Classes" in *The Jewish People in The First Century II*, ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern (Assen, 1976), 561-630; Stern, "Aspects of Jewish Society," in *Studies in Jewish History in Second Temple Times* (in Hebrew), ed. Y. Gafni et al. (Jerusalem, 1991).

28; 3:12-14; 8:2-4; 10:1-22); continues with proto-Qumran apocryphal literature and Qumran literature itself, written from the second century B.C.E. to the destruction of the Second Temple in the first century C.E. (1 Enoch, *Book of Jubilees*, 2 Enoch, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, *Community Rule*, *Rule of Blessings*, *War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness*, *Mikzat Ma'aseh Torah*, *Temple Scroll*, *Damascus Covenant*, *Testament of Levi*, *Apocryphon of Levi*, and others);⁹ and culminates in the *hekhalot* and *merkavah* traditions, committed to writing after the destruction of the Temple (*Hekhalot Zutrat*, *Hekhalot Rabbati* *Sefer Sheva*, *Hekhelei Kodesh*, *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, *Sefer Hekhalot* [3 Enoch], *Merkavah Rabbah*, *Praises of Metatron*, *She'ur Komah*, *Re'uyot Yehezkel*).¹⁰

Many of these works were written by members of priestly circles who, for various reasons—historical, political and religious—were prevented from serving in the Temple. These circles, whose formative stages were marked by unqualified opposition to the Temple cult as it was then, refer to themselves in Proto-Qumran and Qumran literature as “sons of Zadok, the priests,” “guardians of the Covenant,” “knowers of righteousness,” “plantation of righteousness,” “root of growth,” “shoot of righteousness,” “congregation of holiness,” “counsel of the Community,” “those who enter the Covenant or

9. On Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls, see J. M. Allegro, “Further on the History of the Qumran Sect,” *JBL* 75 (1956): 89-95; Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4 (DJF V)* (Oxford, 1968); Baumgarten, *Studies in Qumran Law* (Leiden, 1977); Baumgarten, “The Pharisaic-Sadducean Controversies about Purity and the Qumran Texts,” *JJS* 31 (1980): 155-70; Baumgarten, “The Qumran Sabbath Shirat and Rabbinic Merkabah Tradition,” *Revue de Qumran* 13 (1988); M. Broshi et al., *The Judean Desert Scrolls - Forty Years of Research* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1992); Broshi and Qimron, *Berit Dameseq*; D. Dimant, “Qumran Sectarian Literature,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, ed. M. Stone (Philadelphia, 1984); Dimant and Rappaport, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls*; F. M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran* (Garden City, 1961), 127-60; Cross, “The Early History of Qumran Community,” *New Directions in Biblical Archeology*, ed. D. Freedman and J. Greenfield (Garden City, 1971); D. Flusser, *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity* (New York, 1987); Flusser, “The Judean Desert Sect and its Views” (in Hebrew), *Zion* 19 (1954): 89-103; A. M. Habermann, *The Judean Desert Scrolls* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv, 1959); Licht, *The Hodayot Scroll*; Licht, “The Judean Desert Sect and its Writings” (in Hebrew), in *Society and Religion in the Second Temple Period*, The History of the Jewish People, ed. M. Avi-Yonah and Z. Baras (Jerusalem, 1983); Licht, *Rule Scroll*; Licht, “The Temporal Doctrine of the Judean Desert Sect and of Other Eschatologists” (in Hebrew), *Eretz-Israel* 8 (Jerusalem, 1967), 63-70; J. Liver, *Studies in the Bible and the Judean Desert Scrolls* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1972); Liver, *Studies in the Judean Desert Scrolls* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1957); J. T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Judean Desert* (Oxford, 1959); Milik, *The Books of Enoch*; Schiffman, *Halakhah, Conduct and Messianism in the Judean Desert Sect* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1994); Schiffman, “*Hekhalot* Literature and the Qumran Writings”; Schiffman, “*Merkavah* Speculation at Qumran”; Schiffman, “The Sacrificial System of the Temple Scroll and the Book of Jubilees,” *SBLSP* (1985); Schiffman, “The War of the Scrolls: Developments in the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls” (in Hebrew), *Cathedra* 61 (1992); Strugnell, “Angelic Liturgy at Qumran”; E. L. Sukenik, ed., *Dead Sea Scrolls of the Hebrew University* (Jerusalem, 1955); E. Tov, “The Qumran Scrolls in Light of Modern Research” (in Hebrew), *Madda'ei ha-Yahadut* 34 (1994): 37-67; Yadin, *The Message of the Scrolls* (New York, 1957); Yadin, ed., *Scroll of the War*; Yadin, ed., *Temple Scroll*.

10. See note 7 above.

11. On the sons of Zadok, see Liver, “The Zadokites in the Judean Desert Sect” (in Hebrew), *Eretz-Israel* 5 (1967): 71-81.

the New Covenant,"¹² Sons of Light; and in *hekhalot* literature as "Descenders of the *Merkavah*," "Viewers of the *Merkavah*," or "heroes of the Community and mighty ones of study," as against "band after band from the firmament and camp after camp from the heavens." They constituted a determined, secessionist opposition to the Temple cult of their times. Before the destruction of the Temple, they struggled to establish their own cultic calendar, Sabbath laws and observance of the commandments and festivals;¹³ after the destruction they formulated alternative, mystical conceptions of the Temple and Temple service. The *hekhalot* mystics, active after the destruction, abandoned the oppositional, secessionist aspect of their thought and the cultic controversies characteristic of the mystical priesthood prior to the destruction. Instead, they concentrated on perpetuating the defunct earthly cult through its angelic counterpart in the supernal *hekhalot*.

The emergence and formulation of these alternative cultic conceptions were plagued by controversy and polemics. They clashed, directly and indirectly, with the Hasmonean period's standard perception of the three foundations of the cult: sacred place, sacred time and sacred ritual. The secessionist priestly texts that expounded these alternative cultic conceptions were ultimately excluded from the canon; some were almost completely lost until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran library.

Holding that the site of the Temple in the late Second Temple period was defiled and impure (*Damascus Covenant, Community Rule, Mikzat Ma'aseh Torah, Temple Scroll, Testament of Levi*),¹⁴ the seceding priests proposed instead a heavenly Temple. This drew its validity from the traditions of the First Temple and Ezekiel's *merkavah* vision (*Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*), and from the perception of the eschatological Temple (*Temple Scroll, Damascus Covenant, Rule of the Congregation of Israel at the End of Days*), influenced by biblical traditions and Ezekiel's visionary plan (Ezek. 40–48).

As to sacred time, the secessionist priests considered the ritual calendar then governing the Temple cult—based on a lunar year of 354 days, a month of variable length and human observation of the new moon—to be false and arbitrary, a sinful infringement on the Covenant. They wished to replace it with a ritual-liturgical calendar governed by eternal, cosmic principles and on multiples of the number seven; it was based on a solar year of 364/5 days, on predetermined, mathematical computations, independent of human observation of natural events. In this solar calendar, whose computational

12. On the *Rule Scroll*, see Licht, *Rule Scroll*.

13. On *Mikzat Ma'aseh Torah*, see Qimron and Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4: Y. Sussmann, "The History of Halakha and the Dead Sea Scrolls - A Preliminary to the Publication of 4QMMT"* (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 59 (1990): 11–76.

14. On Jewish law as observed by the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Baumgarten, *Studies in Qumran Law*; M. Kister, "Some Aspects of Qumranic Halakha," in *The Madrid Qumran Congress, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah XI* 2 (Leiden, 1992); S. Lieberman, "The Discipline in the So-Called Manual of Discipline," *JBL* 71 (1952): 199–206; Qimron, *Temple Scroll*; Schiffman, *Halakha*; Sussmann, "History of Halakha."

principles are described in 1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, the *Book of Jubilees*, the *Psalms Scroll* and the *Temple Scroll* (and are also referred to in the *Damascus Covenant*, the lists of priestly courses and the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*), the festivals fell on fixed days of the week and in fixed seasons of the year; no festival could fall on a Sabbath, and every festival stood in a definite seven-fold relationship to other festivals.

This calendar, "ordained and written in the heavenly tablets" (Jub. 32:21; 1En. 81:1-2; 93:1-3; 103:2-3, etc.), imprinted on the laws of nature since the seven days of Creation, had been learned from the angels (Jub. 6:17-29). Its underlying principle was the consecration of eternal divine time, prescribed since primeval times in weeks, seasons and festivals, all of which had their proper places in a seven-based cycle that accounted for the entire solar year. The calendar was linked to ritual-liturgical tradition: "For the daily perpetual sacrifice, for all days of the year, 364 songs; and for the Sabbath offering, 52 songs; and for the New Moon offering and for all feast-days and for the Day of Atonement, 30 songs" (IIQPs*xxvii: 5-8).

The calendar was also linked to the tradition of Enoch, son of Jared, the seventh Patriarch of the world, as well as to the seven days of Creation, the perception of the Sabbath as a symbol of the holiness pervading the Universe, the Festival of Weeks (Pentecost; *Shavu'ot*), and the procession of Temple festivals celebrated at intervals of seven weeks from the first month to the seventh month as explained in the Temple Scroll.¹⁵

Seven weeks elapse from the elevation of the *'Omer* (the sheaf of the wave-offering—the first produce of barley) on Nisan 26 to the Festival of Weeks (marking the first produce of wheat) on Sivan 15. Another seven weeks separate Sivan 15 from the first harvest of wine on Av 3. Still another seven weeks elapse until the first harvest of olive oil on Elul 22. The agricultural-sacral year ends with the seven days of the Festival of Ingathering, halfway through the seventh month. All these elements formed a link between the permanent cycle of the laws of nature and the ritual determinism of sacred heavenly time (1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, *Book of Jubilees*, *Damascus Covenant*, *Temple Scroll*, *Psalms Scroll*).

The men who observed these Sabbaths and festivals in accordance with the solar calendar held themselves to be the guardians of the Covenant, charged with the divine ordering of time:

But with the remnant which 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 unfolded before them His holy Sabbaths and His glorious feasts, the testimonies of His righteousness and ways of His truth, and the

15. On the *Temple Scroll*, see J. Milgrom, "Further Studies in the Temple Scroll," *JQR* 71 (1980); Schiffman, "Sacrificial System"; M. Weinfeld, "The 'Temple Scroll' or the Chapter of the King" (in Hebrew), *Shenaton la-Miqra ule-Heqer ha-Mizrah ha-Qadum* 3 (1979); Yadin, *Temple Scroll*.

desires of His will which a man must do in order to live. (*Damascus Covenant* III:12-16)

They believed that the rites performed in the Temple, which followed the false (lunar) calendar, were sacrilegious and in violation of the Covenant; the Temple itself was unclean, defiled, as explicitly stated in their writings:

And you know that we have separated from the mass of the people and from all their impurity and from mingling with them in these matters and from being in contact with them. (*MMT*)

And they defiled the Temple. (*Damascus Covenant* XX:23)

You will be inflated with pride over your priesthood, exalting yourselves not merely by human standards but contrary to the commands of God; . . . you will deride the sacred things. Therefore the sanctuary which the Lord chose shall become desolate through your uncleanness. (T. Levi 14-15)

Many other passages in this spirit may be found in *Jubilees*, 1 and 2 Enoch, the *Community Rule*, *MMT*, the *Damascus Covenant* and the *Temple Scroll*.

Against the defiled Temple, the false calendar and the iniquitous priesthood described in detail in this literature (both in mythical and visionary terms and in a legal and halakhic context), the authors created a vision of heavenly sanctuaries—*hekhalot*—expressing their profound identification with the angels, so much so that they shared the sacred service with them, performing priestly-angelic liturgical ceremonies in accordance with the eternal, sacred solar calendar.

Against the false, sinful human-priestly cult, they envisaged a heavenly, angelic-priestly cult, an eternal ritual archetype; in their vision they formulated a sacred service performed in concert by angels and human beings (*Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, *Rule Scroll*, 1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, *Book of Jubilees*, *Testament of Levi*, *War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness*).¹⁶

The various *merkavah* traditions and the writings of the community (*yahad*, literally “together,” implying the simultaneity of heavenly and earthly worship) portray priests and angels observing the Sabbaths and festivals together in accordance with the solar calendar, chanting the *Songs of the*

16. On the transition from earthly ritual to the heavenly sanctuary, see A. [V.] Aptowitz, “The Heavenly Temple in the Aggadah” (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 2 (1931): 257-87; R. E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford, 1965); J. C. Enders, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees*, CBQMS 18 (Washington, 1987); B. Gartner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament* (Cambridge, 1965); M. Himmelfarb, *The Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York, 1993); J. Maier, *Vom Cultus zur Gnosis* (Salzburg, 1960). On the earthly Temple, see M. Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake IN, 1995).

Sabbath Sacrifice and the *Kedushah* together in the supernal worlds and the visionary Temple; together, they utter words of praise and thanks, recite blessings and divine Names, pronounce the Ineffable Name with its benedictions as done in the Temple. Such formulas as:

Give thanks to God
 Bless His Holy Name always
 In the Heavens and their dominion
 All the angels of the holy firmament (*Songs*, 4Q504 1-2 vii: 4-6)

may be found in a variety of versions, clearly demonstrating the participation of angels in the ritual. Angelic revelations, recorded on heavenly tablets or imparted in dreams or mystical visions, recorded in holy books of divine origin, constitute the primary fount of religious validity and authority in this literature. They relate to the consecration of the priesthood, its affinity with the angelic world, the participation of angels in the cult, and the establishment of liturgical formulas recited jointly by the terrestrial guardians of the Covenant and their heavenly counterparts. All this revolves around the solar calendar, which sanctifies heavenly time in the *hekhalot*.

* * *

The alternatives proposed by the proponents of the secessionist priestly rite in these three areas—sacred time, sacred place and sacred ritual, which were intertwined in a complex system of mutual relationships—were closely associated with the seven days of Creation, so that seven became a sacred typological number, an archetypal numerical model of divine origin governing time, place and ritual. This formulation of the priestly opposition hallowed the number seven and all its derivatives and multiples, with its mythical and mystical manifestations; it became a distinctive, identifying label, a sacred typological number pervading the universe and fixing the cultic rhythm of life, an eternal, chronotopical-ritual-liturgical axis around which septuples of time, septuples of places and septuples of sacred ritual constantly revolved, mystically metamorphosing into one another.

The number seven, imprinted in nature since the seven days of Creation, assumed a transcendental, cosmic, cultic significance, as sacred seven-fold formulas built a bridge between heaven and earth. The chronotopical axis engendered mystical metamorphoses that unified heavenly-cosmic time and terrestrial-cultic time, both being measured in multiples of seven: Sabbaths, weeks, seasons, weeks of years, *Shabbatot Shanaim*, Jubilees and seven-fold Jubilees. But it also unified cosmic time and cosmic place, as represented by seven firmaments, seven *merkavot* and seven heavenly *hekhalot*.

The chariot-throne in the earthly Temple was thus linked with Ezekiel's *merkavah* in the supernal worlds and with the Festival of Weeks, celebrated in heaven and on earth; a mutual relationship took shape between angelic

worship in the heavenly *hekhalot* and the priestly cult in the earthly Temple. These seven-based traditions concerned the chariot-throne of the *cherubim* that stood in the *devir*, the Holy of Holies, of the First Temple until its destruction; the solar calendar that may have been the cultic-liturgical calendar of the First Temple; and the service of the angels, "the priests of the inner sanctum," as the basis for the service of the Zadokite priests who served as High Priests in the First Temple and with whom the Qumran priests identified themselves.

The circles among whom proto-Qumran and Qumran literature was composed, edited and canonized proposed to replace the Temple cult of their time with three priestly-mystical traditions which featured (1) Solomon's Temple, the chariot-throne of the *cherubim* and Ezekiel's *merkavah* as prototypes of the sacred heavenly place; (2) the solar calendar, as revealed in the tradition of Enoch and the *Book of Jubilees*, as the prototype of sacred heavenly time; and (3) the angelic priesthood and the service of the creatures of the *merkavah* as the prototype of the sacred heavenly ritual. We now examine each of these three traditions and the associated seven-based metamorphoses.

FROM THE CHARIOT-THRONE OF THE *CHERUBIM* TO EZEKIEL'S *MERKAVAH*

The secessionist priestly literature interpreted Ezekiel's *merkavah* as a visionary-mystical transformation of the destroyed First Temple, a prototype of the sacred heavenly place. This same *merkavah* vision of the priest Ezekiel ben Buzi, composed while the First Temple was being destroyed, contains the roots from which Jewish mysticism sprang; it transformed the ruined earthly Temple into an eternal, heavenly chariot-throne, transcending the bounds of time and place. The exiled priest had probably served in the Temple before being deported from Jerusalem with Jehoiachin in 597 B.C.E.

In his vision, he transformed the winged *cherubim* of the Holy of Holies (I Kings 6:23-28; 8:6-8; II Chron. 3:10-13), the copper wheels of the stands in the Temple court, the four threesomes of beasts on all four sides of a square structure (designating the four points of the compass), and the lions, oxen, *cherubim* and *ophanim*—all cultic objects, made of burnished bronze (I Kings 6:23-28; 7:23-37; II Chron. 4:3-4)—into four sacred winged beasts, sparkling with the luster of burnished bronze, with the faces of lions, oxen, eagles and human beings. These beasts stood on four wheels which had the appearance of "two wheels cutting through each other" and faced all four points of the compass (Ezek. 1:4-11, 16-21), like their counterparts in the Temple.

The gold-plated winged *cherubim* in the sanctuary, whose wings were extended and "touched each other" and which stood on their feet (I Kings 6:23-28; 8:6-8; II Chron. 3:13), were transformed in Ezekiel's vision into the sacred, sparkling winged beasts, "each of whose wings touched those of the

other" (Ezek. 1:9) and whose legs "were fused into a single rigid leg" (ibid., v. 7); their appearance was "like burning coals of fire . . . torches" (ibid., v. 13). The *cherubim*, lions and palms referred to in the description of Solomon's Temple (I Kings 6:32, 35; 7:36) also figure in Ezekiel's vision (Ezek. 41:18–19, 25–26), as do the sapphire and beryl (*tarshish*) associated with the divine image (Ezek. 1:16, 26; 10:1, 9). There is thus a whole system of corresponding links between the destroyed earthly Temple and the visionary Temple revealed in heaven.

Such was the interpretation of Ezekiel's vision by the contemporaries of the Second Temple. Following the Chronicler, they associated Ezekiel's account of the winged beasts standing on wheels (Ezek. 1; 10:9–15)—described as *cherubim* with extended wings (ibid., 10:15–17, modeled on the *cherubim* in the desert sanctuary as described in Exod. 25:17–20)—with the divine pattern for the chariot-throne of winged *cherubim* in the Holy of Holies: "the weight of refined gold for the incense altar and the gold for the pattern of the chariot—the *cherubim*—those with outspread wings screening the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord" (I Chron. 28:18), as transmitted to Solomon by his father David before the construction of the earthly Temple: "All this that the Lord made me understand by His hand on me, I give you in writing—the pattern of all the works" (ibid., v. 19).

Readers and listeners in antiquity were presumably aware that the *cherubim* with outspread wings in the biblical Holy of Holies were identified with the sacred beasts or *cherubim*, they too with outspread wings, in the priestly-prophetic tradition of Ezekiel's vision. Here was a link between the gold "pattern of the chariot, the *cherubim*" (the very core of the earthly Temple, revealed to David before its construction) and Ezekiel's *merkavah* (the prototype of the heavenly Temple, revealed to him after the destruction of its earthly counterpart).

The Septuagint renders Ezekiel, chapter 43:3, as "the vision of the chariot which I saw was like the vision which I saw at the River Chobar," whereas the Masoretic text has "the vision was like the vision (*mar'eh*) I had seen"—in a verse that uses the word "vision" four times! The priestly writer, Ben Sira, at the beginning of the second century B.C.E., states the association briefly: "Ezekiel saw a vision and he recounted the varieties of *merkavah*" (Ben Sira 49:8); tradition refers to Ezekiel's vision as the Vision of the *Merkavah* or the *Merkavah* of Ezekiel, for Ezekiel reconstructs in his vision the sacred space and place of the lost physical-ritual experience and the numinous, sublime beauty with which it had been imbued.

Ezekiel's *merkavah* brought together cultic-mythic and liturgical elements, relocating them to an abstract, many-faceted, visionary plane; the secessionist priestly literature of antiquity interpreted its sacred space as a heavenly counterpart of the destroyed earthly sanctuary, where the deity had His seat: the *merkavah*, the eternal, heavenly prototype of the *devir*, the Holy of Holies, of the earthly Temple, which continued to exist in the upper

worlds even after the latter had been destroyed. Descriptions of this sacred space found in the songs, hymns, psalms and benedictions unearthed at Masada and Qumran explicitly invoke the language of Ezekiel's vision; it is perpetuated in angelic song and resuscitated in the mystical vision beyond the boundaries of time and space:

The throne of Your splendor and the footstool of Your glory in the heights of Your standing and Your holy stepping-place. And your glorious chariots, their *cherubim* their wheels and all their councils; foundations of fire and flames of brightness and shinings of majesty and str[eam]s of fire and wonderful luminaries. (4Q bera I, 286 I col. ii, I)

In the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*,¹⁷ which describe the angelic service in the heavenly palaces in sublime, mystical language, we find many descriptions of the world of the chariot-throne; all the elements of Ezekiel's *merkavah* are personified; all the heavenly entities, paralleling the components of the earthly *devir*, speak in the language of temple ritual, priestly service and levitical song:

- 7 in the tabern[acle of the God of] knowledge, the [cheru]bim fall before Him and bless. As they rise, the sound of divine stillness
- 8 [is heard], and there is a tumult of jubilation as their wings lift up, the sound of divine [stillness]. The pattern of the chariot throne do they bless, above the firmament of the *cherubim*.
- 9 [And the splendo]r of the luminous firmament do they sing, beneath His glorious seat. And when the wheels move, the holy angels return. They go out from between
- 10 its glorious [h]ubs. Like the appearance of fire (are) the most holy spirits round about, the appearance of streams of fire like *hashmal*. And there is a radiant substance
- 11 with glorious colors, wondrously hued, purely blended, the spirits of living god-like beings which move continuously with the glory of the wondrous chariots.
- 12 There is a still sound of blessing in the tumult of their movement. And they praise His holiness as they return on their paths. As they rise, they rise marvelously; and when they settle,
- 13 they [stand] still. The sound of glad rejoicing falls silent, and there is a stillness of divine blessing in all the camps of the god-like beings; [and] the sound of prais[es]
- 14 . . . from all their divisions on the[ir] si[des] . . . and] all their mustered troops rejoice, each o[n]e in [his] stat[ion]. (4Q 405 20 ii-21-22; Newsom, 306-307)

A characteristic feature of the late, secessionist priestly-mystical tradition is that almost every single element of earthly ritual stemming from Solomon's Temple (I Kings 6-8; I Chron. 28) or from Ezekiel's *merkavah*

17. See note 6 above.

(Ezek. 1; 3:12–13; 8:2–4; 10) is multiplied by seven in the heavenly rite; from a cultic object or structure, destroyed and no longer existent, it is transformed into an eternal, heavenly, liturgical entity serving in the supernal sanctuary—singing, chanting, blessing. The mystical tradition reconstructs sacred space in a seven-fold pattern, creating a seven-fold kaleidoscopic, visionary refraction of reality: one or more *hekhhalot* in the seventh firmament (1En. 9; T. Levi 3:4–8); seven chariot-thrones, seven firmaments and seven *hekhhalot* and their cosmic multiples. The heavens become a Temple consisting of seven *hekhhalot*: “And above the heavens there are in it seven *hekhhalot* of fire and seven altars of flame” (Schäfer, *Synopse*, §772); “For who can think on seven *hekhhalot* and gaze on the highest heavens . . . in the seventh *hekhhal* there stand one hundred thousand thousand myriad chariots of fire” (ibid., §554); “And these are the names of seven princes, the guards of the seven doors of the *hekhhalot*” (ibid., §414); or: “Seven firmaments did the Holy One create and in them seven chariot-thrones” (Gruenwald, *Re’uyot Yehezkel*, line 45). Seven firmaments are also referred to in Isaiah 7, and numerous septuples appear in the Revelation to John, which is closely related to Ezekiel’s visions: “I saw seven golden lampstands” (Rev. 1:13), “seven stars” (ibid., v. 20), “and before the throne burn seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God” (ibid., 4:5); “seven angels . . . seven trumpets” (ibid., 8:2); “the seventh angel” (ibid., 11:15).

These and similar traditions, stressing not only the reflection of the earthly sanctuary but also the seven-fold structure of the heavens—as a paradise of seven firmaments, or as a universe comprising seven stars, seven heavenly circles, seven appointed angels, seven mountains and seven thunders (1En. 20–21, 24, 32; 2En. 2–10; John 1)—postulate a general link between the cosmic order, the mythical space and the perception of the heavens as a temple of seven-fold structure.

While the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* devote minute attention to the numinous qualities of the Temple, which are described in mystical, enigmatic terms, alluding to mystical metamorphoses of earthly and heavenly rituals into one another, they too speak of a sacred space with a seven-fold structure: “seven lofty holy places,” “seven *devirim* of the priesthoods,” “seven wondrous territories according to the ordinances of his sanctuaries,” “seven priesthoods in the wondrous sanctuary for the seven holy councils,” “seven mysteries of knowledge in the wondrous mystery of the seven holy precincts.”¹⁸

Such seven-based formulas and phraseology, to the priesthood and the Temple, are combined with the liturgical formulas which, in *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, directly invoke the heavenly Temple; there the earthly sanctuary is transformed to seven supernal *hekhhalot*, referred to in the plural in terms clearly pointing to Ezekiel’s *merkavah*. As we have pointed out, the

18. Newsom, *Concordance*, 389–465.

mystical-liturgical *merkavah* tradition personifies the cultic structures of the Holy of Holies and the Temple courts, metamorphosing them into entities that minister in the heavenly Temple, singing, praising and blessing.

The heavenly Temple, referred to in a variety of terms — “*hekhalot* of His glory,” “*hekhalot* of the King,” “the firmament most pure for the sanctuary of His holiness,” “in all heights of the sanctuaries of His glorious kingdom,” “from the source of holiness to the holy sanctuaries” — is intimately bound up with the world of the *merkavah*, all of whose elements bless, praise and sing on high, Sabbath after Sabbath: “And the chariots of His *devir* (Holy of Holies, inner sanctum) give praise together and their *cherubim* and their *ophanim* bless wondrously,” “the pattern of the chariot-throne do they bless above the firmament of the *cherubim*,” “move continuously with the glory of the wondrous chariots,” “for all His majestic chariots and His holy *devirim*,” “of wonder, *devir* to *devir* with the sound of holy multitudes, and all their crafted furnishings,” “with these let all the foundations of the Holy of Holies praise / the uplifting pillars of the supremely lofty abode, and all the corners of its structure.”¹⁹ A similar formulation, recalling the phrase “throne of His splendor” from the *Aleinu* prayer recited thrice daily is the passage cited previously from *Songs*, 4Q Berakhot 1. Thus, Qumran literature takes the world of the *merkavah* as portrayed in Ezekiel’s vision and transforms it into a mystical reality, a liturgical experience that recalls a penetrating insight of Mircea Eliade:

In mythical geography, sacred space is the essentially real space, for in the archaic world the myth alone is real. It tells of manifestations of the only indubitable reality — the sacred.²⁰

TRADITIONS OF THE SOLAR CALENDAR AS THE PARADIGM OF SACRED TIME

In the literature of the secessionist priesthood, the solar calendar is a paradigm of sacred time, combining heavenly, cosmic time and earthly, ritual time. The priestly circles among whom these traditions emerged hallowed the solar calendar as eternal and divine; it had governed time since Creation and symbolized all that was holy in the universe. It was imprinted upon nature as a divine mark, from God’s sanctification of the first Sabbath to the sanctification of the festivals.

The sacred calendar, proof of the divine origin of time and of its eternal seven-fold structure, was engraved on the heavenly tablets and preserved and observed by the angels. They revealed it to human beings so that the people would testify to the sanctity of time and observe the Sabbaths and the festivals in their seven-weekly cycles together with them, in heaven and on earth. Written in the heat of polemics and controversy over the sanctity of

19. *Ibid.*

20. M. Eliade, *Images and Symbols* (New York, 1969), 40.

time, place and ritual, this literature highlights the heavenly origin of time, its division in heaven and earth into seven-fold structures, divinely ordained since the seven days of Creation. By the same token, sacred time is linked to the determinism of cyclic natural laws governing the seasons of the solar year, to the Temple ritual and its seven-fold rhythm, and to the angelic revelation of a liturgical-ritual calendar in which all chronological aspects of the festivals are prescribed and immutable.

These ideas emerged in the context of three central myths, all of which postulate a connection between the solar calendar and the angels: (1) that the sanctity of the solar year and its heavenly origin are reflected in the story of Enoch, son of Jared, who ascended to heaven and learned the secrets of the calendar from the angels and witnessed the eternal order recorded in the "heavenly tablets;"²¹ (2) that the impure nature of the lunar calendar and its sinful origin are embodied in the myth of the descent of the "sons of the gods" to earth, also known as the sins of the fallen angels and the rebellion of the Watchers;²² and (3) that the eternal nature of the solar calendar and its seven-fold structure are presented in the myth of the Sabbath and the Feast of Weeks (*Shavu'ot*), celebrated together by the angels in the seven supernal *hekhalot* and by the priests, their counterparts in the terrestrial Temple. Below, we consider these three myths which appear throughout the secessionist priestly literature, and the basic assumptions underlying them.

In the view of the authors of *The Book of the Watchers* (1En. 1–36), *The Book of Heavenly Luminaries* (1En. 72–82), the *Book of Jubilees*, 1 and 2 Enoch, the *Temple Scroll*, *MMT*, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, *Damascus Covenant* and other Qumran works, time is not an arbitrary, manmade structure or human order, dependent on changing observations and determinations influenced by external conditions, adjustments and errors. Rather, time is of divine origin and its laws are predetermined, immutable, a cycle that has been repeating since sacred time was imprinted on nature during the seven days of Creation and consecrated through the Sabbath day. The solar calendar is not entrusted to man or dependent upon human calculations or terrestrial considerations; it was imparted to human beings by angelic revelation, so that heavenly and earthly time could be blended into a

21. On Enoch, see P. Alexander, "Hebrew Apocalypse of Enoch," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. Charlesworth, 223–316; Alexander, "The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch," *JJS* 28 (1977): 156–180; Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*; Kahana, *Sefarim Hizonim*; Milik, *Books of Enoch*; H. Odeberg, *3 Enoch, or the Hebrew Book of Enoch* (Cambridge, 1928; New York, 1973); Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*; Stone, "Books of Enoch"; VanderKam, *Enoch*.

22. On angels, see D. Dimant, "Sinning Angels in the Judean Desert Scrolls and the Related Apocryphal Writings" (in Hebrew), (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1976); Dimant, "Sons of Heaven – Angelology in the Book of Jubilees in Light of the Writings of the Qumran Sect" (in Hebrew), in *Minhah le-Sarah: Studies in Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah Presented to Prof. Sarah Heller Wilensky*, ed. D. Dimant, M. Idel and S. Rosenberg (Jerusalem, 1994), 97–118; M. Mach, "Studies in Angelology during the Hellenistic-Roman Period" (in Hebrew) (Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv University, 1996); A. Rofé, *Belief in Angels in the Bible* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1979).

single, simultaneous, liturgical-ritual calendar. This is the message conveyed by the archetypal mystical hero of this literature, Enoch, son of Jared, who ascended to heaven in order to witness the heavenly structure of time as manifested in the solar calendar to bring heavenly time down to terrestrial space.

The aim of the Enoch literature is to elucidate in detail the relationship between the seven-fold structure of heavenly time and the seven-fold division of the earthly calendar. The story of Enoch, the seventh patriarch of the world, the length of whose mortal life—365 years (Gen. 5:23)—exactly parallels the number of days in the solar year, specified sometimes as 364 and sometimes as 365 in the various calendar traditions (1En. 1-36; 2En. 6:21, 19:1; Jub. 6), is the story of a human being who became an angel so that he could bear witness to heavenly time, its order and its structure. That same Enoch of whom the Bible says, "Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, for God took him" (Gen. 5:24), became a prototype of the mystical-priestly hero who transcended the boundaries of time and place, ascending from earth to heaven by divine will; not dying like a normal human being, he was "taken to God," to become an eternal witness beyond the confines of time and place. Two special numbers are linked to the figure of Enoch—seven, the number of days of Creation, and 364/5, the number of days in the solar year. There may also be some significance to the gematria value of his name, which is $84 = 7 \times 12$, the product of the number of days in the week and the number of months/gates in a year. Enoch was held in such high esteem that he was rewarded with heavenly knowledge and eternal life, transformed from a mortal to an immortal, heavenly being, permitted to move back and forth between the realms of earthly and heavenly time and space and the realms of past and future.

All these elements combined to make Enoch the central figure of this literature, bearing witness to heavenly time before the denizens of terrestrial space and establishing the ritual solar calendar linking heaven and earth. Enoch combines heavenly lore and testimony with regard to the eternal heavenly order: the appointed times of the festivals in heaven and earth, the signs (the covenants relating to heavenly time) and the *tequfot* (the cycles of the sun and the celestial bodies and their relationship to the seasons of the year). Enoch, "taken up to God" to learn the secrets of the calendar from the angels, so that he could return to Earth and teach them to his sons, the priests, observed the divine origin of time impressed in the laws of nature, and testified at length to the heavenly solar calendar revealed to him in the upper world:

I saw how the stars of heaven come out; and I counted the gates out of which they exit and wrote down all their exits for each one: according to their numbers, their names, their ranks, their positions, their periods, their months, as Uriel, the holy angel who was with me, showed me. (*The Book of Watchers*: 1En. 33:3)

Thus the signs, the durations of time, the years, and the days were shown to me by the angel Uriel, whom the Lord, God of eternal glory, has appointed over all the luminaries of heaven—in heaven and the world— . . . in order that they should rule in the face of the sky and be seen on the earth. (*The Book of Heavenly Luminaries*: 1En. 75:3)

The year is completed in 364 days. True is the matter of the exact computation of that which has been recorded; for Uriel—whom the Lord of all the creation of the world has ordered for me in order to explain the host of heaven—has revealed to me and breathed over me concerning the luminaries, the months, the festivals, the years, and the days. (*ibid.*, 82:6–9)

The link between the heavenly origin of time, its fixed seven-fold structure, as derived from the seven days of Creation and the fifty-two weeks of the solar year, its relationship with the eternal laws of nature and cycles of the year, and its realization in the immutable solar calendar—which is seen as attesting to the divine order of sacred time and observed by the guardians of sacred space (the angels in heaven and the priests on earth)—all these elements emerge from a variety of traditions in these works, which provide lengthy descriptions of the circumstances under which the solar calendar and the significance of its seven-fold structure were revealed.

Observance of the solar calendar was construed as *imitatio angelorum*, imitation of the angelic service in the sacred heavenly space. This service brings together eternal knowledge, the eternal heavenly order, eternal testimony, as reported by the angels who tell the mythological story of Enoch in the *Book of Jubilees*.²³ This book, devoted entirely to the seven-fold structure of historical and ritual time, retells the story of Enoch, the seventh patriarch of the world:

This one was the first who learned writing and knowledge and wisdom, from among the sons of men, from among those who were born upon earth. And who wrote in a book the signs of heaven . . . so that the sons of man might know the times of the years according to their order. . . . This one was the first who wrote a testimony and testified to the children of men throughout the generations of the earth. And their weeks according to Jubilees he recounted; and the days of the years he made known. And the months he set in order, and the sabbaths of the years he recounted, just as we made it known to him. (Jub. 4:17–18)

23. On the *Book of Jubilees* see Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*; Enders, *Biblical Interpretation*; Jaubert, "Le calendrier des Jubilees"; J. Kugel, "Levi's Elevation to the Priesthood in Second Temple Writings," *HTR* 86 (1993); Kugel, "The Jubilees Apocalypse," *DSD* 1 (1994); Stone, "Books of Enoch"; Stone, ed., *Jewish Writings*; Stone, "Enoch, Aramaic Levi"; Stone, *Scriptures, Sects and Visions*; VanderKam, *Enoch*; VanderKam, "Jubilees Fragments"; VanderKam, *Textual and Historical Studies*; VanderKam, *Book of Jubilees*; VanderKam, "Temple Scroll"; VanderKam and Milik, "4Q Jubilees"; Werman, C., "The Attitude to Gentiles in the Book of Jubilees and in Qumran Literature Compared with early Tannaitic *Halakhah* and Contemporary Apocryphal Literature" (in Hebrew) (Ph.D., diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1995).

The Sabbath was the major axis of the solar calendar learned from the angels. The calendar was calculated in terms of the Sabbaths and weeks of the year, in terms of the joint observance of the Sabbath in heaven and earth, as stated in the same work:

For we, the angels of the countenance and all the holy angels, these two kinds, He instructed us to observe the Sabbath with Him in heaven and earth. And He said to us: Lo, I shall single out for Me a nation among my nations, and they shall observe the Sabbath, and I shall consecrate them to Me as a nation and bless them, and they shall be My people and I shall be their God. And he chose the seed of Jacob. . . . And I shall consecrate them to Me for all eternity, and I shall tell them to cease from everything on the seventh day. Thus did he bless them and consecrate them to Him, a chosen people, from among all the nations, to observe the Sabbath together with us. (*DJD XIII*, 19; 4Q216 VII 8–13)

According to the authors of *Jubilees* and the *Apocalypse of Weeks* (1En. 93), not only is cyclic time, as represented in the calendar, calculated in an eternal seven-fold rhythm through the Sabbaths of the year; all of history proceeds in recurrent cycles of Sabbaths, years, sabbaticals, Jubilees and ages. Heaven and earth have thereby been linked together since the seven days of Creation, through the covenants and oaths that God concluded with man, through the sacrifices that man offers God, whose fixed seven-fold progression is governed by the solar calendar and observed by the angels.

The solar calendar reflects a preordained schematization of time. The year comprises 364 or 365 days, divided into twelve gates in the heavens through which the sun enters and leaves (1En. 72:3-33; 74:10-13), paralleling the twelve months of the year. The year divides into two equal parts, each twenty-six weeks long, and four annual seasons, each containing thirteen Sabbaths. The months of the year are specified by numbers, not by names, so that the liturgical order of the thirteen Sabbaths may be repeated in each of the four seasons, whose dates coincide in the 364-day calendar. Each month of the solar calendar is 30 days long except for the third, sixth, ninth and twelfth, which have an added day called "sign" or "day of remembrance."

The four days of remembrance (*degalim*) separate the four seasons. A special day in the first month, Nisan, and another in the seventh month, Tishri, mark the beginning of each half-year. Each of the seasons comprises 91 days (1En. 82:11-15), divided into 13 weeks, which constitute the basis for the sacred service (Jub. 6:29);²⁴ taken together, the four seasons make up 52 weeks, arranged in an inviolable divine, cosmic structure:

And they set them upon the heavenly tablets. Each one of them is thirteen weeks from one to another of the remembrances, from the first to the second, and from the second to the third, and from the third to the fourth. And all of the weeks

24. See *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, Concordance, s.v. שבת, אבות.

which will be commanded will be fifty-two weeks of days, and all of them are a complete year. Thus it is engraved and ordained on the heavenly tablets, and there is no transgressing in a single year, from year to year. And you, command the children of Israel so that they shall guard the years in this number, three hundred and sixty-four days, and it will be a complete year. And no one shall corrupt its (appointed) time from its days or from its feasts because all (of the appointed times) will arrive in them according to their testimony. (Jub. 6:29-32)

But that is not all. The fixed mathematical computation of the weeks guarantees that the thirteen Sabbaths of each season will fall on fixed, identical dates relative to the three months of the season, and that the festivals will occur not only on fixed days of the month but on fixed days of the week. Thus, the first day of each new year will always fall on the day the luminaries were created, the fourth day of the week; the Day of Atonement will invariably fall on the sixth day; and the Festival of Weeks (Pentecost) will always be on the first day, on the morrow of the Sabbath, seven weeks after the offering of the *Omer*, counted from the first Sabbath after the end of the festival of Passover, 26 Nisan, so that the Festival of Weeks is always celebrated on 15 Sivan.

The first Sabbath of each quarter will always fall on the fourth of the first month, the second Sabbath on the eleventh of the first month, the third on the eighteenth, and so on, in cycles of seven days, up to the twelfth Sabbath, which will fall on the twenty-first of the third month, and the last, thirteenth Sabbath, which will always fall on the twenty-eighth of the third month. Thus the Sabbaths occur on the same dates in all four seasons, and a festival will never coincide with a Sabbath.

This calendar, observed in heaven and earth from Creation to the End of Days, is sanctified in the books of Enoch, *Jubilees* and Qumran literature — in all the literature of the secessionist priesthood, which struggled to uphold the eternal sanctity and validity of their calendar with its recurrent cycles of Sabbaths and weeks, the solar calendar with its 364 days.

For the authors of this literature, any interference with the calendrical order, any violation of the sequence of properly dated Sabbaths in each season, constituted a sin. It would be a breach of the cosmic order, of the oaths and covenants concluded between heaven and earth, which are celebrated on special festivals — always falling on the same, preordained days of the week and of the month — using a liturgy that assigns the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* to fixed days in a seven-fold cyclic order. Such a violation would be punished by a parallel disturbance of nature in heaven and by doom and destruction on earth.

The diverse problems relating to this calendar — historical, ritual, mathematical and practical — have been discussed in detail by such scholars as Jaubert, Talmon, Yadin, Herr, Baumgarten, VanderKam, Ben-Shahar, Knohl and others. There is no doubt, however, that the seven-based solar

calendar was a crux of mythical and mystical identification for the secessionist priesthood in its desert retreat, and the major bone of halakhic and cultic contention between them and the official priests of the Temple.

The figure of Enoch is central in the literature which, implicitly and explicitly, declared war on the lunar calendar and championed the sanctity of the solar calendar. Enoch himself testified to his seven-fold identity: "I was born the seventh during the first week, during which time justice and righteousness continued to endure" (1En. 93:3). His ascent to heaven was intimately related to the vision of the *merkavah* (ibid., 14:8-25), and he imparted the knowledge of the solar calendar to his sons, the priests (ibid., 79-82; 92-93; Jub. 4:16-26).

The controversy over the calendar involved the sanctity of time, place and ritual. It was a war against time based on arbitrary human determination, on variable human observation of the new moon and erroneous, fluctuating calculations of the festivals deriving from human consecration of time, adjustment of time to changing reality. It fought for a time woven into the laws of nature, the cosmic order and divine revelation, a cyclic time, featuring an eternal, immutable structure, confirmed by the perpetual testimony borne by the angels and the priests.

This testimony was delivered in a cyclic liturgical rite in which the Temple festivals were celebrated on fixed dates and the priestly courses served at fixed, cyclically recurring times (2En. 8:1-6; 13:14-16; Jub. 6; *MMT*; *Temple Scroll*; *Psalms Scroll*; *Courses*). By contrast, the lunar calendar of antiquity was not a fixed calendar; neither months nor years were of fixed length, and festivals did not fall on fixed days, for the month was consecrated on the basis of visual observations, recurrent sightings of the moon, all dependent on human eyesight, earthly discretion and the decision of a human court (Gen. 1:14; Ps. 104:19; Mishnah R.H. 1-2; B.T. R.H. 1-2; Sanh. 10b).

The struggle between the lunar and solar calendars was a struggle between a historical calendar, dependent on the inconstant, unpredictable, human reading of nature, and a mythological calendar, dependent on the laws of nature and on the divine reading of nature, predetermined from beginning to end. Put differently, it was between a changeable calendar based on malleable human observation, variable calculations and sanctification by human beings, and an unchangeable calendar of sacred origin, based on a fixed mathematical calculation and an immutable principle, relying on consecration by angels and priests.

The solar calendar was agriculturally based, marking such events as the *'Omer*, the first produce of grain, wine and olive oil, harvesting and ingathering of crops; it bound together nature and ritual, founded on the postulate that the Sabbaths and the cycle of weeks had been imprinted upon nature since the seven days of Creation, and that the calendar signified an immutable relationship between Sabbaths and festivals. The adherents of the solar calendar argued that the festivals fell on days prearranged by divine

decree, in keeping with the biblical verse "These are the set times of the Lord, the sacred occasions, which you shall celebrate each at its appointed time" (Lev. 23:4). On the other hand, the believers in the sanctity of the lunar calendar stressed the second person plural, "you shall"—that is, human determination of the times of the festivals, as expressed by consecration of the new moon on the basis of human sightings of the crescent moon:

"These are the set times of the Lord, the sacred occasions, which you shall celebrate"—whether at the appointed time or not. I have no "set times" but these. (Mishnah, R.H. 25a)

In other words, there are no festivals (set times, *mo'adim*) other than those announced and celebrated by the sages of the court, regardless of whether they have been set for the "proper" time. On one hand is a deterministic perception of time, of heavenly origin, bound up with the cyclic laws of nature as reflected in a fixed solar calendar whose festivals fell not only on fixed dates of the month but even on fixed days of the week, a calendar maintained unchanged by angels and priests who attest to this divine origin and declaring "It is in heaven." On the other is a perception of time dependent on variable, human decisions, governed by observations made by ordinary mortals, as reflected in a changeable, lunar calendar whose custodians were leaders who derived their authority from the people as a whole, took terrestrial interests into consideration and invoked, as a crucial principle, "It is not in the heavens."

Vestiges of this controversy echoed in the well-known polemics between the Pharisees and the Sadducees/Boethusians as to the meaning of the expression "the day after the Sabbath" (Lev. 23:11, 15), which is crucial to beginning the counting of the *Omer* and celebrating the Festival of Weeks (Mishnah, Men. 10). It was also reflected in the disputes as to the date of the Day of Atonement, mentioned in the Mishnah in relation to the reliability of witnesses, and in the book *Pesher Habbakuk* in relation to persecution and calendrical controversy. The primeval roots of the conflict, however, are reflected in the two myths relating to the open passageways between heaven and earth in which angels and humans exchange knowledge, and to the establishment of the basic patterns of sanctity and sin in the antediluvian world—myths recounting the holy/sinful origin of the two calendars.

As confirmation of the sanctity, divine origin and eternal validity of the solar calendar, the secessionist priesthood tells and retells the story of Enoch, son of Jared, and his mission to acquire heavenly, angelic knowledge, to testify to the sanctity of time and to teach the secrets of the calendar. Conversely, to expose the sinful origin of the lunar calendar, the priests tell the tale of the fallen angels, the Revolt of the Watchers, the saints who became sinners, who descended against God's will from heaven to earth and imparted forbidden knowledge to humankind. As against the Enoch myth,

told at length and in detail as a tale of conversion (that is, sacred reversal) hinted at in Genesis 5:22–25, the story of the fallen angels is a tale of inversion (reversion to sin), hinted at in Genesis 6:1–7: the myth of the sons of God and the daughters of man—a brief account of the sin incurred by disobeying God, acting arbitrarily against the laws of Creation and commingling the disjoint domains of heavenly and terrestrial. As a result, the earth became filled with lawlessness, and the Flood came to cleanse it:

The sons of God saw how beautiful the daughters of men were and took wives from among those that pleased them. . . . It was then, and later too, that the Nephilim appeared on earth—when the sons of God cohabited with the daughters of men, who bore them offspring. They were the heroes. . . . The Lord saw how great was man's wickedness on earth. . . . The Lord said, "I will blot out from the earth the men whom I created." (Gen. 6:1–7)

Apocryphal literature expands this obscure story, relating that it was because of this descent of the "sons of God" to earth, in revolt against divine will, and their subsequent willful behavior and committing of the three cardinal sins of idolatry, sexual offenses and bloodshed, that the sinful lunar calendar was revealed to human beings:

And there was much wickedness and they committed adultery and erred, and all their conduct became corrupt. Shemhazai taught incantation and the cutting of roots . . . Baraqiel taught astrology, and Kokabiel (the knowledge of) the stars. . . . And Sahariel taught the course of the moon. And it came to pass, when the people died, they cried out and their voice reached up into heaven (1En. 8:2–4; text according to A. Kahana).

Chapters 6–9 in 1 Enoch deal with the detailed circumstances of the angels' transgression. As Dvora Dimant has shown in her study of the fallen angels myth, there are many other parallels in apocryphal literature, particularly in 1 and 2 Enoch and in the *Book of Jubilees*.

The myths are undoubtedly intentionally paired opposites: both involve breaching the boundaries between the heavenly and the earthly realms, and both concern the acquisition of knowledge. In the story of Enoch, a human ascends to heaven as willed by God, experiences conversion from man to angel, from mortal to immortal, and with divine sanction acquires heavenly knowledge that reveals the eternal divine order; on divine instruction, he imparts this knowledge to humankind. In the fallen angels story, the divine beings come down from heaven against God's will, experience inversion and become earthly sinners, deliberately disobey the divine command and rebel against divine order. They disrupt the proper limits of Creation, enter into forbidden liaisons that blur distinctions between upper and lower realms, commit various carnal sins, and teach people idolatry and knowledge that is not properly theirs. The result is death, oblivion and bloodshed.

In the first myth Enoch, in recognition of his virtuous conduct, is taken up by God to heaven to learn the secrets of the solar calendar from an angel named Uriel (*or*, light) and to testify to these secrets before his sons — the first representatives of the priestly dynasty that is to culminate in the Sons of Light²⁵ and the sons of Zadok, the priests, the faithful guardians of the covenants between heaven and earth whose earthly signs are the divine order of Sabbaths and festivals. In the second myth, the “sons of God,” Watchers or angels of destruction come down to earth on their own sinful initiative, to teach human beings forbidden knowledge—licentious behavior, idolatry and bloodshed. An angel named Sahariel (*sahar*, moon) teaches the secrets of the lunar calendar, whose knowledge involves the cardinal sins. And finally the fallen angels beget the *nefilim*, born in sin, and cause the earth to fill up with wickedness. According to the view of the secessionist priesthood, these doctrines were rooted in the most terrible sins; they were professed by the ruling priesthood, that is, the defiled priesthood, who distorted the order of Sabbaths and festivals, culminating in the sons of Belial, the house of rebellion and the Sons of Darkness.

These opposing ideas inspired a great variety of stories in post-biblical and Qumran literature, which established a dualistic world-view as the background and legitimization for secession, exclusion and segregation. The seceding priesthood divided the earthly and heavenly realms into two domains: light and darkness, purity and impurity, righteousness and wickedness. One domain was headed by the priest of righteousness (*kohen zedeq*), the teacher of righteousness (*moreh zedeq*), or the chief priest (*kohen ha-rosh*) and the prince of light (Uriel, Michael]); it followed the solar calendar and adhered to the destiny of the Sons of Light. The opposition was headed by the priest of wickedness (*kohen ha-resha*) and the prince of darkness (Belial, Hatred), adopting the destiny of the Sons of Darkness and following the lunar calendar.

The extraordinary frequency of both myths in the apocryphal and Qumran literatures clearly indicates that this is no mere interpretation of Scripture; the stories acquire a new meaning, relevant to the time and place of the writers, who fought for the sanctity of the solar calendar (and the tradition of the First Temple) against the sin they attached to the lunar calendar (and the tradition of the Second Temple). The secessionist priests considered themselves the true guardians of the covenant and denizens of the blessed domain of light, while their opponents, they believed, were violators of the covenant, residents of the accursed domain of darkness. They expanded the brief allusions of the biblical tale, associating a host of new sins with it and picturing their opponents, with a flourish of mythical augmentation, as sons

25. See Grintz, Y. M., “The Scroll of Light and Darkness – Its Time and Its Authors” (in Hebrew), *Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Y. Yadin and Ch. Rabin (Jerusalem, 1961), 19–30; Yadin, *Scroll of the War*.

of Belial, counterparts of the angels who had sinned, violated the covenant and imparted to mankind the erroneous methods of the lunar calendar and the sinful knowledge; as a result, the Temple had been defiled and desecrated and the Sons of Darkness held power. But this same mythical and mystical augmentation engendered their description of themselves as the domain of the Sons of Light, guardians of the covenant, who possessed divine knowledge of the various sacred, angelic traditions that began with Enoch and his sacred testimony concerning the dominion of the solar calendar in the pure Temple of the spirit, in the world of the Sons of Light.

The controversy over the calendar was a struggle for validity, legitimacy and authority; a struggle for the origin of cultic lore regarding the laws of nature; a struggle to differentiate between sacred and distorted knowledge. The sharp polemical thrust of these works brought about an emphasis on the astronomical thesis that the sun emits seven times more light than the moon (see Isa. 30:26; 2En. 11:2; 1En. 78:4). But it does even more: the moon is actually omitted from the list of heavenly signs taken into consideration for the determination of the calendar:

And the Lord set the sun up as a great sign upon the earth for days, sabbaths, months, feast (days), years, sabbaths of years, Jubilees, and for all of the (appointed) times of the years. (Jub. 2:9)

Compare this with the parallel text in the book of Genesis, where the plural is used:

Let there be lights . . . they shall serve as signs for the set times—the days and the years. (Gen. 1:14; Ps. 104:19)

The *Community Rule*, too, refers exclusively to the “greater light”; God created

the greater light for the Holy of Holies . . . for the beginnings of the appointed times in each season . . . for the beginnings of years and the cycle of their appointed times. (*Community Rule* X:4–6; Licht, *Serakhim*, 209–10)

while rabbinic tradition retained the emphasis on the Genesis formulation:

And God made the two great lights. (Gen. 1:16)²⁶

* * *

The *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, which are arranged according to the Sabbaths of the solar calendar, provide numerous indications of the profound affinity between the concepts of knowledge, testimony, appointed things and

26. Buber, ed., *Shoher Tov* (Vilna, 1891), 230.

people, festivals, eternity—words with the same or similar roots in Hebrew. The order of time and its perpetual subdivision—“things which are eternally appointed”—derive from a fixed, divine order, preordained from beginning to end, and from eternal celestial lore or “wonderful mysteries,” imprinted in nature and kept by the angels:

For from the God of knowledge came into being everything which exists forever. And from His knowledge and His purposes have come into existence all things which were eternally appointed. He makes the former things in their seasons and the latter things in their due time. (Newsom, 170)

OR:

When, as ordained for them, they come into being, it is in accord with His glorious design that they accomplish their task without change. (*Community Rule* III:16)

In all the seasons and appointed times for ever, at the coming of day and at nightfall and at the departure of evening and morning.” (*War Scroll* XIV; Vermes, 179)

The heavenly knowledge of the divisions of time, the deterministic aspect of things that were eternally appointed (i.e., preordained in God’s thought), is imparted to Enoch by the angels and inscribed in the heavenly tablets. This knowledge is associated with the seasons and the laws of nature, as recounted in Enoch and the *Book of Jubilees*; it is the origin of the testimony for the priestly sacred service, which is arranged around the celestial calendar of Temple festivals as represented by the solar calendar. These festivals and their rituals, governed by a seven-fold pattern of “all their sevenfold appointed testimonies,” testify to the secrets of divinely ordered time:

mysteries of marvels in their revelations
 and holy weeks in their appointed time
 and divisions of months . . . years in their seasons
 and glorious festivals in their ordained times
 and sabbaths of the land in their divisions
 appointed times for liberty . . . eternity . . .
 light and [eternal generations] (4QBer)

Such phraseology, creating an association between the division of heavenly and earthly time—“their divisions/their seasons”—and the division of festivals in the sacred service—“glorious festivals in their fixed times”—indicates the preordained regularity of divine time and its deterministic significance, the eternity of the calendar (“everything which exists forever”) and the role of the calendar as testimony to the divine covenant that integrates natural order with metahistorical order. This cultic schedule links

heaven and earth in an angelic and priestly ritual that revolves around a recurrent cycle of testimony, remembrance, observance and perpetuation, of Sabbaths and festivals preordained since the beginning of Creation.

The secessionist priestly literature ascribes decisive importance to the septuple of days of Creation as the foundation of cyclic cultic time, measured in terms of Sabbaths and weeks; and as the foundation of linear, metahistorical time, stretching from beginning to end in multiples of seven, in predetermined ages made up of weeks of years and Jubilees. Superimposed on this permanent cultic time as reflected in the solar calendar, divided into weeks of days, is a perception of linear, metahistorical, deterministic time; this time is measured in past, present and future in terms of ages engraved on the heavenly tablets, divided into weeks of years and Jubilees:

Interpretation concerning the ages made by God, all the ages for accomplishment of all events, past and future. Before ever He created them, He determined their works . . . age by age, engraved on the heavenly tablets . . . the ages of their domination. (4Q180)

Cultic time regulates the sanctity of the Sabbath and the seven-month period of the agricultural year during which the pilgrimage festivals fall: from the first month, Nisan, till the seventh, Tishri. The festivals create an unbroken rhythm of seven-week intervals: seven weeks after the *Omer* has been offered at the end of the seven days of Passover comes the Festival of Weeks, which is the festival of new wheat; seven weeks later comes the festival of new wine, followed after another similar period by the festival of new oil; the cultic year ends with the seven days of the festival of Tabernacles, the festival of ingathering.

Metahistorical time is associated with a system of covenants between heaven and earth. It is reckoned in weeks of years and ages, in a rhythm marked by the occurrences of sabbatical years and further multiples of seven. This system of sevenfold multiples—of days, Sabbaths, weeks, festivals and years—was the explicit crux of the polemic concerning the superiority of the solar year, with its divinely preordained divisions of time, over the lunar calendar, whose progress was determined by human observation and whose cycle of festivals was thus inconstant, fluctuating. But there was also an implicit polemic between the protagonists of a metahistorical, cosmic world view based on ages, covenants and a deterministic, divinely prescribed flow of time, stretching from beginning to end in a constant rhythm, and the advocates of a realistic world view, postulating time as decreed by man, measured in terms of terrestrial, historical dates, eschewing the determinism of a known future.

Such an approach to the calendar, anchoring it in the laws of nature, in the absolute, preordained cosmic order of days, weeks, years, sabbatical years and Jubilees, necessarily implies a deterministic structuring of history and

dictates a specific interpretation of the divine intentions concealed therein. The Apocalypse of Weeks in the book of Enoch reports an angelic revelation in which history is divided into seven historical periods, called weeks [of years], beginning with the birth of Enoch, the seventh patriarch of the world, and ending in the "seventh week," at whose end

there shall be elected the elect ones of righteousness from the eternal plant of righteousness, to whom shall be given sevenfold knowledge concerning all his creation. (1En. 93:9-10)

The *Book of Jubilees*, on the other hand, expounds the details of a seven-based calendar, involving both a metahistorical, linear-deterministic axis of continuous time from Creation to the theophany at Sinai, divided into weeks of years and Jubilees, and a cultic-cyclic axis of a solar year divided into seven-day weeks, seasons and units (*degalim*). The festivals in this calendar depend on the system of covenants concluded with the Patriarchs before the theophany at Mount Sinai—a system quite different from the traditional one, in which the festivals are associated with the historical events of the Exodus from Egypt and the Israelites' peregrinations in the desert after Sinai.

Because of the different number of days and weeks in the year, as well as the resultant differences in the festival cycle and the principles that determined the timing of the festivals, the adherents of the solar calendar could not observe their cult together with those bound by the lunar calendar, nor even share their lives with them; the result was secession and schism. This many-faceted attachment to a solar cultic calendar, to a metahistorical, predetermined calendar of weeks of years and Jubilees, was indubitably the major point of identification and the most prominent polemical crux of the literature of the priestly opposition. A halakhic-cultic struggle ensued, supported by myth and mysticism, as recounted by the angels:

so that the children of Israel might keep the Sabbath according to the commands of the Sabbaths of the land just as it was written in the tablets which He placed in my hands so that I might write for you the law of each time and according to each division of its days. (Jub. 50:13)

All the events in the *Book of Jubilees* concerned with the continuity of the covenant between divine time and earthly time and place occur in the third month, generally on the Festival of Weeks, *Shavu'ot*, on 15 Sivan (Jub. 16:13)—the time of the renewal of the covenant in heaven and on earth. However, unlike the standard tradition, in which the covenant at Sinai is paramount and the commandments given on Mount Sinai are radically new, the tradition of *Jubilees* considers it the last in a series of covenants, all concluded in the third month and all associated with angels. The aim of the

book is to highlight the mythical-mystical, metahistorical nature of the covenants, to demonstrate the eternal validity of the commandments associated with them, and to clarify their relationship with the sevenfold structure of the solar calendar—the bridge between heaven and earth.

Thus, the theophany at Sinai is presented not as a new beginning, but as a summation of customs and commandments that had been in force since Creation; the covenant at Sinai loses its historical significance as establishing the covenant between God and His people. The *Book of Jubilees* reiterates the metahistorical significance of this recurrent cycle of covenants, already concluded between heaven and earth, between angels and priests—between creators of heavenly covenants and burners of incense offering earthly sacrifices.

The first covenant, the covenant of the rainbow, was made with Noah upon his exit from the ark, after he had sojourned there for a whole solar year—the year that provides a detailed basis for all computations of the solar calendar (Jub. 5:24–32; 6:23–33). Emerging from the ark in the third month (Sivan), he burns incense and offers sacrifice, laying the foundations for the priestly cult that links the earthly sacrifice with the heavenly covenant at a sacred time. In the *Jubilees* version, however, this covenant, at this particular time, had been observed in heaven since Creation:

Therefore, it is ordained and written in the heavenly tablets that they should observe the Feast of Weeks in this (the third) month, once per year, in order to renew the covenant each and every year. And all of this feast was celebrated in heaven from the day of Creation until the days of Noah. (Jub. 6:17)

With this covenant, Noah and his household join the ranks of the angels, who have been observing the covenant since Creation. The covenant implies obedience to the divine decree of holy time, acceptance of the yoke of commandments and prohibitions, and writing down the testimony. Having thus become one of the keepers of the covenant, Noah receives seven commandments, which are in a sense opposites of the sins of the Watchers that brought on the flood. God's part in the covenant is to establish a permanent, eternal order of natural laws and seasons, determined by the solar calendar, which guarantee the recurrent cycles of the agricultural year and, together with it, abundant produce and fertility:

And He made a covenant with him so that there might not be floodwaters which would destroy the earth. All the days of the earth, seed (time) and harvest will not cease. Cold and heat and summer and winter and day and night will not change their ordinances or cease forever (ibid., v. 4–5, after Gen. 8:22; text according to A. Kahana).

The human obligation, on the other hand, is to learn and to testify, to remember and observe the cultic calendar and realize it through

grain-offerings and sacrifices brought at a fixed time, on the festival of the first fruits, by those with whom the divine covenant was concluded, and by those destined from birth, by the laws of nature, to perform the sacred service—the priests. The covenant affects both agricultural and cultic matters, since the Festival of Weeks is the festival of the first grain harvest and the time for offering up a new grain-offering (Exod. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:15–21; Num. 28:21). The same is true of all the other agricultural appointed times: the first fruits of grain, wine, oil, the ingathering and the *Omer*, following one after another in a continuous series at intervals of seven weeks, are marked by grain-offerings and animal sacrifices from the various yields, offered up on the fiftieth day as specified in the *Temple Scroll* and the *Book of Jubilees*.

The second covenant, the “covenant between the pieces” (see Gen. 15:9–17), was made with Abram, again in the third month; the angels explain it as a renewal of the divine/angelic covenant with Noah:

And on that day we made a covenant with Abram just as we had made a covenant that month with Noah. And Abram renewed the feast and the ordinance for himself forever. (Jub. 14:20)

Abram, observing the covenant, celebrates the first fruits of the grain harvest halfway through the third month and offers up a new sacrifice on the altar. God appears to him and commands him to circumcise himself and the males of his household as a sign that his seed has been specially chosen and likened to the angels; at this time, too, his named is changed to Abraham (*ibid.*, 15). The birth of Isaac during the Festival of Weeks, on the fifteenth of the third month, is a sign that the divine promise made through the covenant between the pieces has been fulfilled, and he is circumcised “according to the covenant which was ordained forever” (*ibid.*, 16:14).

Further celebrations of the Festival of Weeks by members of Abraham’s family entering the covenant are described in chapters 17, 22, 32 and 44 of *Jubilees*; these celebrations, involving festivals, oaths, promises, sacrifices and renewals of the covenant, are all associated with this annual festival, which guarantees transmission of the covenant to offspring—its scope being gradually narrowed down to an increasingly select group that is enjoined to observe the relevant commandments and prohibitions.

Thus, the covenant with Noah embraces the totality of humankind; the covenant with Abraham concerns him and his progeny; the covenant with Jacob—only part of the progeny of Abraham, namely, the sons of Isaac. The covenant with Jacob is confined to the tribe of Levi and subsequently still further, yielding the covenant with the Zadokite priests, the keepers of the covenant, and their righteous followers who walk in perfection, in contrast to the violators of the covenant, the corrupters of time (Jub. 28:15; 29:5ff; 44:1, 8).

There is a direct line from the Patriarchs and their observance of the covenant annually, in the third month, as described in *Book of Jubilees*, and the members of the Qumran community, who renew the covenant yearly at the same time, sons following in their ancestors' footsteps. The appointed times of the Patriarchs' covenantal ceremonies, the annual festival of the third month, provide a model for the Qumranites to emulate as they reenact the covenant ceremony annually on the prescribed day of the third month, symbolically realizing the biblical commandment, "to pass through the covenant of the Lord your God, and its oath" (Deut. 29:11); in the *Community Rule* they refer to themselves as those who "keep the covenant" or "hold fast to the covenant." The book of Chronicles, indubitably a priestly composition, describes a ceremonial tradition of renewal of the covenant in the third month, celebrated in First Temple times and probably associated with the pilgrimage to the Temple on the Festival of Weeks/First Fruits:

They were assembled in Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. They brought sacrifices to the Lord on that day. . . . They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul. Whoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel would be put to death. . . . So they took an oath to the Lord in a loud voice and with shouts, with trumpeting and blasts of the horn. (II Chron. 15:10-15)

The Aramaic translation of *Chronicles*, known as *Targum Rav Joseph*, explicitly designates the date of the covenant renewal ceremony during Asa's reign as the Feast of Weeks.

The Qumran community assigned a central role to the renewal of the covenant in the third month; the ceremony marked the religious self-definition of the group, unifying the community and setting it apart, defining the distinction between blessed and accursed. We learn from the *Community Rule*, as well as other writings of these circles and the *Damascus Covenant* fragment published by Milik (4QDB) of a covenant-renewal ceremony that took place on the Festival of Weeks. This ceremony, referred to as "passing through the covenant" (in keeping with the original Hebrew of the verse from Deuteronomy cited above, and alluding as well to Genesis 15:17), signified the participants' undertaking to observe the whole system of commandments handed down from heaven in the previous covenants.

The undertaking was marked by an oath taken publicly on the Festival of Weeks, relating both to the totality of the obligations and prohibitions accepted by the members of the Community and to the distinction between the Sons of Light, the keepers of the covenant, who receive God's blessing, and the Sons of Darkness, the violators of the covenant, who earn only His curse. The ceremony, held in the presumed presence of the celestial retinue, in a ritual in which the members of the Community renewed their covenant with God and proclaimed their secession from the breachers of the covenant,

included a blessing pronounced in parallel by the Community and by the angels; the recipients of the blessing were those entering into the covenant, while those remaining outside were execrated.

The *Community Rule* states that the covenant was an oath taken by the members of the sect once a year at a set time. This earthly oath was paralleled by a divine oath, marked by covenants between heaven and earth concluded in the third month on (as transpires from the *Damascus Covenant*) the Festival of Weeks.

The Hebrew root of the verb "to swear, take an oath" is *s-b-a*, which is also the root of the word for "seven." Thus, there is a link between the sacred number and the eternal oath (compare the naming of the city of Beersheba in Gen. 21:29-31; 26:23-33), and also between them and the Hebrew name of the Festival of Weeks, *Shavu'ot*, referring to the oath taken after seven weeks.

Thus the two meanings of the Hebrew root link heaven and earth and are sanctified by the public covenant ceremony, the "new covenant." The ceremony was considered to be a renewal of all previous covenants, beginning with that of the rainbow made by God with Noah (Gen. 9:12-17) when he emerged from the ark. On that occasion Noah initiated the sacrificial cult, atoning with blood for the land, offering up sacrifices in the third month, and entering into a covenant proclaiming the permanence of the laws of nature (Gen. 7:11; 8:14; Jub. 6:1-5).

The covenants then continued with the one concluded with Abraham and his progeny in the "covenant between the pieces," and the covenants with his sons, and were renewed again at Sinai, once again in the third month, with the participation of Moses and the Israelites:

And Noah and his sons swore that they would not eat any blood which was in any flesh. And he made a covenant before the Lord God forever in all of the generations of the earth in that month. Therefore, he [the angel on Mount Sinai] spoke to you [Moses] so that you also might make a covenant with the children of Israel with an oath in this month upon the mountain. And you will sprinkle blood upon them on account of all of the words of the covenant which the Lord made with them for all time. This testimony is written concerning you so that you might keep it always. . . .

And he gave a sign to Noah and his children that there should not again be a flood upon the earth. He set his bow in the clouds for a sign of the covenant which is forever, that the water of the Flood should therefore not be upon the earth to destroy it all the days of the earth. Therefore, it is ordained and written in the heavenly tablets that they should observe the feast of *Shavu'ot* in this month, once per year, in order to renew the covenant each and every year. And all of this feast was celebrated in heaven from the day of Creation until the days of Noah, twenty-six Jubilees and five weeks of years. And Noah and his sons kept it for seven Jubilees . . . until the day of the death of Noah. And from the day of the death of Noah, his sons corrupted it until the days of Abraham. . . . But Abraham

alone kept it. And Isaac and Jacob and his sons kept it until your days, but in your days the children of Israel forgot it until you renewed it for them on this mountain. And you, command the children of Israel so that they might keep this feast in all of their generations as a commandment to them. One day per year in this month they shall celebrate the feast, for it is the feast of *Shavu'ot* and it is the feast of the first fruits. This feast is twofold and of two natures. Just as it is written and engraved concerning it, observe it. (Jub. 6:10-22)

The covenant ceremony, associated from its inception with the offering of sacrifices and the prohibition on the consumption of blood, is described in the *Community Rule* (16:1-18:2) as a typically priestly ritual, including blessings and curses pronounced by the priests and the levites, with the faithful responding "amen," accepting the covenant and identifying with what they hear.²⁷ In the circles of the secessionist priests, those entering the covenant or observing the covenant are the Sons of Light who keep the solar calendar, which attests to the continuity of the covenants and the appointed times in accordance with the heavenly, sacred order; moreover, they strictly avoid the consumption of blood:

But with the remnant which 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 unfolded before them His holy Sabbaths and His glorious feasts, the testimonies of His righteousness and the ways of his truth . . . which a man must do in order to live. (*Damascus Covenant* III:12-16)

The violators of the covenant, on the other hand, are the Sons of Darkness who adhere to the lunar calendar with its confusion of the proper covenant-renewal times and festivals, who follow their willful hearts and refuse to recognize the prohibitions set out in the books of Enoch and *Jubilees*:

As for the exact determination of their times, to which Israel turns a blind eye, behold it is strictly defined in the *Book of Divisions of the Times into their Jubilees and Weeks*. (ibid., XVI:2-4)

There can be no doubt as to the overriding importance of the Festival of Weeks in the literature of the secessionist priesthood, which considered it a sacred model for seven weeks and the covenant-renewal festival, for the bonds with the angels who celebrated the festival in heaven and the tradition of covenants and oaths. The number of times the third month and the Festival of Weeks/*Shavu'ot* are mentioned in the *Book of Jubilees*, in the various contexts discussed hitherto, provides incontrovertible evidence to that effect. However, there is yet another context which, to my mind, has not

27. Compare with the ceremonial blessings and curses on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (Deut. 27).

received sufficient attention: the intriguing connection between Ezekiel's vision and the Feast of Weeks, signifying the link between sacred place and sacred time.

Various traditions point to a complex relationship among Ezekiel's vision, the *merkavah* tradition and the Festival of Weeks. Ezekiel's vision is ceremoniously read as an integral part of the service on the Festival of Weeks, this being the Prophetic Reading (*haftarah*) assigned for the holiday. Although the tradition of the *haftarah* reading is late (B.T., Meg. 31a), this is surely evidence of a link between the two traditions that relate sacred time to sacred place—the sacred place where heaven and earth met at a historic moment and an eternal, metahistorical moment. The theophany at Mount Sinai, which is indeed the content of the Torah reading on that same festival (Exod. 19–20), is thus linked with Ezekiel's throne-chariot (Ezek. 1; 10) which was revealed to the prophet on that very festival and attests to the continuity of divine revelation despite the destruction of the First Temple and the Babylonian Exile. The link between the theophany at Mount Sinai and Ezekiel's throne-chariot—both read on the festival of *Shavu'ot*—is established by the passage:

God's chariots are myriads upon myriads, thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them as in Sinai in holiness. You went up to the heights, having taken captives, having received tribute of men. (Ps. 68:18)

The ties implied here—between the *merkavah* (God's chariots) and the angels ("thousands upon thousands"), on one hand, and the theophany at Sinai ("Sinai in holiness") and Moses' ascent to receive the Torah ("you went up to the heights"—cf. "and Moses went up to God," Exod. 19:3), on the other—create a link between the prophetic-priestly traditions of First Temple times (the theophany at Mount Sinai and the giving of the Torah) and the oppositional-priestly traditions of Second Temple times (throne-chariot, angels, *Shavu'ot* on the fifteenth of the third month).

As pointed out previously, the *Book of Jubilees* interprets the Festival of Weeks as celebrating the numerous covenants made between God and humanity, from the covenant of the rainbow with Noah, through the covenant between the pieces concluded in smoke and fire with Abraham, to the covenant at Sinai solemnized (also in smoke and fire) with Moses and Israel. One might say that the vision of the *merkavah*, revealed to Ezekiel in clouds of fire (Ezek. 1:4; 13), was also perceived as part of the tradition of the renewal of the covenant in the third month—for according to the Metonic computation, Ezekiel's vision took place on the Festival of Weeks, the festival of the earthly Temple which, in the exiled priest's vision, became a heavenly throne-chariot.

The puzzling date stated at the beginning of the book of Ezekiel, which cannot be taken at face value, has been explained by Michael Hayutin, who

has analyzed the dates in Ezekiel and discovered that they conform to the solar calendar; based on calculations synchronizing the dates with the solar calendar, he maintains that Ezekiel's first prophecy took place on the fourteenth or fifteenth of the third month, the date of *Shavu'ot*, as believed by the Qumran sect.²⁸ In other words, on the date of the renewal of the covenant, celebrated in the Temple on the Festival of Weeks, Ezekiel had a vision of the opposite: the destruction of the Temple and the exile, as implied by his opening words (Ezek. 1:1). The exiled priest had presumably served in the Temple; in his visions of God (perhaps brought on by the cognitive dissonance implicit in the agonizing contrast between his grief on the festival day and his memories of the sights of the pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem), he saw the vision of the throne-chariot, which perpetuated the ruined Temple through visionary metamorphosis of its components. It would seem that he saw not only the sacred place but also the sacred time, the appointed time at which all the covenants were established. Like Noah, who saw the rainbow as a sign of the covenant, Ezekiel had a vision of a rainbow:

Like the appearance of the rainbow which shines in the clouds on a day of rain, such was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. That was the appearance of the semblance of the glory of the Lord. (Ezek. 1:28)

Like the smoke and the flaming torch seen by Abraham during the vision of the covenant between the pieces (Gen. 15:17–18) “in the third month in the middle of the month” (Jub. 15:1), and like the covenant of Sinai, also concluded “in the third month” (Exod. 19:1) and also accompanied by “thunder and lightning and a dense cloud” (ibid., 19:16, 18; 20:15), so too Ezekiel's vision was accompanied by “a huge cloud and flashing fire” (1:4), “burning coals of fire, like torches,” “lightning” (ibid., vv. 13–14) and sounds from heaven (vv. 24–25).

Just as Moses saw “the God of Israel, under His feet the likeness of a pavement of sapphire, like the very sky for purity” (Exod. 24:10) after sprinkling upon the people “the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you” (ibid., v. 8)—which some scholars view as an alternative account of the theophany at Sinai—Ezekiel, at the climax of his *merkavah* vision, sees “the semblance of throne, in appearance like sapphire” (Ezek. 1:26) and “something like a sapphire stone, an appearance resembling a throne” (ibid., 10:1). One can hardly doubt that many elements in the language of Ezekiel's vision parallel the wording of the biblical covenants concluded in the third month. It is no accident that Ezekiel's *merkavah* vision, seen by the prophet on the Festival of Weeks in the third month (according to the solar calendar tradition), is read on that very festival as the *haftarah* to accompany the Torah reading of the theophany itself.

28. For the detailed calculation, see Hayutin, *War of the Calendars*, 75.

Ezekiel's *merkavah* vision, interpreted as a prophetic-priestly tradition concerning a mystical-visionary representation of Solomon's Temple, a heavenly immortalization of the destroyed earthly sanctuary through its counterpart in the heavens, is also a mystical-visionary metamorphosis of the tradition of covenants concluded on *Shavu'ot*.

The priest-prophet brings sacred time and sacred place together in his vision, beyond the limits of time and place. Little wonder that Ezekiel's vision became the foundation of mystical thought in antiquity, and that its components became part of an intertwining of heavenly reality and mystical experience.

THE ANGELIC PRIESTHOOD AS A PARADIGM OF SACRED HEAVENLY RITUAL

Much of Apocryphal and Qumran literature emphatically reflects the belief in celestial beings that populate the heavens alongside the God of Israel, to a degree considerably beyond biblical and rabbinic perceptions. They are variously referred to as holiest of the holy ones, congregation of gods, sons of gods, sons of heaven, holy angels, chief princes, priests of the inner sanctum (*qorev*), servants of the Presence, angels of the Presence, spirits of knowledge, lords and host of angels. They perform the sacred service in the supernal *hekhalot* and are associated in many ways with the traditions of the priesthood, the Temple cult and their mythological sources.

In the literature of the secessionist priesthood and in *hekhalot* literature, which maintains the *merkavah* tradition, the angels are seen as the celestial counterparts of ideal priests who link heaven and earth and bring them closer through their sacred service, performed in a sacred place at sacred times using the sacred cultic formulas. The priests are the terrestrial counterparts of the angels.

The prophet Malachi's formulation:

for the lips of a priest guard knowledge, and men seek rulings from his mouth;
for he is an angel of the Lord of Hosts. (2:7)

is expanded with depth and detail: both angels and priests are presented as guardians of the covenant, immersing and purifying themselves, offering sacrifices, singing, reciting the *Kedushah*, preserving the tradition of divine names and blessings, renewing the covenant and attesting to the sacred time observed in heaven and earth according to the solar calendar.

We find in *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* numerous descriptions of angels officiating in the heavenly sanctuaries:

He has established among the eternally holy the holiest of the holy ones
And they have become for Him priests of the inner sanctum in His royal sanctuary
Ministers of the Presence in His glorious *devir*. (4Q400 1 I: 3-4; Newsom, 93)

The writers of this literature considered themselves to be partners of the angels, emulating their actions and obligated, therefore, to observe the strictest criteria of purity. Many works in the literature of the secessionist priesthood give poetic expression to the bonds between the Community, or the Council of the Community, and the celestial holy beings; these bonds gave the Community its name *Yahad* (together) and inspired the writer of the *Thanksgiving Scroll* in his formulation of its ideals:

You have purified man of sin
 that he may be made holy for You . . .
 that he may be one with the children of Your truth
 and partake of the lot of Your Holy Ones . . .
 that he may stand before You with the everlasting host
 and with Your spirits of Holiness
 to be renewed together with all the living
 and to rejoice together with them that know
 (1QH^aXI:10-14; Vermes, 288)

Similarly, the author of the *Community Rule*, in flowery language, describes the divine gift granted to the select ones who experience spiritual communion with the angels:

God has given them to His chosen ones
 as an eternal possession,
 and has caused them to inherit
 the lot of the Holy Ones.
 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
 (*Community Rule* XI:7-8; Vermes, 115)

The members of the Community were not content merely to experience this life in the angelic presence. They made every effort to trace the angelic origins of the priesthood, to determine the roots of the ritual partnership between priests and angels, and frequently invoked their angelic-priestly mythology.

Evidence of this may be found in the chapter of the *Book of Jubilees* referring to the priestly tribe of Levi, whose name is interpreted as meaning joined to or cleaving to God:

And he turned to Levi first and began to bless him first, and he said to him: "May the God of all, the Lord of all ages, bless you and your sons in all ages. May the Lord give you and your seed greatness and honor. May He draw you and your seed near to Him from all flesh to serve in His sanctuary as the angels of the Presence and the Holy Ones." (Jub. 31:13-14)

It is frequent in this literature to find traditions of the mutual relationship between priests and angels (*Community Rule; Thanksgiving Scroll; Testament of Levi; Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice; The Heavenly Prince Melchizedek*). In all these traditions it appears that the priestly cult underlies the descriptions of the angelic cult of the "priests of the inner sanctum who serve before the king of holiest holiness in His glorious [*devir* (?)]" (*Songs*, 4Q400 1 i:8-9; Newsom, 93):

Give thanks to God
 bless His Holy Name always
 in the Heavens and their dominion
 all the angels of the holy firmament

(4Q504 1-2 vii: 4-6)

So, underlying the depictions of the supernal *hekhalot*, is the ruined earthly *hekhal*, the Temple. Both priesthood and Temple are seen in the context of the early First Temple period, of an ideal, mythological past, not the reality of the controversial Second Temple.

Throughout the works of the secessionist priesthood, the angels constitute a source of heavenly validation (the solar calendar is delivered to Enoch by the angels, and the *Book of Jubilees* is dictated to Moses by the Angel of the Presence, like other works of this literature which are alleged to derive from angelic revelation); the angels are the heavenly witnesses to the covenant, corresponding to the priests who are its earthly witnesses; the angels are the priests' partners in affirming the mythical-mystical belief in the existence of open channels between heaven and earth, through which angels and priests ascend and descend. Frequently, the angels are described as present in the writers' mind, time and place, as evidenced by the Qumran sectaries' strict rules of purity and impurity: "for the Angels of Holiness are in their midst" (*Damascus Covenant XV*; Vermes, 137).

Similarly, in the *War Scroll*, describing a war in which the Sons of Light on earth will cooperate with the Sons of Light in heaven: "You will muster the hosts of Your elect . . . with Your Holy Ones and with all Your angels" (*War Scroll XII:4*, Vermes, 175), or "congregation of gods and community of men" (*ibid.*, II:10), the angelic presence in the community is explicitly marked and is presented as the motive for the sect's laws of ablution and purification. This position is also known from the sect's self-definition and from the liturgical partnership between heavenly and terrestrial denizens:

You have cleansed a perverse spirit of great sin
 that it may stand with the host of the Holy Ones,
 and that it may enter into community with the congregation of the Sons of Heaven.
 You have allotted to man an everlasting destiny amidst the spirits of knowledge
 that he may praise Your Name in a common rejoicing

(*Thanksgiving Scroll III: 22-23*; Vermes, 261)

One might say that the angels, perceived in this way as the source of holiness and revelation, the fount of authority and tradition, and the keepers of the calendar and the covenants in the mythological past, when there were no barriers between heaven and earth, were the promise of potency for those who were vulnerable in the earthly present. They were also the promise of an eschatological future in which, once again, such barriers would disappear, the sacred order of priests and angels, guardians of the covenant and the testimony, would be established and evil would be obliterated.

To the degree that the present and its chaotic nature aroused growing consternation, that the arbitrary behavior of the ruling authorities and their usurpation of the legitimate control of time and place provoked increasing anger, that the polemics over the traditions and order of ritual became more acrid—to the same degree, there was a greater inclination to rely on celestial beings as the source of authority, validity and confirmation for the true order of things, transcending the limits of time and place. The angels in this literature attest to an eternal, metahistorical order, to a series of covenants between heaven and earth and a reality beyond the bounds of terrestrial existence and its arbitrary, chaotic character. They express the link between beginning and end, which is at variance with an alienated reality; they embody the continuity of ritual in the heavenly sanctuary, testifying to the source of the priestly cult and perpetuating the true sacred service.

The members of the Community, engaged in a constant endeavor to restore traditional authority and its strictures here on earth, imagined themselves as living in a heavenly world together with the angels. They constructed for themselves an alternative, mythological-mystical world in which the cult, thus derived from angelic revelation, was practiced together with the celestial beings. Experiencing in their minds the immediate presence of the angels, sensing the existence of celestial beings all around them, they created the angels in a priestly image, with the number seven—the profound mark of identity between sacred time and sacred place—becoming the characteristic feature of the angels/priests participating in the sacred service.

The *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* abound in exquisite descriptions of the priestly angels performing the sacred service in the seven supernal *hekhhalot*, forming groups of seven as they worship each Sabbath (every seventh day):

And every statute they confirm to the seven eternal councils; for He established them for Himself as the holiest of the holiest of the holy ones who serve in the holy of holies. (ibid., 4Q400 1 i:7-8; Newsom, 93)

The “priests of the inner sanctum who serve before the king of holiest holiness,” who serve in the “lofty heavens,” are “the seven chief priests,” “seven deputy princes” and “seven priests of the inner sanctum,” who officiate in roles equivalent to those of the priests in the earthly Temple: “The seventh among the chief princes will bless in the name of His holiness”;

"the seventh among the deputy princes" will bless "seven times with seven words of wondrous exaltations." The heavenly priest utters his words of praise and exaltation together with the angels, who offer sacrifices and accompany them with the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, voicing their paeans of praise in recurring patterns of seven.

The explicit descriptions of the angels often resort to terms generally used for the earthly Temple servants: "priests of the lofty heavens who draw near," "ministers of the Presence in His glorious *devis*," "priests of the inner sanctum who serve before the king"; "He established for Himself priests of the inner sanctum, the holiest of the holy ones." Sometimes the description refers more clearly to the angels, again in a sevenfold pattern, as in the account of Levi's vision in the *Testaments of the Twelve Tribes*:

And we left there and came to Bethel. There again I saw the vision as formerly, after we had been there seventy days. And I saw seven men in white clothing, who were saying to me, "Arise, put on the vestments of the priesthood, the crown of righteousness, the oracle of understanding . . . and the *ephod* of prophetic power." Each carried one of these [seven garments] and put them on me and said, "From now on be a priest, you and all your posterity." (T. Levi 8:1-3)

But the most explicit sevenfold characterization of the mystical priestly song, with its depiction of the heavenly priesthood and angelic praise, is to be found in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, which are concerned with the burnt offerings (sacrifices) offered "each and every Sabbath" (Num. 28:10) and are arranged according to the liturgical calendar of thirteen-Sabbath cycles.

These poems, which establish a liturgical link between heavenly hosts and mortal worshippers, speak of series of seven declarations of divine praise, or seven benedictory formulas, uttered in a sevenfold order, varying from Sabbath to Sabbath, by seven celebrants in the seven supernal *hekhalot*:

Psalm of exaltation by the tongue of the third of the chief princes, he will exalt the God of the lofty angels seven times with seven words of wondrous exaltations.

Psalm of exaltation by the tongue of the fourth to the Warrior who is above all heavenly beings with its seven wondrous powers; and he will praise the God of power seven times with seven words of wondrous praise.

Psalm of thanksgiving by the tongue of the fifth to the King of Glory with its seven wondrous thanksgivings; he will give thanks to the God of glory seven times with seven words of wondrous thanksgivings. . . .

Psalm of praise-song by the tongue of the seventh of the chief princes, a mighty praise-song to the God of holiness with its seven wondrous praise-songs. And he will sing praise to the King of holiness seven times with seven words of wondrous praise-song. (4Q403 1 i:1-7; Newsom, 193)

The language of the angels, with its ceremonial proclamations and seven-fold liturgical formulas, is rich in expressions that interpret the sounds of heavenly praise (as mentioned in Ezek. 1:24; 3:12-13; Psalms), creating a numinous grandeur: "seven times with seven words of wondrous exaltation"; "seven times with seven words of wondrous praise"; and dozens of further expressions of this kind, all part of the praises uttered by the angels in their supernal priestly role, performing the sacred service each Sabbath in the seven supernal *hekhalot*, associated closely with the *devir* and the *merkavah*. In the imagination of the secessionist priests, who linked the seventh part of sacred time with the seventh part of sacred place, these became seven sanctuaries, seven *devirim*, seven throne-chariots and seven priesthoods, all proclaiming their praises in the upper worlds and described in mystical terms: "loftiness, seven wondrous territories according to the ordinances of His sanctuaries," "they will give thanks to the God of glory seven times," "the seven *devirim* of the priesthoods," "seven priesthoods in the wondrous sanctuary for the seven holy councils," "His glorious chariots . . . which move continuously with the glory of the wondrous chariots";

And there is a voice of blessing from the chiefs of His *devir*. . .

And the crafted furnishings of the *devir* hasten with wondrous psalms in the *devir* of wonder, *devir* to *devir* with the sound of holy multitudes.

And all their crafted furnishings . . . and the chariots of His *devir* give praise together,

And their *cherubim* and their *ophanim* bless wondrously the chiefs of the divine structure. And they praise Him in His holy *devir*. (4Q403 1 ii:11-16; Newsom, 229)

Concepts of sacred space, transported from the Temple and incorporated in a personified seven-fold structure in heaven, are combined with the sacred ritual of the angels, who celebrate sacred time with *the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, likewise structured in seven-fold liturgical patterns. This juxtaposition creates a new, mystical chronotopy imbued with the number seven, which is a characteristic trait of the secessionist priesthood's writings. At the different stages of the mystical priestly tradition one finds varied depictions of the celestial beings, described in various seven-based liturgical contexts, such as "seven angelic councils, seven *cherubim* and seven six-winged beings, having but one voice and singing in unison" (2En. 19:6-7). One could further multiply quotations describing the angelic liturgy and supernal ritual in relation to sevenfold structure and the recitation of the *Kedushah*; it seems clear, however, that the climax of this trend occurs in *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, which unite the septuples of time, place and ritual around metaphors relating to the *merkavah*.

If the angels, the heavenly counterparts of the priests, were modeled in this literature on the priests and the sacred service in the Temple, the Qumran priests thought of themselves in relation to the High Priesthood of the First Temple, as described in the prophecies of the prophet-priest Ezekiel. Chapters 40–48 of the book of Ezekiel render a detailed blueprint for the future Temple and the priesthood which, like the *merkavah* vision, constitute a visionary metamorphosis of the destroyed Temple and its interrupted ritual. These accounts assign an exceptional role to the Zadokite priests, the most distinguished of the priestly families, who traced their lineage to Zadok the priest, who carried the Ark of the Lord in David's time and anointed his son Solomon king of Israel (II Sam. 15:24–28; I Kings 1:34–45; etc.). The Zadokite priests embody the ideal tradition of the High Priests from the earliest days of the First Temple—the Temple associated with the Davidic kingdom and Solomon's Temple; but they also represent the future, utopian priesthood, destined to continue the sacred work of the High-Priestly line:

for the priests who perform the duties of the altar—they are the descendants of Zadok, who alone of the descendants of Levi may approach the Lord to minister to Him. (Ezek. 40:46)

You shall give to the levitical priests who are the progeny of Zadok, and so eligible to minister to Me—declares the Lord God. (ibid., 43:19)

But the levitical priests descended from Zadok, who maintained the service of My sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from Me—they shall approach Me to minister to Me; they will stand before Me to offer Me fat and blood—declares the Lord God. They alone may enter My sanctuary and they alone shall approach My table to minister to Me; and they shall keep My charge. And when they enter the gates of the inner court, they shall wear linen vestments. . . . They shall declare to My people what is sacred and what is profane, and inform them what is clean and what is unclean. . . . They shall preserve My teachings and My laws regarding all My festivals; and they shall maintain the sanctity of My Sabbaths. . . . This shall be their portion, for I am their portion; and no holding shall be given them in Israel, for I am their holding. (ibid., 44:15–28)

This elect status of the Zadokite priests, the guardians of the sacred service, of the covenants and the commandments, of the Sabbaths and the festivals in Ezekiel's vision, left a deep imprint as an archetypal ideal for Qumran sectaries. The latter saw themselves as the guardians of the ways of truth and righteousness, of the commandments and the covenants, of the tradition of the calendar and the Temple, Sabbaths and festivals. Tracing their lineage back to the historical Zadokite priests, they referred to themselves as such—thus expressing their commitment to the sacred traditions of the High Priesthood of the First Temple and of the Davidic monarchy, and to the priests who would minister in the holy Temple in the eschatological future.

The description of the future status of the priests in Ezekiel's Temple vision was associated with the sacred service that would, in the future, be conducted in the Temple after the expulsion of all impure, wicked priests, leaving only the true guardians of the sacred service—the "priests, sons of Zadok." In regard to the sins of the priests who had defiled the sanctuary, Ezekiel prophesied toward the end of the First Temple period:

Her priests have violated My teaching: they have profaned what is sacred to Me, they have not distinguished between the sacred and the profane, they have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have closed their eyes to my Sabbaths. I am profaned in their midst." (ibid., 22:26)

The polemical thrust of Ezekiel's prophecy awoke a profound echo in the secessionist priests who considered themselves to be the descendants of the Zadokite line, their rightful place in the sacred service unlawfully usurped by the Hasmoneans who had wrested the High Priesthood from them and defiled the Temple.

Against the men of evil, the secessionist priests were a sacred community which lived a communal life, maintained the heritage of the Teacher of Righteousness and followed the lead of the Zadokite priests:

And this is the Rule for the men of the Community who have freely pledged themselves to be converted from all evil and to cling to all His commandments according to His will. They shall separate from the congregation of the men of injustice and shall unite, with respect to the Law and possessions, under the authority of the sons of Zadok, the Priests who keep the Covenant. (*Community Rule* V:1-3; Vermes, 103)

The Community defined its identity as follows:

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. They shall be witnesses to the truth at the Judgment, and shall be the elect of Goodwill who shall atone for the land. (*Community Rule* VIII:5-10; Vermes, 109)

In conjunction with this definition, the *Rule* states that whoever joined the sect took an oath to observe the Law of Moses as revealed to the priests of the Community, that is, the sons of Zadok:

Whoever approaches the Council of the Community shall enter the Covenant of God in the presence of all who have freely pledged themselves. He shall undertake by a binding oath to return with all his heart and soul to every commandment of the Law of Moses in accordance with all that has been revealed of it to the sons of Zadok, the Priests, keepers of the Covenant and seekers of His will. (*Community Rule*, V:8-10; Vermes, 104)

Or:

This is the rule for all the Congregation of Israel in the last days, when they shall join the community to walk according to the law of the sons of Zadok, the Priests. (*Rule of the Congregation* I:1-2; Vermes, 157)

The *Damascus Covenant* explicitly refers to the link with Ezekiel:

As God ordained for them by the hand of the prophet Ezekiel, saying, "But the levitical priests descended from Zadok, who maintained the service of My sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from Me" . . . The sons of Zadok are the elect of Israel, the men called by name who shall stand at the end of days. (*Damascus Covenant* IV:3-4; Vermes, 129-30)

The *Rule of Blessings* contains a special benediction for the sons of Zadok, opening as follows:

Words of blessing by the *M[askil]* to bless] the sons of Zadok the Priests, whom God has chosen to confirm His Covenant forever, and to inquire into all His precepts in the midst of His people, and to instruct them as He commanded; who have established [His Covenant] on truth and watched over all His laws with righteousness . . .

May the Lord bless you from His holy abode;
 May He set you as a splendid jewel in the midst of the Congregation of Holy Ones;
 May He renew for you the Covenant of His priesthood
 May He sanctify you for the Council of Holiness.

(*Rule of Blessings* III:22-27; Vermes, 375)

Significantly, both the biblical term "sons of Zadok," assigned a special position in the book of Ezekiel and of great influence in Qumran literature, and the term "varieties of *merkavah*," in reference to the vision of Ezekiel, occur in the Hebrew book of the priest Ben Sira in its description of the sacred service and the High Priesthood around the year 180 B.C.E.

* * *

The advocates of these secessionist views defined those who identified with them as "knowers of righteousness," "those who enter the covenant," "the plantation of righteousness" or "those called by name"; their opponents were branded as "a congregation of traitors who stray from the way" and "violators of the covenant." Their poetry referred to the profound gulf in heaven and on earth between "the destiny of light" and "the destiny of darkness," while exulting in their own good fortune:

You have created us for Yourself, O God, that we may be an everlasting people.
 You have decreed for us a destiny of light according to Your truth.

And the Prince of Light You have appointed from ancient times
 to come to our support;
 all the sons of righteousness are in his hand,
 and all the spirits of truth are under his dominion.
 It also denounced their enemies:

But Belial, the Angel of Malevolence, You have created for the Pit;
 his rule is in darkness and his purpose is to bring about wickedness and iniquity.
 All the spirits of his destiny, the Angels of Destruction,
 walk according to the precepts of darkness; toward it is their urge together.

(*War of the Sons of Light* XIII: 9–12; Vermes, 177;
 compare *Community Rule* III:3–30)

Those who shared these views were identified—in their own eyes—as “the priests, sons of Zadok,” led by a “Priest of Righteousness” or “Teacher of Righteousness”; their opponents were defined as “men of iniquity,” controlled by “the priest of wickedness.” They described themselves as Sons of Light, adherents of the solar calendar, in contrast to the Sons of Darkness, who followed the lunar calendar; such differences reflect in various ways the struggle over the sacred tradition of Temple ritual as against the defiled tradition then in practice.

The apocryphal and Qumran literatures gave rich expression to these conceptions in works relating to such subjects as the heavenly *hekhal*, the *merkavah*, mystical liturgy, ascent to heaven and the Enoch tradition, the solar calendar and the angelic priesthood. Rabbinic tradition, however, almost completely rejected such elements. The sages rejected the priestly solar calendar with its reliance on a rigidly fixed, celestial structure, choosing instead the lunar calendar, based on variable human decisions. Opposed to secessionism and sectarianism, they denied that a person’s worth could depend on that person’s birth: “All Israel have a part in the World to Come”—not only the Sons of Light, the elect, the righteous or the select priests who derive their authority from angelic revelation or “heavenly tablets.” Small wonder, then, that the mainstream tradition suppressed the figure of Enoch, and ignored or actively rejected the Enoch literature, the *Book of Jubilees* and Qumran literature.²⁹

Rabbinic tradition, which held that direct divine communication with man had ceased, that Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were the last prophets, took sharp exception to persons who claimed to be privy to the holy spirit, to have contact with angels and heavenly voices or with any other kind of continuous divine revelation after the destruction of the Temple. The Torah had achieved its final formulation, and not one letter could be altered; but the

29. On the attitude of the sages toward mystical lore and other priestly traditions, see Cohen; Lieberman; Schwartz, “Sages and Priests”; Urbach, *Sages*, “Traditions.”

canonized, sacred text was open to autonomous, human interpretation. Such interpretation was the right of the entire body of students of the law, based on human, earthly reason, on strict separation between the heavenly and the earthly realms—"for it is not in heaven."

Rabbinic tradition denied the legitimacy of all contrary traditions relying on continued divine revelation or on "heavenly tablets"; it opposed those circles that continued to write books inspired by the holy spirit or by angels, circles that claimed access to renewed prophetic vision or mythological priestly authority. All such deviant traditions were therefore suppressed, and works written on their basis were rejected, suppressed or withdrawn from circulation and from public study and teaching.

Attempts to exclude the book of Ezekiel from the canon, by reason of its different priestly and sacrificial laws (ch. 40-48), which seem to contradict the Torah, or by reason of the danger inherent in studying Ezekiel's *merkavah* vision (B.T., Hag. 13a), may also be associated with that prophet's central position in the world of the secessionist priesthood, which considered itself descended from the Zadokite priests and hallowed the *merkavah* tradition:

That man should be remembered with favor, his name being Hananiah son of Hezekiah, for were it not for him, the book of Ezekiel would have been suppressed and withdrawn, as its teachings contradict those of the Torah. What did he do? They brought him 300 cannikins of oil, and he sat in the attic and expounded upon the texts [through the night]. (B.T., Shab. 13b)

Detailed priestly teachings, such as the *Temple Scroll*, *Damascus Covenant* and *Mikzat Ma'asei Torah*, and mystical priestly liturgy, such as *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, all drawing from Ezekiel's *merkavah* or from his vision of the future Temple and priestly laws, were barred from the canon. These controversies most probably had both direct and indirect influence on the rabbinic proscription: "One must not expound on the *merkavah*" (Mishnah, Hag. 11:12).

This mention of the *merkavah* evidently refers to Ezekiel's vision, the basic element of the perception of sacred place and sacred ritual in the literature of the secessionist priesthood, which differed sharply from standard rabbinic perceptions in regard to such questions as the sanctity and legitimacy of the priesthood, the times of the festivals and a host of other legal and ritual problems.

Given the vehemence of the opposition, it is not surprising that the circles of sages and Pharisees who shaped tradition after the destruction of the Second Temple rejected the literature that had been written and sanctified by the secessionist priesthood or, at the very least, ignored it. (The rejection was not absolutely effective, as vestiges of the literature may be found in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* and in the Midrash.) This literature was written mostly

during the Hasmonean period, in the last centuries B.C.E., in a spirit of opposition and challenge to the contemporary Temple ritual and the priests of the Hasmonean dynasty who ministered in the Temple. While written and edited by a variety of groups, so that it developed in different directions, it maintains several basic, typical identifying features that recur in all its works, features which might be seen as opposed to rabbinic tradition.

This opposition is quite clearly no accident, for even if we do not know whether—and if so, to what degree—the sages were acquainted with the secessionist literature, it seems obvious that what they considered in a negative light and prohibited was considered favorably as a subject for discussion in the deviant priestly literature: the *merkavah* (i.e., the heavenly throne-chariot); *Ma'aseh Bereshit*, the act of Creation (i.e., the totality of cosmological phenomena that linked the sanctity of time with the sanctity of place and ritual in a sevenfold system); and *'arayot* (incest), the forbidden sexual unions (i.e., the sins of the Watchers [*'irin*—the roots of these words share two consonants), who tried to set aside the barriers between the upper and lower realms, this being considered the sinful origin of the lunar calendar.

There may have been many other reasons for the suppression of this apocryphal literature; moreover, we do not know whether the process was deliberate, aimed at reinforcing the biblical canon, or fortuitous; whatever the case, there is no denying the sharply polar relationship between it and rabbinic positions. The sages strengthened the barriers between heaven and earth; between works written with divine inspiration and those written after the termination of prophecy; between the canonized Torah and the ongoing composition of Torah under the influence of the holy spirit; between angels and humans, between heavenly voices and earthly responsibility; between the determinism of metahistorical myth and the laws of nature, on one hand, and history and variable human determination, on the other; between divine eternity and human time. The secessionist priestly literature represented a diametrically opposite view to that of the sages.

One can identify in these oppositional texts, written at different times and in different places—but by persons sharing a well-defined, common identity—almost a dozen characteristics that define them as a single literary body from the standpoint of self-definition, fields of interest, polemical thrust and identification. The almost symmetric opposites of these characteristics can be traced in rabbinic tradition.

1. Many of these works prominently feature the belief in ongoing divine revelation to the elect, with an emphasis on angelic revelation at different times: in the antediluvian era, from the patriarchal period until the theophany at Mount Sinai, and in the time of the Teacher of Righteousness and the writers of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*. This belief is obvious in the description of the leader of the Community: "Interpreted, this concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God made known all the mysteries of

the words of His servants the prophets" (*Commentary on Habbakuk*, VII:4-5; Vermes, 481; and cf. *ibid.*, II:8-10).

2. Such divine revelations provide renewed justification for and validation of freedom to extend the biblical text by adding further works under the influence of the holy spirit, by prophetic inspiration or angelic dictation, and for the canonization of such works on a par with the Bible. It would appear that, for the secessionist priesthood, the Bible was never finalized—contrary to the position of rabbinic circles, who considered the divinely revealed and canonized text of the Scriptures a closed body to which nothing could be added and from which nothing could be removed (although the controversy over Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs and Ezekiel continued at least until the mid-second century C.E.) (*Mishnah*, *Yad*. 3:5).

In addition, the rabbinic view was that prophecy had ceased after the period of the Restoration: "Since the death of the last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the Holy Spirit has abandoned Israel" (*Yoma* 9b; *Tos. Sot.* 13:2). Direct divine communication with humanity, which had been common in biblical times, was discontinued:

Hitherto [before the arrival of Alexander the Great] prophets would prophecy in the Holy Spirit; from now on, "Incline your ear and listen to the words of the sages" [*Prov* 22:17]. (*Seder Olam Rabbah* 30)

Some rabbinical literary traditions hold that there had been no prophets in Israel since the destruction of the First Temple (*Bava Batra* 12a-b), or that the Holy Spirit was one of five things that had been present in the First Temple but not in the Second (*Yoma* 21b)—and without the Holy Spirit there could be no prophecy.

3. There is freedom to retell the biblical story, invoking an alternative principle based on angelic revelation, primeval authority—as in the *Book of Jubilees*, which sets out a historical account differing from that of Genesis, reckoned by Jubilees and weeks of years; or in the book of Enoch, which retells a considerable part of Genesis—or divinely inspired exegesis (as against the rabbinic position, which permitted fragmented interpretations and aggadic Midrash relating to isolated words and verses, based on authority derived from the oral law or human logic; but never allowed a total alternative version of the Bible laying claim to heavenly authority, divinely inspired exegesis or angelic revelation).

4. In many of these works one detects a particular interest in the mythical-mystical elevation of human beings to supernal realms, whether in a waking or dreaming state; and, conversely, in the descent of angels to the earthly world, in past, present and future. Throughout its pages, one finds angels fulfilling a central, participatory role in ritual, ranging from the angels in Enoch and the *Book of Jubilees* to the "priests of the inner sanctum" in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (contrary to the down-to-earth view of the

sages, who limited the role of angels and frowned on discussions of them; witness the absence of angels from the Mishnah).

5. Secret knowledge or lore is a characteristic feature of accounts of angels, who are referred to as "godlike beings of knowledge," "angels of knowledge," "those who know," "singers of knowledge," "those who establish knowledge" and the like. The authors of this whole body of literature (or their protagonists) constantly invoke heavenly knowledge and angelic authority, which is revealed to persons considered worthy of mystical access to the heavenly *hekhalot* and to which such persons bear witness. (This is contrary to the rabbinic view, which refused to recognize heavenly lore as possessing prior authority in earthly polemics, as manifested in the famous story of the oven of Achnai.)

6. Much attention is devoted to the divine visions revealed to those ascending to heaven, reflecting the eternal cosmic order and its sevenfold structure. (The sages, on the other hand, employ indirect language in referring to "entry into the *pardes*" and forbid public teaching of *Ma'aseh Merkavah*.)

7. Considerable prominence is given to the seventh patriarch of the universe, Enoch, son of Jared, to whom were revealed, in a mystical trance, the secrets of the solar calendar and sevenfold cosmic time, the deterministic progressions of metahistory, advancing in Jubilees and ages as engraved on the heavenly tablets, from beginning to end. (Contrast this with the rabbinic attitude belittling Enoch and portraying him in a negative light; *Genesis Rabba* 25:1).

8. The totality of existence is preordained in light of the schematization of divine time. This determinism, linking Creation and its eternal laws with the progress and predetermined events of metahistory, is aimed at eliminating the arbitrary, chaotic, meaningless and hopeless nature of existence, creating instead a pattern of order and meaning, destiny and mission. Earthly and heavenly are thus interlinked through eternal testimony, and divine justice is ensured.

9. The literature of the secessionist priests emphatically favors the solar calendar over the lunar, attesting to a struggle to establish a festival calendar other than that observed in the Temple. Paramount importance attaches to the number seven and all its derivatives: the seven days of the week, Sabbath, sabbatical year, Jubilee, seven weeks of years and *Shavu'ot*, the Festival of Weeks—sevenfold units that establish an eternal cosmic order, a predetermined march of history, imprinted upon nature since the seven days of Creation. The permanent schematization of time based on divine sevenfold structure shapes both the ritual calendar and the sect's deterministic historical outlook, according to which the future is foreordained in conformity with the past; there is no free choice (contrary to the rabbinic doctrine that "Everything is foreseen, but freedom of choice is given" [Avot 3:15]).

The calendar, like the law and the ritual, was derived from a sacred, divine source; like them, it reflected an eternal order, unchangeable by humans, an order strictly maintained and correlated with a system of divine covenants, perpetuated in the heavenly tablets and celebrated at set times in heaven and on earth, observed by angels and priests (contrary to rabbinic tradition according to which the calendar and the law were both subject to human reason).

10. In view of the above, this literature attaches major importance to the divine origin of the priesthood and its connection with the angelic ritual. It takes a special interest in the guardians of the covenant, the tribe of Levi, the sons of Aaron and in particular the Zadokite priests, the ancestors of the High Priests of First Temple times, who kept the true tradition of Sabbaths and festivals and continued the antediluvian priestly traditions—Enoch, Noah and Melchizedek. (This stress on holy lineage, endowing the priests with sanctity as an inborn trait, and on divine law conferring the exclusive privilege of approaching the holy, ran counter to the rabbinic position, according to which anyone participating in study of the Law could lay claim to the “crown of Torah,” regardless of descent.)

It also concerns itself intensively with the mythological origins of the priesthood prior to the tribe of Levi: the priestly traditions relating to Enoch, the seventh of the ancients, the father of the antediluvian High Priesthood, and to his descendants, the founders of the sacrificial ritual: Methuselah, Melchizedek and Noah, who create the link between angelic myth, divine covenant and the eternity of the laws of nature. (Rabbinic tradition rejected or disparaged this literature.)

11. Other topics that occur repeatedly are the tradition of the *merkavah* and the Temple ritual, the idea of a heavenly Temple containing seven firmaments, seven *hekhalot*, seven *merkavot* and seven *devirim* (contrary to the rabbinic view, which frowned on study of the *merkavah*). The *merkavah* tradition—and together with it the Festival of Weeks; the perception of the heavens as possessing a sevenfold structure; the idea of angelic participation in the cult, in the chanting of the *Kedushah* together with the angels, and in sevenfold harmonies of “seven wondrous words” sung by “seven chief princes” in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*—was associated with the book of Ezekiel, the scriptural work that the sages had at one time intended to exclude from the canon, and with the controversial time of the *Shavu'ot* festival.

Alongside such mythical and mystical ideas, which envisage channels of free access between heaven and earth, the heavens as sacred sanctuaries where the angels officiate, one also finds in these works legal material: harsh priestly laws pertaining to cultic matters, to unknown relationships between the solar calendar and the reasons for the commandments and the festivals. Throughout this material one senses a strenuous effort to reduce to a minimum the historical, event-bound nature of the festivals, to place them as

far as possible in the context of the seven days of Creation, the cycle of nature and the agricultural-cultic year.

The common denominator of all works in the secessionist priestly literature is the challenge offered to the prevalent world view of their time and place in everything connected with religion, Temple and cult, calendar, Sabbaths and festivals, purity and impurity, everyday human behavior and regulation of access to the Temple and the cult. Presenting a typically priestly orientation and an extreme oppositional position to the ruling priesthood, these works expounded a sweeping alternative deriving, on one hand, from a different cultic tradition, a comprehensive dualist position, unique socio-religious views, and legal arguments, and on the other hand, from postulates resting on a mythological, mystical and prophetic basis.

The literature of the priestly opposition was doomed to "concealment," to oblivion and suppression, not only because of questions relating to the source of authority and the legitimacy of one tradition or another—such questions could be debated—but primarily because it adopted an exclusive position according to which the absolute truth was the sole legacy of a select group of Sons of Light. Any other world view was rejected out of hand and its believers condemned as Sons of Darkness, doomed to destruction in this world and the next; while the opposing tradition, the butt of its polemics, defined itself from the start by the all-inclusive declaration: "All Israel have a part in the World to Come" (Mishnah, Sanh. 10:1).

* * *

The third, later stage in the history of the mystical tradition was the creation of the *hekhlot* and *merkavah* literature by other priestly circles, deprived by the destruction of the Second Temple of the focus of earthly ritual and unable to perform the sacred service. These circles, in whose works one discerns a definite affinity with the traditions of the secessionist priesthood, neutralized the oppositional disposition of the latter's doctrines which were concerned with a terrestrial polemic that had lost its import with the destruction of the Temple and the cessation of the sacred service. What they preserved was the mystical element, the doctrine of divine truths which were now brought into play in order to perpetuate the Temple and its ritual.

The mystical nature of *hekhlot* literature is reflected in its concern with such topics as the *merkavah* tradition, the seven supernal *hekhlot* and angelic priesthood, the Enoch traditions, the sevenfold configurations, angelic song and heavenly thanksgiving, and with ceremonies in which the *Kedushah* is recited and divine Names invoked. The authors took over these traditions, which had developed from Ezekiel's vision of sacred place and sacred ritual, and from the Enoch tradition of the sevenfold organization of sacred time; the next stage of this development was manifested in *hekhlot* and *merkavah* literature.

This literature, transforming the ruined Temple into seven heavenly Temples, centering its attention on the world of the *merkavah* with its angels ministering as priests and levites, represents a mystical metamorphosis of the Temple and the priesthood in a new language, based on the previous concepts of the priestly *merkavah* tradition. The unique feature of *hekhalot* and *merkavah* tradition was that it made the heavenly *merkavah* and its seven *hekhalot* direct objects of mystical experience, targets of direct action: observation, descent, ascent, entry and departure, song and praise. Its writers referred to themselves as "descending to the *merkavah*" or "observing the *merkavah*," singing together with the angels in the supernal *hekhalot*.

The body of works known as *hekhalot* and *merkavah* literature was created in the first centuries after the destruction of the Second Temple, around the same time as the Mishnah and the Talmud. It comprises various traditions, written by authors who remain anonymous or conceal their identities in the usual manner of pseudepigrapha, although they wrote as if delivering testimony from the heavenly realms. These traditions, assigning a most important role to Enoch, ascribed many of the works concerned to two members of the second generation of *tannaim*: Rabbi Ishmael, the High Priest, who entered the innermost sanctum (after the destruction of the Temple!); and Rabbi Akiva, who "entered the *pardes*" (i.e., engaged in esoteric speculation pertaining to the heavenly sanctuaries) but emerged safely, just as the High Priest used to enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement and emerge safely. The works belonging to these traditions are *Sefer Hekhalot*, also known as the Third Book of Enoch; *Hekhalot Zutrat* and *Hekhalot Rabbati*; *Shivhei Hanokh-Metatron* and *She'ur Komah*; *Merkavah Rabbah* and *Ma'aseh Merkavah*.

The goal of this literature was to preserve and perpetuate the numinous essence of the ruined Temple and the sacred service of old, by mystically transforming them into the heavenly *hekhalot* and angelic service. This new goal was incorporated into, or combined with, the mystical conceptions of "descending to the *merkavah*," "entering the *pardes*," "ascending to the *hekhalot*" and "entering the innermost sanctum," all expressions implying a freedom of access between heaven and earth. *hekhalot* literature was profoundly influenced by the earlier priestly-mystical traditions associated with Ezekiel's vision, the heavenly Temple, the participation of angelic priests in the ritual, the angelic-liturgical tradition of *Kedushah*, the various phases of the Enoch tradition, and the ritual and liturgical visionary traditions associated with the divine names, with the divine "dimensions" and visible and hidden manifestations of God as portrayed in *She'ur Komah*.

As their central heavenly protagonist the authors of the *hekhalot* literature chose the hero of the ancient mystical priestly tradition, Enoch son of Jared, giving him the additional name *Metatron* and describing him as a heavenly High Priest, ministering in the supernal *hekhalot* and bearing testimony to the secrets of the heavenly world. At his side were two

terrestrial figures, Rabbi Ishmael the High Priest, doubling for Aaron the priest, and Rabbi Akiva, who entered the *pardes* and was seen as the counterpart of Moses, who ascended to heaven.

Rabbi Ishmael the High Priest was said in the Babylonian Talmud (Ber. 7a) to have “entered the innermost sanctum” where he offered incense, saw Akatriel Jah the Lord of Hosts and blessed Him—this at a time when the Temple no longer existed—and he is referred to similarly in *Hekhalot Rabbati*, where he “offers up a burnt offering on the altar,” sees and blesses (*Synopse*, sec. 151).

In the minds of the authors of *hekhalot* literature, it was as if Rabbi Ishmael was the last representative of the dynasty of earthly high priests, a continuous line from Aaron to the destruction, and the first representative of the mystical priestly dynasty of “descenders to the *merkavah*.” When he enters “the innermost sanctum,” which is equivalent to “descent to the *merkavah*” and to “ascent to the seven supernal *hekhalot*,” Rabbi Ishmael meets Enoch, who shows him the heavenly world of the *merkavah*, teaches him the angelic song and allows him to participate in the sacred service perpetuated in those upper realms. The opening section of *Sefer Hekhalot*—thought to be the latest work of this literature—attests to the conceptual continuity between the *merkavah* tradition created after the destruction of the First Temple, the supposed desecration of the Second Temple in the minds of the secessionist priesthood, and the *merkavah* tradition that emerged after the destruction of the Second Temple:

“Enoch walked with God. Then he was no more, for God took him.” Said Rabbi Ishmael: When I ascended on high to look and observe the *merkavah*, I would enter six *hekhalot*, room within room, and upon reaching the entrance of the seventh *hekhal* I stood in prayer. . . . And I said: Sovereign of the Universe, I beg of You to grant me at this time the merit of Aaron son of Amram . . . who received the crown of priesthood before Your glory on Mount Sinai. . . . Forthwith He brought me [Enoch] Metatron His servant, the Prince of the Countenance. . . . And he said to me: Come in peace, for you have been found worthy before the most lofty King to gaze upon the pattern of the *merkavah*. Thereupon I entered the seventh *hekhal*. (*Synopse*, sec. 1)

Rabbi Ishmael’s partner, Rabbi Akiva, is associated in *hekhalot* literature with the figure of Moses (who ascended to the heavens). He, too, is referred to in the context of a mystical ascent to the supernal worlds, of entry into the *pardes*—the relevant account is phrased in the same terms as entry into the Holy of Holies and safe emergence from it. He thereby perpetuates the prophetic archetype of ascent to heaven to hear the Lord’s words and to receive a new Torah. Thus, *hekhalot* tradition sees Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Ishmael as mystical counterparts of Moses and Aaron. The first plays the role of the prophet, the man of God, capable of direct contact with the deity and of hearing and seeing heavenly secrets; the second is the priest, perpetuating

the Aaronide dynasty and hence charged with creating the ritual translation of the heavenly laws and secrets, imparting them to man, remembering and protecting them.

The authors of *hekhalot* literature attached much importance to the mystical apotheosis of ascent to the heavens or, as they called it, "descent to the *merkavah*," and to the tradition of Enoch being taken up into heaven, becoming an angel and creating a bridge between the angels and the "descenders to the *merkavah*." Of crucial significance, in their view, were the *Kedushah* recited in the supernal *hekhalot* by the angels and the prayers recited on earth in parallel, as well as the various sevenfold elements relating to the priesthood and the Temple, to the *hekhalot* and the angels, to the sacred songs and the divine names—all bound up inherently with the mystical metamorphosis of the Temple rites and in combination providing a heavenly alternative to the ruined earthly Temple. The liturgical tradition in this literature, describing the rites performed in cooperation with the angels, the *Kedushah* and the *merkavah* song, is intimately connected with the priestly traditions of angelic ritual and with the ancient *merkavah* traditions.

I have dealt elsewhere with the mystical nature of *hekhalot* literature and its close relationship with priesthood, Temple, sacred song and the angelic world.³⁰ Here, to demonstrate the basic continuity between the three stages of mystical priestly tradition and its derivation from the *merkavah* tradition, I shall present one example of the conceptual transformation involved, using the notion of *ophan* (*galgal*, wheel).

The first stage in the metamorphosis of the notion of *ophan* reflects the transition from the cultic reality of First Temple times to a heavenly-visionary existence in Ezekiel's *merkavah*; the second stage is the transition in Qumran literature from Ezekiel's *merkavah* to the visionary-liturgical *merkavah* in the seven sanctuaries in heaven; and the third marks the transition from Qumran *merkavah* literature to the mystical visionary *merkavah* of *hekhalot* literature:

1. The description of Solomon's Temple in I Kings includes a cult object consisting of four threesomes of animals (twelve oxen) standing together on four bronze wheels:

Each laver stand had four bronze wheels [*ophanim*] . . . And below the insets were the four wheels . . . and the height of each wheel was a cubit and a half. The structure of the wheels was like the structure of chariot wheels; and their axletrees, their rims, their spokes and their hubs were all of cast metal. (I Kings 7:30-33)

2. In Ezekiel's vision the "wheels" undergo a mythical-visionary metamorphosis, from an inanimate cultic object to a living, heavenly entity:

. . . the figures of four creatures . . . like the luster of burnished bronze. . . . As I gazed on the creatures, I saw one wheel [*ophan*] on the ground next to each of the

30. *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (1997).

four-faced creatures. As for the appearance and structure of the wheels, they gleamed like beryl. All four had the same form; the appearance and structure of each was as of two wheels cutting through each other. . . . Their rims were tall . . . for the rims of all four were covered all over with eyes. And when the creatures moved forward, the wheels moved at their sides. . . . And when those [the creatures] were borne above the earth, the wheels were borne alongside them—for the spirit of the creatures was in the wheels. (Ezek. 1:5–8, 15–22)

I could see that there were four wheels beside the *cherubim*, one wheel beside each of the *cherubim*; as for the appearance of the wheels, they gleamed like the beryl stone. . . . And the wheels, the wheels of the four of them, were covered all over with eyes. It was these wheels that I had heard called “the wheelwork” [*galgal*] (ibid., 10:9–13)

3. Ezekiel’s vision now undergoes a mystical-liturgical metamorphosis in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, in which all parts of the *merkavah* become illuminated and personified celestial beings that sing, utter thanks and blessings inspired by the sacred service of the priests and the levites:

His glorious chariots . . . holy *cherubim*, luminous *ophanim* in the *devir* . . . spirits of godlike beings. . . .

[And the splendor] of the luminous firmament do they sing beneath His glorious seat. And when the wheels move, the holy angels return. They go out from between the *galgalim* of its glory. (*Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 306; Newsom, 4Q 405 20.)

And the chariots of his *devir* give praise together, and their *cherubim* and their *ophanim* bless wondrously. (ibid., 229)

4. Finally, *hekhhalot* literature subjects the sacred service of the *ophanim* to a mystical-ritual metamorphosis, describing it as the sacred service of the priests in the Temple as reported in the unio-mystical testimony of those who descend to the *merkavah* and stand before the throne of glory:

And in the seventh *hekhhal* there were luminous *ophanim*, sprinkling pure *epilyaton* and *epiplasmon*, and a two-fold *ophan* blowing blasts [on the ram’s horn], proclaiming: Let everyone worthy of seeing the King in His beauty enter and see. Whereupon powerful *ophanim* embrace him and glorious *cherubim* kiss him, the creatures lift him up and the brilliance dances before him and the *hashmal* sings before him . . . until they lift him up and seat him before the throne of His glory. (*Synopse*, sec. 411)

And when the time comes to sing, a tumult of *galgalim* clamoring. . . . All the angels and *degalim* (camps) dance and utter sounds, *galgal* to *galgal*, cherub to cherub, creature to creature, *ophan* to *ophan*, seraph to seraph. (*Sefer Hekhalot*, *Synopse*, sec. 30)

And the *ophanim* are all full of eyes, and all full of wings, seven wings and as many eyes as wings. (*Synopse*, sec. 40)

These quotations—but a few of many similar passages—clearly demonstrate how the physical objects of Solomon's Temple, the bronze wheels/*ophanim*, become, in Ezekiel's vision, moving visionary entities: "for the spirit of the creatures was in the wheels." In the next stage, Qumran, these same entities acquire the power of speech, blessing and singing in the priestly ritual: "their *cherubim* and their *ophanim* bless wondrously." Finally, they play an even more active role, becoming part of the mystical experience of descent to the *merkavah*: "a two-fold *ophan* blowing blasts . . . and powerful *ophanim* embrace him." These *ophanim* are present even in present-day liturgy, in the *Kedushah* prayer of *Yozer* (a part of the daily morning service) and others, though their origin in mystical Temple tradition is not always realized.

All the elements of the Temple underwent a similar metamorphosis. The *cherubim* of the Holy of Holies became the *cherubim* of the *merkavah* in Ezekiel's vision, the wondrous *cherubim* reciting blessings at Qumran and the glorious *cherubim*, kissing and embracing the "descender to the *merkavah*" and raising him to the throne of glory in the seventh *hekhal*. Thus, *merkavah* tradition readily replaces inanimate cult objects by luminous visionary entities that possess mythical qualities and heavenly liturgical essence and participate in ceremonies of thanksgiving and praise in the *hekhalot*, referring to them all with their ancient cultic name. In so doing it has essentially invoked creative imagination, the poetic power of memory embedded in language, to combine remembrance of song and sacred service in the earthly Temple, their immortalization in the visionary Temple, and the renewed experience of them in the mystical *hekhal*. What brings all these together is the remembrance of the cult recited by *cherubim* and angels, those whose roots lie in the biblical account of Solomon's Temple:

the gold for the pattern of the chariot—the *cherubim*—those with outspread wings screening the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. (I Chron. 28:18)

culminating in the description of the sacred service in the heavenly Temple inspired by Ezekiel's vision:

and the *cherubim* and the *ophanim* over against the entrance to the seventh *hekhal* . . . they utter sounds, *galgal* to *galgal*, cherub to cherub, creature to creature, ophan to ophan . . . *galgalim* exult, *cherubim* extoll, creatures bless . . . and holy *cherubim* sing a song of comfort, holy creatures utter song with the secret of their mouth . . . the holy creatures and the glorious *ophanim* and the splendid *cherubim* sanctify themselves and purify themselves, and the glorious *cherubim* kiss him, the creatures lift him up . . . until they raise him and seat him before the throne of His glory. (*Synopse*, secs. 245, 30, 593, 188, 815, 411)

Hekhalot literature, having abandoned the struggle to prove the truth of the alternative cultic tradition after the destruction of the Temple, neutralizing its secessionist, oppositional dimension, became a repository of diverse priestly traditions—mystical, liturgical and cultic—concerning the *merkavah*, the *hekhalot* and the angelic priesthood. It created a new, mystical version of the same mystical priestly traditions that had been rejected by the Hasmonean priests in the Second Temple period and were later blurred and repudiated by the sages. What was excluded from the canon and thrown out the front door came back in through the window through the efforts of a select elite; a considerable part of the secessionist priesthood's traditions, originally suppressed, re-emerged in *hekhalot* literature.

The destruction of the Second Temple neutralized the earthly controversies over the validity of the legacy of sacred time, place and cult, as the need to preserve the sacred service could be answered by assigning it to the angelic priesthood in the supernal *hekhalot*. The descenders to the *merkavah* testified to the continuity of this sacred service, conserving the living memory of the priestly ritual in its angelic version after the destruction of the Second Temple; as the no longer existent terrestrial experience receded in time, these mystics invoked all their poetic imagination and mystical inspiration, ascending in their minds' eye to the highest heavens.

The sages frowned upon these traditions, limiting their accessibility:

Three people should not study the laws of forbidden sexual relations, nor should two persons study *Ma'aseh Bereshit*, nor one person the *merkavah*, unless he is wise and understanding. (Mishnah, Hag. ch. 2)

The Talmud, however, relates that, despite these reservations—understandable, given the origins of the *merkavah* tradition and its derivatives in the circles of the priestly opposition—there were some authorities who believed that the merit of these mystical priestly traditions, concerned with the supernal worlds and immortalizing the memory of the ruined Temple and the discontinued sacred service, was sacred, in fact superior to halakhic tradition, which addressed earthly matters:

A great thing and a small thing: "A great thing" refers to *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, "a small thing" to the discussions of Abbaye and Rava. (Sukkah 28a)

The variety of traditions in the *hekhalot* and *merkavah* literature prove that many studied and observed the *merkavah*. The inclusion in the prayer book of the *Kedushah* prayer, bringing together prayers uttered on high and on earth, attests to the vigor of the mystical-liturgical memory, nurtured by the *merkavah* tradition through a thousand years of metamorphoses from the destruction of the First Temple to the finalization of the Talmud, despite complex transformations affecting the sacred service of priests and angels.

APPENDIX

We cannot state with certainty that a solar calendar was used during the First Temple period or in the early days of the Second Temple (despite the view of certain scholars that this was the case, and despite the rabbinic ruling that the day in the Temple began at sunrise, with the night being counted after the day—a typical feature of the solar calendar). The alternative is to assume that the solar calendar, so prominent in the writings of secessionist priests, was never more than a literary and mystical-mythological tradition. Still, it is worth noting that an early *barayta* relating to the Temple ritual reflects a tradition that depends essentially on the solar calendar:

Our rabbis taught: The incense was made of 368 *manehs*. Three hundred and sixty-five corresponded to the number of days in the solar calendar; of the three remaining *manehs*, the High Priest took his hands full on the Day of Atonement. (Kerit. 6a)

This prescription for making incense in the Temple is clearly in keeping with the solar calendar. It involves preparation of 368 measures of incense. Of these, 365 were meant for the daily offering: one *peras* (half a *maneh*) in the morning and one *peras* in the evening. Three further measures were earmarked for the special incense offered on the Day of Atonement—the High Priest was to take one handful for that purpose. The Day of Atonement was the final and most important day in the solar calendar of the Temple incense: it was the only day on which the High Priest entered the inner sanctum—the Holy of Holies—and offered incense there; all other days of the year incense was burned twice a day on the inner altar (Exod. 30:1–10).

The proper order for burning incense in the Holy of Holies was a known bone of contention between Pharisees and Sadducees. Besides the link with the number of days in the solar calendar, we can also point out a connection with the number seven: according to the tradition of the *Book of Jubilees*, the incense was made up of seven ingredients; it was also related to the seven days of the Festival of Tabernacles (Booths), and celebrated in the seventh month as instituted by Abraham, who celebrated it in Beersheba:

And he first observed the Feast of the Booths on the earth. And in these seven days he was making offering every day, day by day, on the altar . . . and seven lambs, one kid on behalf of sins so that he might atone thereby on behalf of himself and his seed. And for a thank offering: seven rams and seven sheep and seven lambs and seven he-goats and their (fruit) offerings and their libations and all their fat he offered. . . . And in the morning and evening he offered the fragrance of frankincense, and galbanum, and stacte, and nard, and myrrh, and spices, and costum. All seven of these he offered, crushed, mixed in equal parts and pure. . . . And Abraham took hearts [branches] of palm trees and fruit of good trees and each day of the days he used to go around the altar with branches. Seven times per day. (Jub. 16:21–31)