THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS AND LATER JEWISH MAGIC AND MYSTICISM*

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Students of the Rabbinic period who study the phenomena we call magic and mysticism have good reason to appreciate the efforts of Qumran scholars over the past five decades, as their labors have yielded palpable results for the history of Hekhalot and magical literatures. While historians of talmudic law may have to reason by analogy on how each community faced a similar legal problem, we can point to specific genres of literature found at Qumran that provide precedents for later Jewish esoteric literature. Two examples, which will be discussed below, are the well-known Angelic Liturgy and a fragment of an Aramaic magical handbook. It will be argued here that both present interesting examples of persistence and transformation.

At the same time, these fields are also plagued with two of the most vexed terms in contemporary history of religions. Both mysticism and magic are currently disputed categories, a fact recognized recently by some Qumran scholars, as will be shown below. To call ancient Jewish literature "mystical" raises serious epistemological questions regarding how we recover the inner experience of writers who do not reveal themselves explicitly. To call anything "magical" raises questions of whether our modern, rationalistic categories create an inherent bias against some sorts of discourse and activity and thereby prevent us from understanding them in their fullness.[1] Yet these problems are not

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* I would like to express my thanks to Professors Lawrence Schiffman and the other *DSD* editors, Sam Meier, and Gonzalo Rubio for their helpful references and insights.

[1] Cf. P.S. Alexander, "'Wrestling against Wickedness in High Places': Magic in the Worldview of the Qumran Community," *The Scrolls and the Scriptures: Qumran Fifty Years After* (eds S.E. Porter and C.A. Evans; JSPSup 26; Roehampton Institute London Papers 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 318, who sensibly observes that this criterion need not invalidate the term, since "the pejorative overtones of 'magic' are much stronger in rarefied academic discourse than in common speech."

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unsolvable, if we only acknowledge the heuristic and local nature of the terms in relation to our data.[2]

These issues come into focus when we understand that one of the most striking results of current Dead Sea Scrolls research is the discovery of how naturally the so-called mystical and magical elements fit into the Qumran worldview. Much of what we have related to mysticism—interest in the heavenly hosts and their praise of God—corresponds well with the principal goals of the Qumran community, to whom the prospect of "living with the angels" was an organizing principle. Likewise, much of what we think of as magical in the Dead Sea Scrolls—discourse on demons and esoteric forms of divination—fits in well with the way of life reflected in the scrolls and was part of the larger cultural environment. L.H. Schiffman has remarked that "magical traditions of the kind we find in later Jewish materials were already part of Jewish religious life in the second temple period and that attempts to seek outside influence on this tradition must deal with the early presence of these teachings."[3] Recently P.S. Alexander has shown how the demonology and divination systems at Qumran functioned in their overall social and theological structure.[4] W.J. Lyons and A.M. Reimer, complaining that the term "magic" is used in antiquated ways by Qumran scholars, call for an "integrated reading" of that material.[5]

In this discussion, however, we will look at this material through the lens of subsequent literature—the Hekhalot texts, especially the ascent and liturgical texts in that corpus, and the growing body of magical literature from late antiquity and the early middle ages. For our purposes, therefore, these terms introduce a set of texts from Qumran that are important to us precisely because of their relationship to those genres.

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[2] See M.D. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 15-22.

[3] L.H. Schiffman, "Magical Materials in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Significance" (unpublished paper delivered at Tel Aviv University). My thanks to Professor Schiffman for making a copy of this paper available to me.

[4] Alexander, "'Wrestling against Wickedness'"; and idem, "Physiognomy, Initiation, and Rank in the Qumran Community," *Geschichte—Tradition—Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag* (eds H. Cancik, H. Lichtenberger, and P. Schäfer; Tübingen: Mohr, 1996) 385-94.

[5] W.J. Lyons and A.M. Reimer, "The Demonic Virus and Qumran Studies: Some Preventative Measures," *DSD* 5 (1998) 16-32.

I. *Mysticism*

Discussions of mysticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls usually refer to those texts that are said to prefigure the visionary and ascent texts in Hekhalot literature: those stories of Rabbis and other figures who ascended to heaven through seven palaces or temples, witnessed the celestial liturgy, and, in some cases, were transformed into heavenly beings themselves. Because of thematic and literary affinities, the main Qumran texts used as evidence for precedents to Hekhalot literature are liturgical compositions that deal extensively with the angelic and demonic worlds. The most famous of these is the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, also known as the Angelic Liturgy. Also important is another liturgical text, 4QBerakhot. It should also be mentioned that pre-Qumranic apocalyptic texts, such as the Aramaic Enoch literature, provide important models for the Hekhalot, and seem to have contributed specifically to such texts as 3 Enoch.[6]

As we will see, there is no dearth of parallels between the two literatures. But we also must ask what value lies in the designation of a literature as mystical. Is it to admit it into the long history of Jewish mysticism, which begins, according to the design of Scholem's monumental *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, with Hekhalot literature, and attains its classical form with the Kabbalah? Is it to provide it with a set of comparanda taken from other mystical texts, from al-Ghazali's visions to Theresa of Avila's? In most cases mysticism seems to be shorthand for the question of whether this literature reflects a practice of cultivating a mystical trance—either because it is meant to produce such a trance or because it is the product of one.

We can shed light on these questions by examining one of the key texts in this debate, the Angelic Liturgy, a set of hymns that portrays an angelic sacrifice in heaven in a cycle of thirteen weeks. From J. Strugnell's first publication of excerpts,[7] and early analyses by G. Scholem and Schiffman, it has been recognized that it has affinities with Hekhalot literature both in style and substance.[8] But it took C. Newsom's seminal publication of the text to set it into its own context.[9] The Hekhalot text that most closely parallels the Sabbath Songs is known as Maʿaseh Merkavah[10]—or, more specifically, those sections of that text that deal with an ascent rather than the conjuration of the angel of the Torah.[11] These two texts share some terminology and cosmological features, such as the reference to multiple chariots (מרכבות),[12] but they also share a few more general characteristics.

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[6] On the question of the influence of the Enochic literature on the Hekhalot tract 3 Enoch see J.C. Greenfield, "Prolegomena," in H. Odeberg, *3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch* (New York: Ktav, 1973) xvi-xxiii; J.C. Greenfield and M.E. Stone, "The Books of Enoch and the Traditions of Enoch," *Numen* 26 (1979) 98-102; M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 44; P.S. Alexander, "3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch," *OTP* 1.247-48.

[7] J. Strugnell, "The Angelic Liturgy at Qumran—4Q Serek Šîrôt ʿÔlat Haššabbat," *Congress Volume: Oxford 1959* (VTSup 7; Leiden: Brill, 1960) 318-45.

One of these affinities is stylistic. The Sabbath Songs contain two types of poetic style when describing the heavenly array. One is a parallelistic form of measured poetry; Newsom, S. Segert, and B. Nitzan have shown how synonymous parallels, ballast variants, and other conventional poetic techniques were used by the composer or composers.[13] Maʿaseh Merkavah is notable for a similar style, not an unusual one for ancient Jewish hymnology.[14] The second style is a more elaborate, fluid style characterized by a profusion of synonyms in series and a more unstructured rhythmic pattern.[15] It is this style that has often been seen as the primary evidence for the text's "numinous" and therefore, mystical nature.[16] Recently similar claims have been made for another text, 4QBerakhot.

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[8] G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkavah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965^2) 128; L.H. Schiffman, "*Merkavah* Speculation at Qumran: The 4Q *Serekh ʿOlat ha-Shabbat*," *Mystics, Philosophers, and Politicians* (eds J. Reinharz and D. Swetschinski; Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1982) 15-47.

[9] C. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* (HSS 27; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985).

[10] This text was first published in excerpts by A. Altmann, "שירי קדושה בספרות ההיכלות הקדומה" *Melilah* 2 (1946) 1-24, then by Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*; and in P. Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (TSAJ 2; Tübingen: Mohr, 1981) §§544-96; on the text see M.D. Swartz, *Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism: An Analysis of Maʿaseh Merkavah* (TSAJ 28; Tübingen: Mohr, 1992); cf. N. Janowitz, *The Poetics of Ascent: Theories of Language in a Rabbinic Ascent Text* (SUNY Series in Judaica; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

[11] That is, sections I and IV according to the numbering system in Swartz, *Mystical Prayer*.

[12] 4Q405 22 11-12; cf. Schäfer, *Synopse* §§554-55. For other parallels see Schiffman, "*Merkavah* Speculation" and J.M. Baumgarten, "The Qumran Sabbath Širot and Rabbinic Merkabah Traditions," *RevQ* 13 (1998) 199-213.

[13] Newsom, *Songs*; Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer and Religious Poetry* (STDJ 12; Leiden: Brill, 1994); S. Segert, "Observations on Poetic Structures in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice," *RevQ* 13 (1998) 215-23.

[14] See Swartz, *Mystical Prayer*, 190-207.

[15] See especially 4Q405 20 ii–21-22.

[16] See B. Nitzan, "Harmonic and Mystical Characteristics in Poetic and Liturgical Writings from Qumran," *JQR* 85 (1994) 178-79.

This stylistic affinity leads us to consider a deeper affinity: the liturgical nature of both texts. Both texts are an ordered set of hymns. But whereas the Sabbath Songs are a fully integrated set of liturgical compositions for a quarter of the year, Maʿaseh Merkavah is an anthology of hymns that were placed at a later date into the setting of a vision of the heavens and divine throne.[17] The hymns themselves, while dealing extensively with the throne and the heavenly array, were not composed to create that vision.[18] Rather, they are oriented toward one point: that the prayer of the human community is equivalent to that of the angels on high.[19] It is generally agreed that the poet of the Qumran Sabbath Songs does not travel to heaven; rather, he relates the details of the heavenly offering to his earth-bound community. If this view of the hymns in Maʿaseh Merkavah is correct, the same was true for them at one point.

But if this is true, can we also compare the main function of the Qumran Sabbath Songs—evocation of the heavenly sacrifice—to that of Maʿaseh Merkavah? This question is not so simple. The idea that human and angelic worshippers praise God concurrently each in their sanctuaries is the same. But the specifically sacrificial nature of the heavenly worship is not present in Maʿaseh Merkavah. Nonetheless, the texts may have one thing in common. If the Sabbath Songs are indeed a sectarian, or proto-sectarian composition, they may reflect the needs of a community that can no longer participate in the earthly עולה. Likewise, Maʿaseh Merkavah served a community for whom the departure of the potent Presence of God was a deeply felt reality.

Neither function is specifically mystical by any sophisticated criterion. The imagining of the deity on a throne surrounded by angels singing his praise can be read simply as valid exegesis of Isaiah and Ezekiel, and the aspiration to participate in an earthly equivalent is likewise an extension of priestly theology—after all, does not the Psalmist want only one thing from God: to dwell in his house all his days (Ps. 27:4)? Rather, it is the literary style of these compositions that has served as evidence for the mystical character of Qumran literature and spirituality. The elaborate style described here also characterizes other texts, such as 4QBerakhot. Some passages of this text are characterized not by fully formed syntax but, as Nitzan puts it, “with lists describing the worshipers and their blessings:”[20]

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[17] Section II (§§560-70) of the composition consists of prayers designed to bring down the angel of the Torah (שר התורה).

[18] For the argument for this history of the text, see Swartz, *Mystical Prayer*.

[19] On this idea in the liturgical *Qedushah* see for example M. Weinfeld, ‘עקבות של קדושת יוצר ופסוקי דזמרה במגילות קומראן ובספר בן סירא," *Tarbiz* 45 (1976) 15-26; and Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer*, 273-82, 367-69.

מושב יקרכה והדומי רגלי כבודכה ב[מ]רומי עומדכה
ומדר[ך] קודשכה ומרכבות כבודכה
כרוביהמה ואופניהמה וכול סודי[המה

the seat of your honor and the footstools of your glory, in the heights of your station,
and the tread of your holiness, and the chariots of your glory,
their cherubim and their wheels with all their councils . . .

But a very similar style that is used to describe the heavenly hosts is also used to describe elements of nature that also praise God:

הארץ וכול [א]שר [עליה
תבל וכול] יושבי בה
אדמה וכול מחשביה[21]
[ארץ וכו]ל יקומה

The earth and all that is on it,
the world and all that dwell in it,
the ground and all its depths
earth, and all its living things . . .[22]

Newsom, being careful to distinguish the Angelic Liturgy from the ascent texts in Hekhalot literature, called them “quasi-mystical,” arguing that they were meant to evoke a feeling of being in the presence of the heavenly temple while not claiming to transport the worshiper to it.[23] Nitzan, taking her models from her reading of Scholem, sees the literary style described here as evidence of the authors’ mystical point of view—one that sees liturgical harmony with the angels as a mystical undertaking.[24] E. Wolfson, responding to Nitzan, insists on a more rigorous approach to the theoretical question and at the same time builds on his earlier argument that the mystical essence of ascent texts in Hekhalot literature lies in the experience of transformation and apotheosis as an angel, attested in Hekhalot Rabbati and related texts. He argues that because Jewish mysticism does not aim for the unitive experience stemming from the Neoplatonic world view that influenced Western mysticism, its equivalent is personal transfiguration and enthronement in heaven.[25] He therefore sees mysticism operating in only one text from Qumran, 4Q491, or the so-called self-glorification hymn, which M. Smith identified as attesting to an ascent and transfiguration.[26]

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[20] 4Q286 1 ii 1-2. These excerpts, including the translations, are quoted and adapted here from E. Eshel, H. Eshel, C. Newsom, B. Nitzan, E. Schuller, and A. Yardeni, *Qumran Cave 4.VI: Poetical and Liturgical Texts, Part 1* (DJD 11; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) 12, 22. See Nitzan, “Poetic and Liturgical Writings,” 171.

[21] This word is apparently a copyist’s error for מחשכיה, “depths.” Cf. the translation given and DJD 11.23. My thanks to Professor Esther Eshel for this suggestion.

[22] 4Q286 5 1-2.

[23] For a concise statement of her argument, see Newsom, *Songs*, 19-21, 71-72.

[24] Nitzan, “Poetic and Liturgical Writings.”

D.J. Halperin was one of the first to cast doubt on the "mystical" nature of the Hekhalot texts.[27] M. Himmelfarb also questions "whether we can move from the realm of literature to the realm of practice."[28] Consistent with her reading of Hekhalot literature "not as rites to be enacted but as stories to be repeated,"[29] she finds precious little evidence for ascent techniques in late antiquity. Does this mean that the approaches to ascent and theophany are essentially the same in Qumran and Hekhalot texts?

We must be cautious in extrapolating to personal experience of one kind or another from this literature, which really reveals so little about its authors' state of mind.[30] Likewise, those who would argue that prophetic and apocalyptic texts reflect a visionary incubation process must bear the burden of proof.[31] But at the same time, those who would deny any praxis are extrapolating no less. One avenue of exploration in addressing this question is the extent to which narrative accounts of dream incubation, ritual preparation for divine vision, and the like, flourished in ancient Near Eastern religions. In at least two cases, Dan'el's theophany in the Aqhat cycle, and Gudea's dream in the Sumerian Gudea Cylinder A, the answers are not definitive. In the Aqhat epic, Dan'el, in his wish for a son, offers food to the gods for seven days and is answered on the seventh with a positive reply.[32] But while J. Obermann characterized the episode as an "incubation scene,"[33] this description has been called into question.[34] In the Gudea cylinder, sacrifices are performed and omens are consulted, following which Gudea receives a message in his sleep; it is not clear, however, whether the ritual was intended to produce the divine word.[35] Thus in each case the preparation seems to be a way of beseeching the god for the desired goal not for the vision itself.

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[25] E. Wolfson, "Mysticism and the Poetic-Liturgical Compositions from Qumran: A Response to Bilhah Nitzan," *JQR* 85 (1994) 185-202; cf. his "*Yeridah la-Merkavah*: Typology of Ecstacy and Enthronement in Ancient Jewish Mysticism," *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typologies* (ed. R.A. Herrera; New York: Peter Lang, 1993) 13-44.

[26] M. Smith, Ascent to the Heavens in 4QM^a," *Archaeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. L.H. Schiffman; JSPSup 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990) 180-88; cf. J.R. Davila, "Heavenly Ascents in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment* (eds P.W. Flint and J.C. VanderKam; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 2.473-76.

[27] D.J. Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1988). Cf. also P. Schäfer, "The Aim and Purpose of Early Jewish Mysticism," *Hekhalot-Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1988) 277-95; idem, *The Hidden and Manifest God: Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

[28] M. Himmelfarb, "The Practice of Ascent in the Ancient Mediterranean World," *Death, Ecstasy and Other Worldly Journeys* (eds J.J. Collins and M. Fishbane; Albany: SUNY Press, 1995) 123-37.

[29] Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 109.

[30] Although a psychoanalytic approach such as that taken by Halperin would imply that the authors' images, language, and references reveal much about them, still, Halperin himself, in arguing against significant distinctions between vision, hallucination, and imagination, has found the category of mysticism unhelpful.

[31] Cf. Davila, "Heavenly Ascents."

But further than this, it is worth looking at the variety of explicit indications of the intended function of ascent texts in Hekhalot literature. These are dependent on scribal settings and interpolations. For example, the introduction to Hekhalot Rabbati, known as the גדולה hymns for their opening formula, "it is a greatness beyond any" (גדולה מכולם), says that anyone who masters the text will be able to strike fear in the hearts of his enemies, afflict them with terrible skin diseases, and the like.[36] But the ascent sections of the text do contain declarations that the reader of the text himself can undertake the journey under the right circumstances. The best-known example of this is the passage in Hekhalot Rabbati that knowing the technique is "like having a ladder in one's house, on which he can go up and down."[37] The framework of the חבורה narrative in Hekhalot Rabbati in which Rabbi Neḥuniah relates his journey to his students may not imply that anyone at all can travel to heaven, but it does imply that those rabbis did so voluntarily.[38] Here, then, may be a criterion that allows us to pinpoint what distinguishes the Hekhalot corpus from Qumran and led to its characterization as mystical. It is the implication that the reader, or at least the company of adepts depicted in the narratives, can undertake the journey as well as the rabbinic hero.

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[32] "The Tale of Aqhat," *ANET* 149-50.

[33] J. Obermann, *How Daniel Was Blessed with a Son: An Incubation Scene in Ugaritic* (JAOS Supplements 6; issued with *JAOS* 66 [1946]).

[34] See B. Margalit, *The Ugaritic Poem of AQHT* (BZAW 182; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989) 260-67.

[35] E. Jan Wilson, *The Cylinders of Gudea: Transliteration, Translation, and Index* (AOAT 244; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996) Cylinder A, Column xx, pp. 90-91. My thanks to Gonzalo Rubio for this latter reference.

[36] *Synopse* §§83-92; see G. Wewers, "Der Überlegenheit des Mystikers: Zur Aussage der Gedulla-Hymnen in Hekhalot Rabbati 1,2–2,3," *JSJ* 17 (1986) 3-22.

[37] *Synopse* §199.

[38] *Synopse* §§198-206.

At the same time, it must also be stressed that the actual technique for ascent is practically nowhere spelled out in that literature.[39] The instructions for the ascent deal with what happens when one is actually up in the heavenly realm. Rather, rituals of preparation were designated for bringing an angel down to earth. Nonetheless, if this analysis is correct, the authors of the ascent texts in the Hekhalot corpus were among the first to make the conceptual step from depicting the occurrence of being taken passively up to heaven—what Himmelfarb calls "rapture"—to the belief that any qualified man can take the initiative and go there himself. Whether or not this qualifies as mysticism, this is one of the innovations of Hekhalot literature.

II. *Magic*

When we come to what we call magical texts, the situation is somewhat different. Here style and function are quite similar both at Qumran and in the magical literature of late antiquity and the early middle ages. Yet here too some nuances provide for some interesting puzzles.

If mysticism is a controversial term, magic is even more so—especially as its relevance extends beyond the history of religions to anthropology and cultural history. Lyons and Reimer, while registering their dismay at the unsophisticated use of the term magic, are still not ready to throw it out entirely.[40] Current research on magic in late antiquity and the early middle ages likewise has not abandoned the term, having found that there is a great deal of formal cohesion among amulets, magical handbooks, and the like, and that these literary forms yield a picture of Jewish magic.[41]

One of the most significant findings from Qumran for the student of Jewish magic is the fragmentary magical manual 4Q560. This document, which was at first designated "Proverbs?," was first published by R.H. Eisenman and M.O. Wise, then by D.L. Penney and Wise,[42] and republished with important corrections by J. Naveh.[43] This text is important because it demonstrates that magical manuals similar to those found in abundance in the Genizah existed in antiquity. It had been inferred that such books existed from the relationship of Palestinian amulets from late antiquity to magical manuals in the Genizah, but this confirms their existence.[44] In the first place, as Naveh shows, the terminology is that used by countless magical manuals and incantations.[45] More than this, the fact that the text includes both descriptions of purposes for the incantations[46] and the incantations themselves is a strong argument that it is a magical manual.[47] So too, the personification of diseases as demons characterizes later Jewish magic.[48]

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[39] For possible exceptions, see Himmelfarb, "Practice of Ascent"; cf. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, 153-57.

[40] Lyons and Reimer, "Demonic Virus," 32 n. 68. While their basic point is well taken, the authors do not provide a sustained argument for keeping the term, especially in the face of such trenchant critiques as J.Z. Smith, "Trading Places," *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (eds M. Meyer and P. Mirecki; Leiden: Brill, 1995) 13-27.

[41] See M.D. Swartz, "Scribal Magic and Its Rhetoric: Formal Patterns in Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah," *HTR* 83 (1990) 163-80.

Another text that seems to deal with magic, however, is more complicated: the so-called Songs of the Sage (4Q510-511), in which the משכיל, or instructor, proclaims God's power over demonic forces and malevolent angels.[49] The fact that these compositions deal with the control of demons does not assure their admission into the magical corpus. Thus, we must ask: are these simply prayers that deal with the war against the demons, a major aspect of Qumran theology in any case? Or are they a formulation for commanding the demons to heal, and conquer bad spirits, that is, the community's equivalent of the classical incantation formula? If the latter is the case, the form in which the Maskil declares his duty to praise God's healing power would simply occur in the position in which introductory formulae such as בשם would appear in Palestinian and Genizah incantations. There are indications that the latter might be the case. Compare these passages with the Babylonian Jewish magical bowls in which the magician begins with statements about himself and his power, derived from "him who created heaven and earth."[50]

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[42] R.H. Eisenman and M.O. Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* (Rockport, MA: Element, 1992) 265-67; D.L. Penney and M.O. Wise, "By the Power of Beelzebub: An Aramaic Incantation Formula from Qumran (4Q560)," *JBL* 113 (1994) 627-50.

[43] "Fragments of an Aramaic Magic Book from Qumran," *IEJ* 48 (1998) 252-61.

[44] See Naveh, "Fragments," 252.

[45] For example, the term for malarial fever, אשא עריה, parallels that in Palestinian amulets and Genizah texts; the term מומה for adjuration is also a constant in Aramaic incantations.

[46] Column A.

[47] Column B, indicated by the verb מומה.

[48] Cf. L.H. Schiffman and M.D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation texts from the Cairo Genizah: Selected Texts from Taylor-Schechter Box K1* (Semitic Texts and Studies 1; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992) 35-36.

[49] 4Q510-511; "Cantiques du Sage," in M. Baillet, *Qumrân grotte 4.III (4Q482–4Q520)* (DJD 7; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) 215-62. See the formal analysis in Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer*, 238-59.

III. *Divination*

Finally, it is worth mentioning one other genre of esoteric knowledge: divination.[51] Divination deserves to be classified as a separate category from mysticism and magic. While there is certainly some cross-fertilization among the three, divination has almost the exclusive goal of obtaining information from cosmic forces. Divination motifs and texts are well attested at Qumran. There is the complex brontological text 4Q318,[52] a physiognomic text with astrological overtones known as 4QHoroscopes (4Q186),[53] and physiognomic elements in narrative and hymnic texts.

As J. Licht has noted, the biblical term תולדות is taken to mean the physical and psychic nature of the person both at Qumran and in medieval physiognomic texts. In fact the links between the physiognomic literature at Qumran and those from esoteric circles in late antiquity and the early middle ages are quite strong.[54] M. Geller has also pointed out Akkadian parallels to the Qumran divination texts.[55] Physiognomy seems to have played a part in the determination of where an individual member of the sect stood according to the doctrine of the Two

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[50] Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, Bowl 3, translated by B. Levine, "The Language of the Magical Bowls," *A History of the Jews in Babylonia* (ed. J. Neusner; StPB 9; Leiden: Brill, 1970) 5.362.

[51] There are other suggestive documents, such as an expanded version of Psalm 91, which came to be known to the Rabbis as the song for afflictions (שיר של פגעים), 11QPsAp^a; see É. Puech, "11QPsAp^a: Un rituel d'exorcismes. Essai de reconstruction," *RevQ* 14 (1990) 377-408; idem, "Les deux derniers psaumes Davidiques du rituel d'exorcisme, 11QPsAp^a IV 4–V 14," *The Dead Sea Scrolls, Forty Years of Research* (eds D. Dimant and U. Rappaport; STDJ 10; Leiden: Brill; Jerusalem: Magnes Press and Yad Ben-Zvi, 1992) 64-89.

[52] M.O. Wise, *Thunder in Gemini and Other Essays on the History, Language and Literature of Second Temple Palestine* (JSPSup 15; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994) 13-60; and J.C. Greenfield and M. Sokoloff, "An Astrological Text from Qumran (*4Q318*) and Reflections on Some Zodiacal Names," *RevQ* 16 (1995) 507-25.

[53] See M. Albani, "Horoscopes in the Qumran Scrolls," *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Fifty Years*, 2.277-330.

[54] See I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (AGJU 14; Leiden: Brill, 1980) 218-24.

[55] M.J. Geller, "New Documents from the Dead Sea: Babylonian Science in Aramaic," *Boundaries of the Ancient Near Eastern World: A Tribute to Cyrus H. Gordon* (eds M. Lubetski, C. Gottlieb, and S. Keller; JSOTSup 273; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 224-29.

Spirits.[56] These documents therefore point in several directions: outward, to the social system at Qumran, back in time to Mesopotamian divinitory traditions, and forward to the physiognomic texts related to Hekhalot literature.

IV. *Conclusions*

It has been argued here that the history of the genres under discussion provide interesting examples of persistence and transformation. It is interesting to see how each of the esoteric genres adapts to its cultural environment. The angelic liturgical texts, whether or not they are of sectarian origin, seem to blend in very well with the sectarian ideology, whereas the corresponding liturgies in Maʿaseh Merkavah were "rabbinized" by their attribution to great sages. So too the anti-demonic hymns, recited by a sectarian official, and the physiognomic text, perhaps used to rank individuals in the *yaḥad*, fit in with the worldview and social structure of the sect.

Of the three traditions examined here—mystical or visionary, magical, and divinitory—we should also take note of which seem to have been more stable and enduring. Judging by the degree of change that affected each, the magical and divinitory traditions have undergone the least change. It is also easier to identify the role that the latter play in the life of the community. This factor should give us pause to think about how we look at the history of Jewish spirituality in antiquity. While we have become accustomed to seeking visions—that is, looking for evidence for visionary practices at Qumran and in the Rabbinic milieu—we may have been ignoring another important source of revelation and divine disclosure. If the divinitory tradition is more pervasive and recognizable, we might reconsider our view of Qumran sectarians and Rabbinic esotericists, and perhaps of their contemporaries, as given to charismatic enthusiasms, and consider how they engaged in disciplined, intricate forms of reading—not only of the Sefer he-Hagi/u, but of the Sefer Toledot Adam.

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[56] See Alexander, "Physiognomy, Initiation, and Rank in the Qumran Community," 385-94.