

THE *SHIROT 'OLAT HASHABBAT*: AN INDIVISIBLE, ECSTATIC SONG OF AWE

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ABSTRACT: This essay explores the transition from disenchantment with the Jerusalem Temple's worship to the enchantment experienced by the *yahad* community at Qumran. The essay focuses on the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (*Shirot 'Olat HaShabbat*), a set of 13 hymns from the Dead Sea Scrolls. These songs were designed to facilitate a mystical–ecstatic communion with angels during liturgical practices. The essay begins by addressing the sense of disenchantment that led certain individuals to leave the Jerusalem Temple, deemed illegitimate due to its use of a solilunar calendar and other practices. These individuals joined the *yahad*, where they believed they had received divine revelations, including the correct calendar that allowed them to align their liturgical practices with the true cosmic order. This alignment was seen as essential for entering into communion with God and His angels. Central to the essay is the analysis of the Hebrew root *pl'* (פלא), which conveys the concept of awe or wonder. The repetitive use of *pl'* is seen as instrumental in inducing an ecstatic state of consciousness, allowing the worshippers to experience a sense of awe in the presence of God and the angels. The essay argues that the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice were likely recited in their entirety in a single session, rather than over 13 Sabbaths, to fully immerse the worshippers in this ecstatic experience. The communal recitation of these songs was intended to achieve angelic communion, with the *yahad* community functioning as a terrestrial reflection of the angelic priests in the heavenly Temple. Ultimately, the essay concludes that the disenchantment with the Jerusalem Temple led to a unique experience of divine beatitude for the members of the *yahad*.

Questo saggio esplora il passaggio dal disincanto per il culto del Tempio di Gerusalemme all'incanto sperimentato dalla comunità *yahad* di Qumran. Il saggio si concentra sui *Canti dell'olocausto del sabato* (*Shirot 'Olat HaShabbat*), un insieme di 13 inni provenienti dai Rotoli del Mar Morto. Questi canti sono stati concepiti per permettere una comunione mistico–estatica con gli angeli durante il culto. Il saggio inizia affrontando il senso di disincanto che portò alcuni uomini

a lasciare il Tempio di Gerusalemme, ritenuto illegittimo a causa dell'uso di un calendario solilunare e di altre pratiche. Questi si unirono al *yahad*, comunità che riteneva di aver ricevuto rivelazioni divine, tra cui il corretto calendario che permetteva loro di allineare i tempi liturgici con il vero ordine cosmico. Questo allineamento era considerato essenziale per entrare in comunione con Dio e i suoi angeli. Al centro del saggio vi è l'analisi della radice ebraica *pl'* (פלא), che trasmette il concetto di stupore o meraviglia. L'uso ripetitivo di *pl'* è visto come strumentale al fine di provocare uno stato di coscienza estatico, che permette agli oranti di provare un senso di stupore alla presenza di Dio e degli angeli. Il saggio sostiene che i Canti dell'olocausto del sabato venivano probabilmente recitati per intero in un'unica sessione, piuttosto che nell'arco di 13 sabati, per immergere completamente i fedeli in questa esperienza estatica. La recita comunitaria di questi canti era intesa a raggiungere la comunione angelica, con la comunità (*yahad*) che funzionava come un riflesso terrestre dei sacerdoti angelici nel Tempio celeste. In definitiva, il saggio conclude che il disincanto del Tempio di Gerusalemme portava a un'esperienza unica di beatitudine divina per i membri dello *yahad*.

KEYWORDS: Qumran, Apocalypticism, Mysticism, Worship, *Yahad*

PAROLE CHIAVE: Qumran, Apocalittica, Mistica, Culto, *Yahad*

1. Introduction

This essay aims to illustrate the transition from disenchantment with the Jerusalem Temple worship, considered illegitimate, to enchantment with the establishment of a new community, the *yahad* present at Qumran (Fletcher-Louis 2002, p. 90; cf. Boccaccini 1998)⁽¹⁾, which thrives through the restoration of the correct calendar and measurement of time for the liturgical communion with angels. It will present evidence concerning the category of awe conveyed by the Hebrew verbal root *pl'* (פלא), primarily referring to the literary material from the work *Shirot 'Olat Ha-Shabbat* (*Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*).

We aim to analyze the terminology of awe employed in this work, demonstrating how awe functioned as the language through which the ecstatic-mystical communion with angels was articulated by members of the community, particularly during liturgical practices.

(1) According to Fletcher-Louis the designation *yahad* might refer to communion with the angels. Alternatively, it could be derived from Deut. 33:5, which speaks of "the union of the tribes of Israel".

We will approach the text and the use of the root *pl'* from a literary perspective. It is not possible, in fact, to definitively demonstrate the liturgical use of this text at Qumran or in other communities where it may have been employed. Commentators acknowledge that the recitation of this prayer allowed the worshipers to experience what is known as realized eschatology, yet there remain significant doubts regarding its actual usage. Furthermore, given that the text available to us contains numerous gaps and is only reconstructed based on Carol Newsom's work, our analysis will be strictly limited to the literary evidence that emerges from the text, always considering a degree of uncertainty.

2. The (dis)Enchantment of the Temple

The *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, and the experience of the *yahad*, start from a sense of disenchantment. Deeming the Temple cult illicit, among whose reasons is also the one related to the use of the calendar and the consequent liturgical times celebrated, prompted individuals close to priestly circles to adhere to the *yahad*. As we read in the *Damascus Document* (VI:2-VII:4):

² But God remembered the covenant of the forefathers. Blank And he raised from Aaron men of knowledge and from Israel ³ wise men and made them listen. And they dug the well: "A well which the princes dug, which ⁴ the nobles of the people delved with the staff". The well is the law. And those who dug it Blank are ⁵ the converts of Israel, who left the land of Judah and lived in the land of Damascus, ⁶ all of whom God called princes, for they sought him, and their renown has not been repudiated ⁷ in anyone's mouth. Blank And the staff is the interpreter of the law, of whom ⁸ Isaiah said: "He produces a tool for his labour". Blank And the nobles of the people are ⁹ those who came to dig the well with the staves that the scepter decreed, ¹⁰ to walk in them throughout the whole age of wickedness, and without which they will not obtain it, until there arises ¹¹ he who teaches justice at the end of days. Blank But all those who have been brought into the covenant ¹² shall not enter the temple to kindle his altar in vain. They will be the ones who close ¹³ the door, as God said: "Whoever amongst you will close my door

Blank so that you do not kindle my altar¹⁴ in vain!”. They should take care to act in accordance with the exact interpretation of the law for the age of wickedness: to keep apart¹⁵ from the sons of the pit; to abstain from wicked wealth which defiles, either by promise or by vow,¹⁶ and from the wealth of the temple and from stealing from the poor of his people, making widows their spoils¹⁷ and murdering orphans; to separate unclean from clean and differentiate between¹⁸ the holy and the common; to keep the sabbath day according to its exact interpretation, and the festivals¹⁹ and the day of fasting, according to what was discovered by those who entered the new covenant in the land of Damascus;²⁰ to set apart holy portions according to their exact interpretation; for each to love his brother²¹ like himself; to strengthen the hand of the poor, the needy and the foreigner; *Blank* for each to seek the peace^{7,1} of his brother and not to be unfaithful against his blood relation; to refrain from fornication² in accordance with the regulation; for each to reprove his brother in accordance with the precept, and not to bear resentment³ from one day to the next; to keep apart from every uncleanness according to their regulations, without anyone defiling⁴ his holy spirit, according to what God kept apart for them.

In the Temple, the “solilunar” calendar of 354 days was in force, which had displaced the solar calendar of 364 days (cf. Martone 1998), representing an older element in the development of Jewish identity. The theme of the calendar finds a privileged space in Second Temple apocalyptic literature. Starting from the *Book of Astronomy* of 1 *Enoch* and *Jubilees*, where the authenticity and validity of the solar calendar are sought to be demonstrated (Cohen 1989, p. 193). For the *yahad*, the community formed at Qumran, and perhaps in other sites, considering “the Jerusalem temple as polluted and its priesthood as sinful (*ibid.*, p. 152),” following the correct calendar and therefore the correct order of the cosmos, represented a fundamental instance⁽²⁾.

(2) See, for example, texts such as 1QS I:8-15; IX:26-X:8; CD XVI:2-4; 11QT^a XII-XXIX. Consider also that: “A short prose section of the large Psalms Scroll (11QP^a), known as ‘David’s Compositions,’ states that David wrote ‘364 songs to sing before the altar for the daily perpetual sacrifice, for all the days of the year; and 52 songs for the Sabbath offerings’ (11Q5 XXVII 5-7). Over 20 of the Dead Sea scroll texts are calendrical, including lists of Sabbaths and festivals. Another way of structuring longer cycles of time at Qumran was the *mishmarot* (cf. 1 Chr 9:23; 26:2; Neh 7:3; 12:9), which is the Hebrew term for the priestly service watches at the Temple (cf. 4Q321-330)” (Henze 2020, p. 127).

Detaching themselves from the Temple and the illegitimate cult, the members of the *yahad* believed they had received from God the revelation of hidden things (*nistārôt*), including the times of the cosmos, to be able to enter communion with Him and the angels in a mystical–ecstatic experience. This is the use of the *Songs* that allows us to better understand their meaning (Lesses 1998, pp. 161–162). James Vanderkam asserts, for example, that: “Measuring units of time was not simply a matter of convenience; rather, it was a moral issue involving obedience to divine revelation about the nature of reality and the laws by which the world operated” (VanderKam 1998, p. 13).

The act of separating themselves, in perceiving themselves as recipients of the “renewed covenant”, allows them to express full awe for the encounter with God in the angelic liturgy. Their disenchantment, the separation from unfaithful Israel and the gentiles, allows them to live in a privileged status while recognizing their own limits and creatureliness, acknowledging the wondrous works of God (Collins 2016, pp.200–201; 1QHa XI:20–2 3):

²⁰ *vacat* I thank you, Lord, that you have redeemed my life from the pit and that from Sheol–Abaddon ²¹ you have lifted me up to an eternal height, so that I walk about on a limitless plain. I know that there is hope for one whom ²² you have formed from the dust for an eternal council. And a perverted spirit you have purified from great sin that it might take its place with ²³ the host of the holy ones and enter into community with the congregation of the children of heaven.

The members of the *yahad*, who had separated themselves from the men of injustice thanks to the mysteries revealed to them, were aware of the true times of the cosmos. The times that God had impressed upon the cosmos. Thus, practicing the liturgy in these “holy times” allowed them to synchronize with the worship of the angels (*Berakhot* 4Q286 1ii,8–11):

⁸ mercies, and good kindness, and true mercies and eternal kindnesses, and won[derful] mysteries [...] ⁹ in ... [...] and the holy weeks in their measures, and the signs of the months [...] ¹⁰ [...] in their stations, and

the glorious festivals in [their] appointed times [...] and the sabbaths of the earth in their divi[sions and the fix]ed times of relea[se ...].

The communal recitation of these songs had the task of achieving angelic communion (Newsom 2000, p. 888)⁽³⁾. The life of the *yahad* was structured in such a way as to facilitate access to celestial worship, fostering a state of ritual purity (Collins 2016, p. 203).

3. The *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*

The *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* consist of 13 songs⁽⁴⁾, which are believed to have been used for communal recitation over thirteen consecutive Sabbaths. Personally, and as we will argue below, we agree with Carol Newsom, perhaps the foremost expert on this work, that the recitation of the 13 songs should instead have occurred in a single moment of praise. The text combines motifs of communal cultic ritual and visionary texts (Lieber 2004, p. 54).

Though dating the work remains difficult, it can be hypothesized to date no later than 100 BCE. The *Songs* are among the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran designated as “sectarian,” meaning they were used by the community living at Qumran (Newsom 2019, p. 129).

According to Philip Alexander, the *Songs* and other sectarian works can be described as mystical. Communion with angels is transformative and performative as it involves sharing in the worship of God and the knowledge of angels, allowing one to experience the glory of the afterlife (Alexander 2010, p. 226; Evans 2020, p. 12). John Collins defines this experience as “realized eschatology” (cf. 1QS XI:7–8 and 1QH^a XI:11–24;

(3) There appear to be two opposing views regarding the recognition of the *Songs* as a mystical text. Alexander (like Nitzan) supports this perspective, while Schäfer leans toward the idea of liturgical union. Scholem’s work (1941) clearly could not take the Qumran texts into account, as they had not yet been published. Cf. Alexander 2010, pp. 215–235. Schäfer, who favors the idea of a liturgical union, presents various scholarly perspectives that lean towards mystical union (authors with a Christian background), angelic transformation (“angelification,” as seen in ancient apocalypses), and a liturgical framework akin to the *Heikhalot* texts; cf. Schäfer 2009, p. 66.

(4) In her critical edition, Newsom proposed a reconstruction of the text, dividing it into thirteen hymns, cf. Newsom 1999.

Collins 2016, p. 209), not only because it speaks of communion with angels but because it contains no reflection on death as a problem.

The communion in worship between angels and the elect is both present and eschatological (Flusser 2000, p. 569); however, even in the present, the elect experience the same state of blessedness that is reserved for them in the afterlife (Gladd 2009, pp. 78-79). According to Paolo Sacchi, the elect, united with the angels, are already saved for eternity, and living within the community marks the beginning of their paradise (Sacchi 2006, p. 75). The company of angels is an essential aspect of the earthly community (Collins 2016, p. 200). For instance, in 1QS XI:3-4, the company of angels to which the elect, who have contemplated the *raz nihyeh* (the mystery that is to be/come, mystery of existence, future mystery), are destined is the same fate promised to the righteous after death in the *Epistle of Enoch* (1En 104:2-6) and *Daniel* 12. It can be said that the elect of the community lived the “angelic life” in the present⁽⁵⁾. Although the angelic life they experienced was evidently imperfect and perhaps limited to moments of worship⁽⁶⁾. It nevertheless provided a foretaste of eternal life, which, according to Collins, was capable of “rendering mortality insignificant” (*ibid.* p. 211).

Though not all scholars agree that this condition was permanent, there is nonetheless consensus in considering it realized at least for the duration of the liturgy (*ibid.* pp. 195-211). Communion in worship, between angels and the chosen, is both present and eschatological (Flusser 2000, p. 569), but already in the present, the chosen experience the same condition of bliss and knowledge reserved for them in the afterlife. The company of angels is constitutive of the community on earth (Collins 2016, p. 200). Angels and members of the *yahad* not only offer worship simultaneously but constitute a single praying community. For this reason, ritually impure individuals must separate from the community (1QS^a II,2-9; Jost 2021, p. 6):

(5) According to Puech, the perfect tense of the verbs used is prophetic and would indicate their fulfillment in the future. In contrast, Collins interprets the use of the perfect tense as a sign of liberation that has already occurred, suggesting a mystical experience of resurrection, cf. PUECH 1993, pp. 335-419.

(6) Collins goes so far as to assert that even if the experience of anticipating eternal life was not permanent, the members of the *yahad* would still have been significantly transformed.; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 208-209.

These₂ are the men of renown, those summoned to the assembly, those gathered for the community council in Israel₃ in the presence of the sons of Zadok, the priests. No man, defiled by any of the impurities₄ of a man, shall enter the assembly of these; and no-one who is defiled by these should be₅ established in his office amongst the congregation: everyone who is defiled in his flesh, paralyzed in his feet or₆ in his hands, lame, blind, deaf, dumb or defiled in his flesh with a blemish₇ visible to the eyes, or the tottering old man who cannot keep upright in the midst of the assembly;₈ these shall not en[ter] to take their place [a]mong the congregation of the men of renown, for the angels₉ of holiness are among their [congre]gation.

The rules of ritual purity (cf. Lev. 1–7) reflect angelic life (Dimant 2014, p. 471). Common worship between angels and priests represents the original order of creation, respecting the authentic “holy times” (Tuschling 2007, p. 131). A harmonious structure between celestial and earthly (Ego 1991, p. 363) elements build the social identity of the community practicing this liturgy (Mizrahi 2015, pp. 65–66).

In the second section of the work, composed of Songs 6–8, there is a stylistic change characterized by a noticeable reduction in vocabulary, monotonous and almost hypnotic repetition, and an obsessive recurrence of the number seven (šēḇaʿ). While Songs 7 describing the council of angels moves the worshippers further into the sanctuary, Songs 6 and 8 respectively depict the prayer of the seven princes of the angels and the seven angelic priests.

While it is true that for ancient mysticism, we can only access it through the texts we possess, we must consider how the Songs propose something beyond mere prayer with angels, which is also present in biblical Psalms. In fact, Newsom recalls, as “intense repetition, mirroring passages, paradoxical formulations, sensuous imagery, deformations of ordinary syntax, are indications of an attempt to generate an experience of the heavenly realm and its wonders” (Newsom 2012, p. 221). Newsom and Alexander are among those who recognize that communion with angels occurred limitedly through certain types of prayer and liturgy. Among these would also be the Songs, whose repetitive and hypnotic recitation allowed for the experience of the so-called “realized eschatology” (Collins 2016, pp. 208–209).

Thus, the yaḥad itself reflects the community of “angel-priests” who operate the worship in the innermost part of the Temple⁽⁷⁾. The community is structured around this revealed image and is aimed at achieving a “replica” of the angelic reality (Dimant 2014, p. 467). According to what emerges from the Community Rule, we know the ways in which the community used its common spaces and ordered the bodies of the members within the space. This allowed for the integration of verbal and non-verbal aspects in the ritual context (Newsom 2012, p. 221). From this perspective, it can be affirmed that the revealed image⁽⁸⁾ of angelic worship is constitutive of the community. In the liturgy, the wall between the two realms is torn down, and there is a perfect parallelism between the earthly community of the yaḥad and the angelic community (Dimant 2014, p. 470).

4. The use of the root *pl'*

As mentioned, in the second section of the work, there is an intensification of the repetitiveness of language that is employed “to induce dissociated states that facilitate a meditative state of consciousness” (Newsom 2012, p. 217). While Songs 6 and 8 aim to introduce this meditative experience through the repetitiveness of terms, in 7, there is an intention to create “a sense of the numinous” (*ibid.*). According to Ruth Tuschling, “the liturgy is not only (statically) the link with heaven; it is (actively) the means of sanctification and of incorporation into heaven” (Tuschling 2007, p. 131; Dimant 2014, p. 470). Thus, for Michael Jost, the prayer of the Songs would not aim to obtain the prayer of the angels, but in worship, songs and prayers, the real presence of God and communion with the angels would be effectively performed (Jost 2021, p. 7).

Looking at Songs 6–8 in our analysis, where 6 and 8 serve as book-ends towards the focus of Song 7, one can note an exhaustive repetition of certain terms. Among them, we find the root *pl'*, which can be

(7) The characteristics we observe do not correspond to the worship of the Jerusalem Temple but rather to the image of an angelic worship.

(8) The revelation was made to the *maškil*.

translated within the semantic field of wonder. In these three songs “the use of *pl'* is so frequent that the term gains noticeable prominence. In some passages, the lexeme appears in almost every line, giving the impression that its repeated recitation assumes a formulaic, invocative quality” (Thomas 2016, p. 286). We read, for example (Songs 6:37–54):

³⁷He will sing-praise to the king of holiness seven times with [seven
wo]rds of ³⁸wondrous praise-songs, seven psalms of [his blessings].
Seven psalms that magnify [his righteousness]. ³⁹Seven psalms of the
exaltation of his kingdom. [Seven] psalms of [praise of his glory].
⁴⁰Seven psalms [of thanksgiving for his miracles]. [Seven psalms of
rejoicing] for his power. ⁴¹Seven [psalms that sing] of his holiness.
Generations [...] ⁴²[...] with seven wondrous words, words of [...] ⁴³
[...] of the [supreme princes he will bless] in the glorious name
of God all the [...] with seven words] ⁴⁴wondrous. He will bless all
their [councils] in his holy temple ⁴⁵[with seven wondrous words]
and bless those who know the eternal things. [The second] ⁴⁶[of the
supreme princes will bless in the name] of his truth all [their places]
with seven wondrous [words. He will bless] with seven wondrous
words; ⁴⁷[and he will bless ... the] king with seven words of the glo-
ry of his wonders, all the pure ones eternally. The thi[rd] ⁴⁸[of the
supreme princes will bless in the name] of his supreme kingship [all
those of ex]alted knowledge with se[ven wo]rds of exaltation, and all
[the angels of] ⁴⁹the knowledge of [his truth] he will bless with seven
wondrous words; he will bless all those [appointed] to righteousness
[with seven] wondrous words. [The fourth] ⁵⁰of the supreme princes
will bless in the name of the majesty of the king all those who con-
duct themselves righteously with seven majestic words; and he will
bless those who establish the [majesty] with seven ⁵¹wondrous words;
and he will bless all the [angels who approach] the knowledge of his
truth with seven words of righteousness for his glorious mercy. The
fifth ⁵²of the [supreme princes] will bless in the name [of his won-
drous majesty] all those who [know the mysteries of ...] the pure one
with seven words of his exalted ⁵³truth; [and he will bless] all those
who hasten to carry out his will with seven [wondrous words; and he
will bless] all those who recognize his majesty with seven words of
majesty, ⁵⁴for a wondrous thanksgiving.

In the Hebrew Bible, the root *pl'* appears in narrative and poetic (Albertz 1997, p. 1234)⁽⁹⁾ texts and generally expresses acts performed by God, of judgment or redemption⁽¹⁰⁾, which transcend common human experience (Thomas 2009, pp. 136–137) and are unexpected, causing wonder and emphasizing human limitations. In the *Book of Job*, this aspect of human incomprehension regarding the wonders performed by God is particularly emphasized⁽¹¹⁾, establishing a connection between wisdom, creation, and cosmology (Thomas 2009, p. 139). It translates as marvel, wonder, marvelous. It may also refer to the transcendence of God's action, to the extent that it is regarded as incomprehensible, extraordinary, and mysterious⁽¹²⁾. The aspect of limitation is also explicitly emphasized in some Qumranic texts (where it is reiterated that man is simply made of clay or earth)⁽¹³⁾ or, as in the case of the *War Scroll* 1QM XIV:14–15, the mysteries of wonder elevate the one who is in the dust and lower the one who makes himself like God:

¹⁴ For great is the p[lan of] your [glo]ry and your marvelous mysteries in [your] height[s], in order to r[ai]se from the dust for yourself¹⁵ and to humble those of the gods.

Its use in poetic or narrative–sapiential texts can also be found in the Qumran scrolls where it appears for the most part in hymnic, encomiastic, and laudatory passages, so much so that in these contexts *pl'* seems to reveal its predominant meaning.

If what has been said represents the semantic level of the use of the root *pl'*, from a functional point of view, it is immersed in a dynamic of reduction of terms used, in which few terms are repeated multiple times, with a specific intent to create a state of ecstasy and participation in the heavenly liturgy.

(9) Two-thirds of the total occurrences.

(10) For some occurrences of the mysteries of God, terms such as judgment, mercy, or atonement are also used.

(11) Cf. Job 37–38; 42:3.

(12) The *niph'al* conjugation of the root *pl'* can also be rendered as “to exceed” or “to be excessive.” Cf. Alonso Schökel 2013, pp. 677–678; Bonanno 2023, pp. 14–15.

(13) Cf. 1QHa^a IX:23; XII:28–29 and three other texts from the *Hodayot* where we read “mysteries of God.” (1QHa^a XVIII, 5; XX:23; XXI:27).

Throughout the Hebrew Bible, the root *pl'* appears 86 times, of which 39 are in the biblical Psalms. Only in the section 6–8 of the Songs, in contrast to 41 occurrences of the root *qdš* (holy, holiness, sanctuary), 44 of *brk* (bless), and 77 of the number seven, and its derivatives seventh and sevenfold, we find *pl'* 66 times (99 in the entire work). Specifically, 33 times in the Songs 6, 12 in the Songs 7, and 21 in the Songs 8. Furthermore, if we also consider overlapping texts, the sum of the occurrences of the root *pl'* comes after only those of the terms *ʾēlôhîm* (God) and *šəḇaʿ* (seven) (Maier 1992, p. 554).

Of these most used terms, the root *pl'* is the only one that, besides having an instrumental use due to its repetition, represents the attitude of the faithful during praise. Samuel Thomas suggests that *pl'* is used to qualify the heavenly dwelling, the sanctuary or the heavenly sanctuaries, and the most holy area as well as some of its architectural features; the entire firmament, understood as the sum of the heavens, is considered as *pl'*. The clothing of the heavenly priesthood and its equipment is also considered of “wonderful nature” (Thomas 2016, p. 286).

By combining the two, it could be said that the worshiper is led into a state where wonder for the actions of God is the hallmark of their life in the *yahad* and of experiencing angelic communion in the liturgy.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said, along with Newsom, that language itself codifies an experience, indeed:

The investigation of religious experience in communities of antiquity is one of the most elusive of academic quests. It is not, however, an investigation that eludes inquiry entirely. Language itself encodes experience or at least it encodes attempts to induce experience. That encoding is something that is objectively present, and that can be studied. Thus where we have texts that presumably served as scripts or models for performances, we can draw reasonable conclusions about the ways in which religious communities attempted to construct common experiences for individuals in the community and for the body of the community as a whole. [...] The Sabbath Songs illustrate a different type

of inculcated experience, a common worship shared not only by the assembled members of the community but also to a certain extent with the angelic priests themselves (Newsom 2012, pp. 220–221).

Thus, the root *pl'* also appears to be the hallmark of the attitude of one who participates in the liturgy in communion with the angels. Moreover, this root is one of the main keys to access it.

The wonder, in the face of the marvelous works performed by God, and conveyed by the root *pl'*, seems to be one of the main categories through which the experience defined as “realized eschatology” is expressed. This attitude shows what man feels when finding himself synchronized with the rhythms of the cosmos. It is a sort of awareness of being within the mechanism with which God has designed creation. The exaltation of God’s extraordinary works, and the awe of man that follows, derives from God’s revelation of hidden things (*nistarot*). What God has revealed and has been transmitted to the members of the community is a source of wonder.

Having its internal dynamics, through the repetitive use of terms and a particular structure developed in the 13 songs, which invite to enter into an ecstatic state, it could be hypothesized that the entire work was recited in a single session and not divided over 13 Sabbaths⁽¹⁴⁾. If the true purpose of the work is liturgical, how could it be possible that only on certain Sabbaths is this sort of communion facilitated by proceeding in an ecstatic state? In fact, Andrea Lieber states that: “This kind of text only makes sense as a vocalized mantra or meditation, or more likely as a communal song” (Lieber 2004, p. 55).

On one hand, the repetitive style and structure of the thirteen hymns might simply reflect a literary and poetic characteristic; on the other hand, it cannot be excluded that this repetition serves a

(14) “These examples illustrate the way in which the careful manipulation of language constructs an invitation to certain kinds of numinous religious experience. The question that lingers, however, has to do with how the sectarians would have engaged the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice. From my own experience in translating, editing, and commenting on this text, I can say that the effect of the language is most powerful when it is read and experienced in a single sitting. But if the date headings are taken seriously, the Sabbath Songs would not have been experienced as a rhetorical whole but would have been spread out over a quarter of the year. Would not the religious experience of the composition have been significantly weakened if it were encountered in such a piecemeal fashion? It certainly seems so;” *ibid.*, p. 219.

functional purpose for the worshiper, enabling them to enter an ecstatic state in which they experience the afterlife and the wonders of God. In this latter dynamic, the root *pl'* would be significant not only at the textual level but also as an expression of the experience undergone by the worshipers. This experience can be described as one of awe, particularly an awe attainable by members of the *yahad* only through renouncing the sinful worship of the Temple to live in God's holy times within the community of the elect. Those who consider themselves the rest of Israel faithful to the covenant and who separate themselves both from unfaithful Israel and from the Gentiles can thus experience awe in the angelic liturgy. This is evidently a result of the disenchantment caused by the Temple's administration, which, on the threshold of the eschatological era, led to a profound communion with God and His angels.

Thus, considering the obsessive and repetitive use of *pl'* and other terms, it is reasonable to infer that the *Songs* were recited in their entirety to guide the worshipper into a state of communion with the angels. Alternatively, if they were recited individually each Sabbath, exclusively in specific instances (such as in *Songs* 6, 7, and 8), the text may have functioned as an ecstatic mantra, repeated obsessively⁽¹⁵⁾.

Finally, therefore, we can affirm that the change brought about by disenchantment has allowed for a unique experience of communion with the angels and experiencing divine beatitude in the present. The testimony of the understanding of this experience is represented using the language of wonder conveyed by the root *pl'*. The marvelous works of God, the *niflā'ôt*, which cause awe in man, for the members of the *yahad* are experiential thanks to the correct calendar, being in tune with the times that God has impressed upon the cosmos. Enchantment thus is the fruit of this harmony that allows for the experience of liturgical communion with the angels and in fully experiencing the marvelous works of God.

(15) It should be noted that the *Songs* in their literary form appear to be unique within the landscape of Second Temple Judaism. Furthermore, their widespread presence is evidenced by copies found at Masada.

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