

In Animate Praise: **The Heavenly Temple Liturgy of the Apocalypse and The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice**

Sean Michael Ryan

Sean Ryan is a Lecturer in Biblical Studies at Heythrop College, University of London, with a particular interest in apocalyptic/heavenly-ascent literature. A revised version of his PhD, focused on the cosmology of Rev. 9, will be published in Spring 2012.

[s.ryan@heythrop.ac.uk]

I. Introduction

Central to the Apocalypse's visionary logic is its visualisation of the heavenly realm as a celestial temple.¹ Scenes of worship in the heavenly sanctuary can be traced, like a golden-thread, through this visionary narrative (Rev. 4–5, 8:1-6, 11:15-19, 14:2-5, 15:2–16:1, 16:17-21, 19:1-8), revealing the Deity's consummate control over the created cosmos, enthroned in the heavenly Holy of Holies, prior to the cessation of such cultic boundaries in the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21–22). The abundance of hymns in the Apocalypse, the *sanctus* (Rev. 4:8), doxologies (Rev. 5:13, 7:10, 12, 19:1), and acclamations (Rev. 4:11, 5:9, 12), have long been the object of close critical scrutiny. Scholars have sought to tease out the form-critical *Gattung* of each hymn or to assess the significance of hymnic interludes in the unfolding visionary narrative.² More recently, researchers have sought to position the visions of the Deity, enthroned on the *merkabah* throne (Rev 4-5), amidst a broader continuum of Jewish *mystical or heavenly-ascent* traditions, tracing lines of continuity from Ezekiel 1, 10 and 1 Enoch 14, via the Qumran scrolls, and later *hekhalot* literature. Prominent in such an approach have been members of the *SBL Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism Group*, notably April DeConick, Christopher Rowland, Christopher Morray-Jones, and Philip Alexander.³

¹ See Robert A. Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery in the Book of Revelation* (New York, Peter Lang, 1999), pp. 45-110.

² See David Aune, *Revelation 1-5* (WBC; Waco, TX, Word Books, 1997), pp. 314-7, John J. O'Rourke, 'The Hymns of the Apocalypse,' *CBQ* 30 (1968), pp. 399-409, and Leonard Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (Oxford, OUP, 1990), pp. 53-73.

³ See the collection of essays in April DeConick (ed.), *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism* (Leiden, Brill, 2006).

SBL Early Jewish & Christian Mysticism <http://www.aprildeconick.com/jewishxtianmysticism.html>
SBL New Testament Mysticism Project <http://www.aprildeconick.com/ntmysticismproject.html>

This paper engages with contemporary research by drawing out evocative lines of continuity between the description of angelic praise in the heavenly realm in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, and scenes of worship in the celestial temple in the Apocalypse (especially Rev. 4–5). Three aspects will be picked-out for detailed scrutiny in this comparative analysis:

- The architecture and plan of the celestial temple
- The animate praise of the celestial architecture and furnishings
- The prominence of 'seven' as a structural principle

I will begin by offering a broad overview of the structure and content of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, paying particular attention to the three facets noted above. This will lead onto a consideration of the same motifs in the Apocalypse, noting lines of continuity and discontinuity, before concluding with a reflection on potential lines of further research on this topic.

II. The Heavenly Liturgy in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*

The *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* is a Hebrew liturgical text extant in ten fragmentary copies, nine preserved at Qumran (4Q400-4Q407, 11Q17) and one surviving from Masada (Mas1k).⁴ The manuscripts date from c.75 BCE–50 CE,⁵ although the original date of composition is difficult to pinpoint, as it is unclear whether the work was composed by the Qumran community (*yahad*) or simply appropriated and copied by them.⁶ Regardless of whether the *yahad* actually composed the work, however, it ‘functioned as an adopted or naturalized text within the sectarian perspective of the Qumran community’,⁷ and so affords important insights into the community's liturgical practice.

The text provides the rubrics for the Sabbath liturgy of the first quarter of the year (Sabbaths 1-13), in which each ‘Song’ replaces, rather than accompanies,

⁴ Critical editions, with notes and comments are provided by Carol Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* (Atlanta GA, Scholars Press, 1985), James H. Charlesworth & Carol A. Newsom, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations. Volume 4B, Angelic Liturgy: Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck/Louisville, WJK Press, 1999), and James R. Davila, *Liturgical Works* (Grand Rapids MI, Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 83-167.

⁵ Charlesworth & Newsom, *Angelic Liturgy*, 1-6.

⁶ Newsom originally held the text to be a sectarian composition (Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, pp. 1-4), but later changed her mind and now concludes that the text predates the community which subsequently adopted it. See Carol Newsom, ‘“Sectually Explicit” Literature from Qumran,’ in W. H. Propp, B. Halpern & D. N. Freedman (eds.), *The Hebrew Bible and its Interpreters* (Winona Lake, Eisenbraun, 1990), pp. 167-187 (179-185). The data is mixed as although aspects of the work closely coheres with the ideology of the *yahad* (e.g. acceptance of the same solar calendar), other aspects are atypical (e.g. the prominent occurrence of the word *Elohim* – principally to refer to angelic beings – a term more usually avoided in *yahad* compositions).

⁷ Newsom, ‘Sectually Explicit,’ p. 184.

the holocaust offering in the terrestrial temple (cf. Num. 28:9-10; Ezek. 46:4-5).⁸ The reason why only the first quarter of the liturgical calendar (Sabbaths 1-13) is covered is initially puzzling. The most plausible solution is that there was an intimate connection between the performance of the Sabbath liturgy and the *Festival of Weeks* (Deut. 16:9-12, Lev. 23:15ff) which occurred between Sabbaths 11 and 12, and served to mark the Qumran community's annual covenant renewal ceremony (cf. 4Q286-90, 4Q Berakoth, 1QS I.16-III.2).⁹ Both *Sabbath Songs* 11-12 and 4Q Berakoth contain an array of allusions to Ezekiel's vision of the divine throne-chariot (*merkabah*) (Ezek. 1, 10), a prominent text in (later) lectionary readings for the *Festival of Weeks*.¹⁰

Each of the (fragmentary) thirteen Songs commences with a comparable formulaic opening:¹¹

- a. *La-Maskil*;
- b. the number of the Song from one to thirteen;
- c. the date on which the particular Song was to be sung;
- d. a call to the angels to praise God (using the verb *hallelu*)¹²

All thirteen 'Songs' are directed to the *Maskil* (i.e. to/for the Instructor/Sage), a term that designated a senior priestly office-holder in the *yahad* community (cf. 1QS III.13, 1QS IX.12, 1QS IX.21-X.14, 1QH^a XX.11), who most plausibly functioned as the custodian of esoteric celestial lore and leader of each performance of the angelic liturgy at Qumran.¹³

The *Maskil* leads the community in an extended call to praise over a period of thirteen Sabbaths, encouraging the angelic priestly hierarchies, in the heavenly realm, to undertake their duties in the Sabbath liturgy of the *celestial temple*. Strikingly, this liturgical text simultaneously leads its practitioners through a

⁸ Neither Num. 28:9-10 nor Ezek. 46:4-5 suggest that the Sabbath holocaust sacrifices were to be accompanied by singing, but according to 11QPs^a xxvii.5-9 David is the attributed author of fifty-two songs for the Sabbath sacrificial offerings (one for each week of the year); cf. Davila, *Liturgical Works*, pp. 88-9. See also the reference to levitical singers (plus trumpets) accompanying the Sabbath sacrifice in the context of a rededication of the Temple (2 Chron. 29:27-28).

⁹ See Charlesworth & Newsom, *Angelic Liturgy*, p. 4; Davila, *Liturgical Works*, pp. 88-90.

¹⁰ In Second Temple Judaism, the *Festival of Weeks* celebrated the revelation of the Torah at Sinai (cf. *Jubilees* 6:17), closely associating Ezek. 1 with Ps. 68:17-20. See David Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot. Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision* (Tübingen, Mohr-Siebeck, 1988), chs 4 & 8.

¹¹ For an overview of the structure and content of the *Sabbath Songs* see Charlesworth & Newsom, *Angelic Liturgy*, pp. 3-4, Davila, *Liturgical Works*, pp. 86-90, and Philip Alexander, *Mystical Texts* (LSTS 61; London & New York, T & T Clark/Continuum, 2006), pp. 44-50.

¹² Alexander 2006, p. 48; cf. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, p. 6.

¹³ For more details on the role of the *Maskil* at Qumran see Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, pp. 3-4, Davila, *Liturgical Works*, pp. 99-100, Alexander, *Mystical Texts*, pp. 48-49 (49): 'The *Maskil* was probably the community's senior priest, perhaps effectively its "high priest". This would certainly fit with the role he seems to be assigned in Sabbath Songs of mediating between earth and heaven in the performance of the angelic liturgy, and bringing the earthly community near to the celestial sanctuary.'

progressive verbal description of the courts of the celestial temple, culminating in a movement into the inner-shrine (*debir*) of the celestial Holy of Holies where the Deity is enthroned on the divine throne-chariot (*merkabah*).

Songs 1-5:

Although only very partially preserved, Songs 1-5 describe God's establishment of an angelic priesthood in the celestial temple (cf. 4Q400 1.1.3-4: 'And they have become for him priests of [...] ministers of the presence in his glorious inner room')¹⁴ (Song 1), who are hierarchically superior both to non-priestly angels and the terrestrial priesthood (cf. 4Q400 2.6-7: 'how shall we be accounted [among] them? And how shall our priesthood (be accounted) in their dwellings ... the offering of our tongue of dust (compared) with the knowledge of divine [beings]') (Song 2).

Songs 6-8:

This closely interconnected trio of Songs form a 'preliminary crescendo',¹⁵ in the cycle, centred on Song 7, which marks the entry-point into the celestial Holy of Holies. The call to praise in Song 6 is directed to the seven 'chief princes', almost certainly a reference to the seven angels of the Presence, the seven archangels (cf. 1 Enoch 20:1-8),¹⁶ mirrored in the corresponding seven-fold praise uttered by the seven 'deputy princes' in Song 8. Each of the seven chief princes offers a seven-fold psalm of thanksgiving and a seven-fold blessing, as the liturgical text repetitively, ritually, meditates on the number seven in connection with Sabbath worship (cf. 4Q403 1.1.21-3: 'The sixth among the chief princes will bless in the name of [...] the divine beings all those who have powerful insight with seven [wo]rds of his wondrous powers; and he will bless all those whose way is perfect with [se]ven wondrous words, as a [con]tinual sacrifice for all [ag]e[s] to come') (Song 6). The progressive, choral, nature of the *Songs* is evoked by the sevenfold-swell of praise that results as each successive angel in the hierarchy adds his praise to that already being expressed, commencing with the first prince (nearest to God) (Songs 8-9).

Song 7 contains a seven-fold call to praise the Deity who is enthroned in the inner sanctuary (*debir*) of the celestial temple: (4Q403 1.1.41-3: 'Sin[g praise] (to) G[od who is dr]eadful (in) power [...] to [lift] up together the splendidly shining firmament of [his] holy sanctuary [...] god[like] spirits to confe[ss

¹⁴ All translations of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* are taken from Charlesworth & Newsom, *Angelic Liturgy*.

¹⁵ Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones, 'The Temple Within: The Embodied Divine Image and its Worship in the Dead Sea Scrolls and other Early Jewish and Christian Sources,' in Christopher Rowland & Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament* (Leiden, Brill, 2009), pp. 303-39 (p 321). Morray-Jones is critical of Newsom's identification of a pyramidal structure in the *Sabbath Songs*, culminating in Song 7, and he lays the focus instead upon Song 12 (see below).

¹⁶ So Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, pp. 32-36 and Davila, *Liturgical Works*, pp. 120-1.

...fore[ever the firmament of the uppermost heig[h]ts...’ (Song 7)). The architecture of the celestial realm is difficult to pin-down precisely, as the visionary, dream-like, quality of the Song oscillates between two alternative designs. One visualisation is of a seven-heaven cosmos, in which each tier consists of a heavenly sanctuary, replete with its own inner shrine (*debir*) (cf. 4Q403 1.2.14: ‘inner room (*debir*) to inner room (*debir*)’).¹⁷ The alternative design, interwoven with the former, is of a single-heaven model, with a solitary inner sanctuary (*debir*) (cf. 4Q403 1.2.16: ‘holy inner room’ (*debir*) [singular]).¹⁸ The celestial sanctuary is simultaneously singular and seven-fold as the text attempts ‘to communicate something of the elusive transcendence of heavenly reality’.¹⁹

Integral to the transcendent, heavenly, character of the celestial sanctuary is the *animate* nature of its architectural components (gates, portals, pillars). The celestial sanctuary is a *living temple* that joins in the praise of the Deity: (cf. 4Q403 1.2.13-14: ‘And all the decorations of the inner room make haste with wondrous psalms in the inner ro[om ...] wonder, inner room to inner room with the sound of holy tumult’ ((Song 7), (cf. 4Q405 23.1.8-10)).

Alexander neatly captures the crucial significance of this aspect of the celestial sanctuary: ‘The overall impression conveyed is that the heavenly temple is a living temple, made up of serried ranks of angelic spirits, and built out of their praise.’²⁰ The gates or portals in the celestial sanctuary are angelic functionaries in an ornate hierarchy, in which grades of holiness are distinguished on the basis of proximity to the Deity. As a consequence, the celestial temple is itself comprised of hierarchies of animate angels (chief princes, deputy princes, cherubim, ofanim etc.), in much the same way that the *yahad* envisaged itself as a living temple (cf. 1QS 8.4-9, 1QS 11.8-9).

Songs 9-13:

This poorly preserved section retraces the movement of praise from the outer-court to the inner *debir*, echoing Ezekiel's description of the ideal temple (Ezek. 40-48).²¹ The text verbally depicts the architecture and furnishing of the animate celestial sanctuary, progressing inwardly from the outer vestibule into the interior shrine (cf. Ezek. 40:7-8; cf. 1 Kings 6:29-35) (Song 9), before gazing

¹⁷ See Morray-Jones, ‘The Temple Within,’ p. 315: ‘As in I Enoch and the Testament of Levi, the courts and chambers of the temple are, in fact, the celestial levels. The temple is not “in” heaven: its seven “sanctuaries” are the heavens.’

¹⁸ On the complexity of the celestial temple imagery/cosmology of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* see Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, pp. 39-58, Davila, *Liturgical Works*, pp. 84-5, Charlesworth & Newsom, *Angelic Liturgy*, pp. 7-8, Alexander, *Mystical Texts*, pp. 52-5, and Morray-Jones, ‘The Temple Within,’ pp. 311-28.

¹⁹ Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, p. 49.

²⁰ Alexander, *Mystical Texts*, p. 54.

²¹ See Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, pp. 53-8.

beyond the veil (Song 10; cf. Exod. 26:31-35) at the Deity enthroned on the chariot-throne (*merkabah*) in the inner *debir* (Songs 11-12; cf. Ezek. 1, 10). Attention is paid to the decorative 'figures of living godlike beings', that is, the cherubim, (4Q405 1.6 (Song 9), (cf. 1 Kings 6:29, 35, Ezek. 41:17-20) engraved in the vestibule envisaged as animate angelic functionaries offering praise to the Deity. Within the *debir* itself mention is similarly made of 'figures of images of godlike beings engraved round about their glorious brickwork' (4Q405 19.5-6), celestial, animate cherubim reminiscent of Enoch's visionary description (1 Enoch 14:11: 'And the ceiling was like shooting stars and lightning flashes; and among them were fiery cherubim, and their heaven was water') (cf. Exod. 26:1, 31; 36:8, 35; 1 Kings 6:29, 31-35).²²

Another, culminating point is reached with Songs 11-12, which together describe the glory of the Deity enthroned on the divine chariot (*merkabah*) echoing Ezek. 1, 10. These Songs describe the praise of the cherubim, signalled by their wings, in response to the divine stillness (cf. 4Q405 20.7-8). According to the Qumran solar-calendar,²³ Song 12 would have been sung on the 21st day of the third month, that is, the Sabbath immediately following the community's celebration of the *Festival of Weeks* (15th day of the third month), which constituted its annual covenant renewal ceremony (cf. 4Q286-90, 4Q Berakoth, 1QS I.16-III.2).²⁴ Songs 11-12 evoke Ezekiel's vision of the *merkabah* (Ezek. 1, 10), which formed a central component in the Qumran community's celebration of the revelation of the Torah on Sinai (cf. 4Q 286 ii.1-13, 2.1-7, 4Q 287 2.1-13).

The concluding Song (Song 13) focuses on the angelic (chief-)priests, describing their colourful priestly garments (breastplates, ephods), and the sacrifices of praise that they perform before the *merkabah* throne. The plurality of chief-priestly angels coheres with the plurality of celestial shrines (seven *debarim*) in this seven-fold vision of the celestial sanctuary (cf. 4Q 405 23.2.10-12).²⁵ This fragmentary Song concludes the liturgy by offering a retrospective review of the contents of the celestial sanctuary (footstool, *debirim*, portals, firmaments).

²² George W. E. Nickelsburg & James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch. A New Translation* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2004), p. 34.

²³ See James C. VanderKam, *Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Measuring Time* (London & New York, Routledge, 1998).

²⁴ On 4Q Berakoth, the *yahad's* covenant renewal liturgy, and its connections with the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, see Davila, *Liturgical Works*, pp. 41-82 and Alexander, *Mystical Texts*, pp. 61-3.

²⁵ Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden, Brill, 2002), pp. 356-94 proposes that the figures described refer to the senior priestly figures in the *yahad* community, envisaged as 'angelomorphic' human beings who embody the divine Glory. Whilst a close communion between the angelic and heavenly liturgy is required by the performance of the *Sabbath Songs*, it is implausible that the *yahad* priesthood envisaged themselves as replacing the celestial priesthood. For a pointed critique of Fletcher-Louis' proposal see Alexander, *Mystical Texts*, pp. 45-7 and Morray-Jones, 'The Temple Within,' pp. 323-5.

The essential aspects of the angelic liturgy depicted in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, for the purposes of the present article, can be summarised as follows:

● **The architecture and plan of the celestial temple**

The *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* concentrate on the inner sanctuary, rather than the outer courts, of the celestial shrine, divided into two major parts by means of a curtain (*parokhet*): a holy place (vestibule or nave) and an inner holy of holies (*debir*). In the latter sacred space, the Deity is enthroned on an animate cherubim throne echoing Ezek. 1, 10. Strikingly, this familiar template oscillates with a more complex sevenfold design, comprised of seven vestibules, seven curtains, seven *debarim* and seven cherubim thrones, evocative of a seven-heaven cosmology.²⁶

● **The animate praise of the celestial architecture and furnishings**

The celestial sanctuary is a *living temple* comprised of a vast array of angelic beings (*Elohim*) in elaborate hierarchical gradations. Included among such angelic functionaries are the architectural components of this heavenly sanctuary, notably animate carvings of cherubim that decorate the pillars and walls of the celestial realm.²⁷

● **The prominence of ‘seven’ as a structural principle**

Integral to the verbal content and structural design of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* is the importance afforded the number ‘seven’, evident, in particular, in the crescendo of praise that surrounds the 7th Song (enclosed by the sevenfold praise of the chief and deputy angelic princes, Songs 6 & 8), and equally prominent in the sevenfold structure of both the angelic hierarchies and celestial sanctuary/heavens. Newsom memorably suggests that the ‘entire composition seems at times to be a rhapsody on the sacred number seven’.²⁸ The logic of this mantra-like meditation on the number seven is integrally connected with the liturgical focus of this text, namely, the ritual performance of the *Sabbath* day offering of praise for the first quarter of *Sabbaths* of the liturgical calendar.

²⁶ See Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, pp. 39-58 and Alexander, *Mystical Texts*, pp. 52-55.

²⁷ See Morray-Jones, ‘The Temple Within,’ pp. 325-8.

²⁸ Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, p. 49.

III. The Heavenly Temple Liturgy in the *Apocalypse*

How does the depiction of the celestial temple liturgy in the *Apocalypse* compare to that recounted in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*?²⁹ Each of the three key facets under scrutiny will be considered in turn:

● The architecture and plan of the celestial temple

The *Apocalypse*, like a significant number of other Second Temple Jewish heavenly ascent texts including the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (eg. i Enoch 14:8ff, Testament of Levi, 2 Enoch, 3 Baruch) envisions the celestial realm according to the architectural design of the wilderness tabernacle/Jerusalem temple.³⁰ The *Apocalypse* is explicit on this point, openly referring to ὁ ναὸς τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, (the sanctuary, that is, the tent of witness in heaven) (Rev. 15:5), indicating that the architectural plan of the wilderness tabernacle (cf. Exod. 25:40) informs its vision of the sacred space of heaven (cf. Heb. 8:2, 9:11; cf. 4Q 405 22 col. 2 7). A schematic representation of the areas of ‘graded holiness’ within the celestial sanctuary (ὁ ναὸς) in Rev. 4–5 & 8–9 can be tentatively plotted, informed by the spatial design of the wilderness tabernacle (cf. Exod. 25ff), whilst remaining attentive to the spatial references within the text (cf. fig. 1).³¹ The most distinctive aspect of the plan of the celestial sanctuary in the *Apocalypse* is its *concentric* design, such that the *debir* is located at the centre of a circular structure rather than at the eastern end of a rectangular shrine.

At the epicentre of the celestial sanctuary is the central throne (θρόνος) (Rev. 4:2) on which the Deity is enthroned, both consisting of, and encircled by, four living creatures (τέσσαρα ζῶα) (4:6). The image is of an animate version of the inanimate cherubim-throne located in the Holy of Holies of the wilderness tabernacle, modified in the light of Ezekiel’s vision of the ‘living creatures’ that propel the Deity’s throne-chariot (*merkabah*) (cf. Exod. 25:10-22; and cf. Ezek. 1:1-28). The four living creatures constitute part of the animate celestial

²⁹ For previous studies of interconnections between the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* and the *Apocalypse* see Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John*, trans. Wendy Pradels, (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2004), pp. 22-36, David E. Aune, ‘Qumran and the Book of Revelation,’ in Peter W. Flint and James C. VanderKam (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment, Volume II* (Leiden, Brill, 1999), pp. 622-48, Torleif Elgvin, ‘Priests on Earth as in Heaven: Jewish Light on the Book of Revelation,’ in Florentino García Martínez (ed.), *Echoes from the Caves: Qumran and the New Testament* (Leiden, Brill, 2009), pp 257-78, and especially Håkan Ulfsgård, ‘The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and the Heavenly Scene of the Book of Revelation,’ in Anders Klostergaard Petersen et. al (eds.), *Northern Lights on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the Nordic Qumran Network 2003-2006* (Leiden, Brill, 2009), pp. 251-66.

³⁰ See Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York, OUP, 1993) and Adela Yarbro Collins, ‘The Seven Heavens in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses,’ in Adela Yarbro Collins, *Cosmology & Eschatology in Jewish & Christian Apocalypticism* (Leiden, Brill, 2006), pp. 21-54.

³¹ See Michael Chyutin, *Architecture and Utopia in the Temple Era* (London & New York, T. & T. Clark/Continuum), pp. 4-36.

furniture, one positioned at each corner of the Deity’s throne, such that they also encircle the throne to offer their praise (cf. Rev. 5:8, 19:4).³²

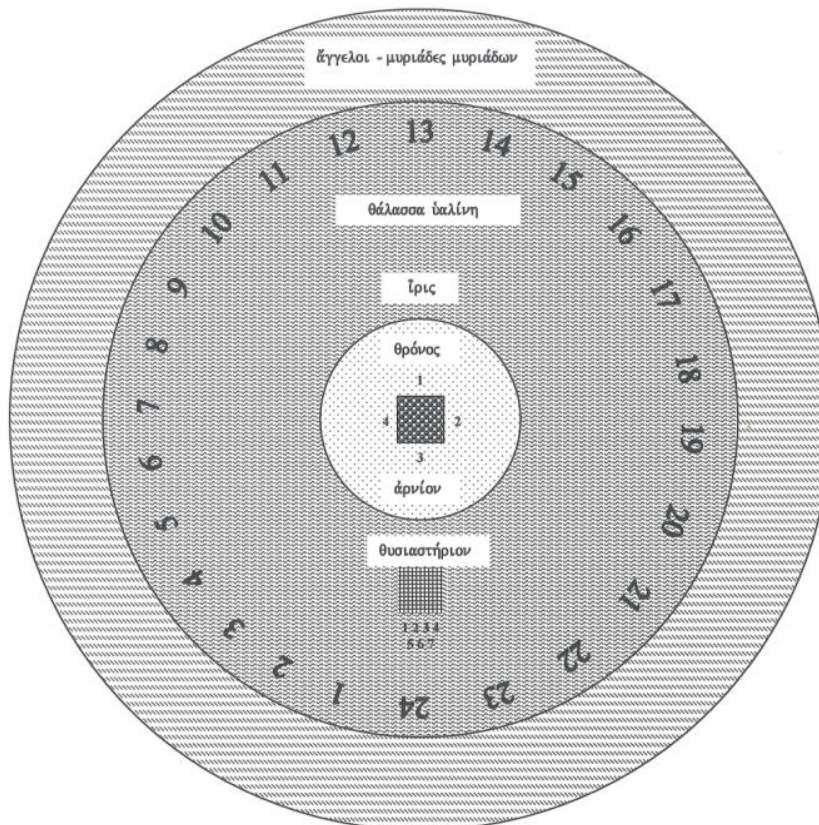


Fig. 1 The Celestial sanctuary of the Apocalypse (Rev. 4–5; 8–9)

Corresponding to the four living creatures who form an inner-ring, encircling the throne (κύκλω τοῦ θρόνου) (Rev. 4:6b), is a second concentric ring formed by the twenty-four enthroned elders who similarly encircle the throne (κυκλόθειν τοῦ θρόνου) (Rev. 4:4).³³ These elders are further removed from the centre than the four living creatures, reflected in their subordinate role in relation to them: the four living creatures lead the celestial liturgy and are followed by the elders

³² It is plausible that a ‘living creature’ is positioned at each corner of the throne, such that each summons a rider from one of the four compass-points (Rev. 6:1-8).

³³ The identity of the twenty-four elders remains a keenly disputed point. For an overview of the major positions (which include heavenly counterparts to the heads of the priestly courses; the twelve sons of Israel; the twelve apostles; and astronomical decans) with additional bibliography see Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, pp. 287-92 and Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery*, pp. 47-49. I interpret these figures as angelic priestly functionaries who correspond to the heads of the twenty-four priestly divisions in the temple (cf. 1 Chron. 23:6, 24:7-18; cf. 4Q *Mishmarot*), primarily because of the evidence of angels as priestly functionaries in other Second Temple Jewish texts (eg. *Jubilees*, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifices*).

(Rev. 4:9-11), who are generally mentioned second when both groups are referred to (cf. Rev. 5:8-10; 14:3).³⁴

Between the inner-circle of the four living creatures, and the perimeter circle of the twenty-four elders, are a range of other items that re-imagine aspects of the furnishings of the wilderness tabernacle, most notably the golden altar of incense and the seven-lamped menorah. The seven lamps (ἑπτὰ λαμπάδες) of Rev. 4:5 explicitly identified as the seven spirits of God (τὰ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ) create a cluster of associative images. These seven lamps located in the celestial sanctuary are resonant of the solitary seven-lamped menorah positioned in the Holy Place of the wilderness tabernacle (Exod. 25:31-40), as well as the visionary re-imagining of this item in both Zech. 4:2ff and Rev. 1:12-20.³⁵ Furthermore, the explicit identification of these lamps with the seven spirits of God (Rev. 1:4, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6) suggests a further layer of meaning, correlating these celestial lamps with the seven spirits = angels who stand in the presence of God's throne, most likely referring to the seven archangels familiar from other heavenly ascent literature (e.g. 1 Enoch 20:1; T. Levi 8:2; cf. 'the seven chief princes' of *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (Song 6)).³⁶ The altar (θυσιαστηρίου) (Rev. 8:3; cf. Rev. 6:9, 8:5, 9:13, 14:18, 16:7), whilst absent from the initial vision of Rev. 4–5, is carefully described in the trumpet-cycle (Rev. 8:1ff). The altar described in Rev. 8:3-5 functionally corresponds to the golden-altar of incense (cf. θυμιάμα, 8:3; cf. Rev. 9:13) immediately positioned before the veil, in the Holy Place of the wilderness tabernacle (cf. Exod. 30:1-6). Although it is uncertain whether this is the sole altar referred to in the Apocalypse, as other references (notably Rev. 6:9) may describe the altar of burnt offering located in the court of priests, it is apparent that the altar of incense is the intended referent in this context.³⁷ Finally, a third concentric ring is formed by the myriads of angels that form an outer circle around the throne (Rev. 5:11, cf. Dan. 7:10).

The design-plan of the celestial temple of the Apocalypse differs markedly from that verbally portrayed in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*. The Apocalypse ascribes to a single-heaven cosmology in which the Deity's *merkabah* throne is located at the centre of a re-imagined, circular, wilderness tabernacle. The *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, by contrast, oscillates between a single-celestial sanctuary and a seven-tiered celestial sanctuary/seven-heavens. Nonetheless, both texts share a *common conceptual world* in that both choose to depict the

³⁴ Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, p. 91. In Rev. 7:1 they are listed in reverse order, from the perspective of the angelic throng.

³⁵ See Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery*, pp. 55-66.

³⁶ See Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, pp. 33-35.

³⁷ Cf. R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* [ICC] Volume I (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1920), pp. 226-30; Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery*, pp. 74-85.

heavenly realm as a celestial temple,³⁸ as is borne out by a series of more precise parallels in the reference to animate inhabitants and furnishings that each celestial temple contains.

● **The animate praise of the celestial architecture and furnishings**

The Apocalypse, like the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, envisages the cultic contents of the celestial temple to be animate functionaries in an elaborate celestial hierarchy. The living creatures of the animate cherubim-throne lead the antiphonal praise of the Deity (cf. Rev. 4:8, 5:9-10, 14), and are envisaged to be hierarchically superior to the twenty-four elders (cf. Rev. 4:9-11), in view of the living creatures' closer proximity to the central throne. Similarly, the horn of the golden altar of incense is an animate celestial functionary (Rev. 9:13), hierarchically superior to the seven trumpet-angels/menorah (i.e. seven archangels, 1 Enoch 20:1-7) in view of its closer proximity to the Deity (cf. fig. 1).³⁹

Such a world-view underlies the Apocalypse's promise to the believers at Philadelphia, who are each offered the potential status of 'pillar' in the (animate) celestial temple hierarchy ('Ο νικῶν ποιήσω αὐτὸν στῦλον ἐν τῷ ναῶ τοῦ θεοῦ μου) (Rev 3:12).⁴⁰ As Elgvin notes, such a conception resonates with the idea, found elsewhere in the Qumran writings, that the community constitutes a living temple of praise to the Deity (cf. 1QS VII.5-10; 4Q 174 1-3 I, 6-7; cf. Eph. 2:20-22).⁴¹

The Apocalypse develops this conception of the heavenly temple as a living community of (angelic) beings in an innovative direction. Unlike the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* the Apocalypse makes no explicit mention of celestial architecture (portals, vestibules, walls etc.) in its description of the heavenly sanctuary (Rev. 4–5) as instead, the *angelic beings* themselves constitute the animate, living temple. The concentric row of twenty-four elders functions as the border of the celestial Holy Place, enclosing the animate version of the altar of incense and the menorah. The outer concentric ring of the angelic multitudes (Rev. 5:11-12) marks the outer-boundary of the celestial temple (*hekhal*), separating this space from the outer courts. The celestial sanctuary of the Apocalypse does not portray the architecture as animate (as does the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifices* with its description of living figures engraved on the brickwork), but rather it removes all architecture, to focus exclusively on the

³⁸ See Ulfgard, 'Heavenly Scene,' pp. 260-1.

³⁹ So also Dale C. Allison, '4Q 403 Fragm. I, Col. I, 38-46 and the Revelation to John,' *RevQ 12* (1986), pp. 409-14 (410).

⁴⁰ See Allison, '4Q 403,' pp. 410-11,

⁴¹ Elgvin, 'Jewish Light,' p. 269.

angelic inhabitants. The angelic hierarchies do not praise the Deity “in” the celestial temple, the angelic hierarchies *are* the celestial temple.

● **The prominence of ‘seven’ as a structural principle**

The Apocalypse could equally well be described as a ‘rhapsody’ on the sacred number seven, given the prominence of seven as a macro-structural principle in the vision’s design-plan (Rev. 2–3 seven letters, Rev. 6–8 seven seals, Rev. 8–11 seven trumpets, Rev. 16 seven bowls).⁴² At the micro-structural level too, patterns of seven are equally prominent (e.g. seven beatitudes Rev. 1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 14). In this regard Ulfgard has highlighted correspondences between the seven-fold words of praise uttered by the seven chief princes and deputy princes (*Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, Songs 6 & 8) and the sevenfold doxologies of praise in Rev. 5:12 and 7:12.⁴³

Rev. 7:12: “Amen! Blessing (εὐλογία) and glory (δόξα) and wisdom (σοφία) and thanksgiving (εὐχαριστία) and honour (τιμή) and power (δύναμις) and might (ἰσχύς) be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.”

What conclusions may be drawn from this correspondence? As noted above, it is plausible that the recurrent, meditative, emphasis upon the number seven in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, especially the concentration on this numeral surrounding Song 7, derives in no small part from the liturgical function of this text, focused on the sacrifice of praise to be offered during the Sabbaths that occur in the first quarter of the liturgical year. Might not the recurrent emphasis upon the number seven in the Apocalypse, be similarly informed by a liturgical performance centred on the Lord’s day (ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ) (Rev. 1:10)?⁴⁴

IV. Conclusion

The celestial temple liturgy of the Apocalypse shares a wealth of conceptual parallels with the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*. Both texts visualise the heavenly realm(s) as the interior of a celestial temple (Holy Place, Curtain, Holy of Holies (*debir*)), replete with animate angelic worshippers. For both authors

⁴² On the organizing significance of seven see Richard Bauckham, ‘Structure and Composition,’ in *Ibid.*, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1993), pp. 1-37 (esp. pp. 7-15).

⁴³ Ulfgard, ‘Heavenly Scene,’ pp. 262-3.

⁴⁴ See Davila, *Liturgical Texts*, p. 91: ‘John’s vision is explicitly set “on the Lord’s day” (1:10), the Christian analogue to the Sabbath (cf. Barn. 15:1-9).’ On the development of the idea of the ‘Lord’s day’, see Richard Bauckham, ‘The Lord’s Day,’ in D. A. Carson (ed.), *From Sabbath to the Lord’s Day* (Grand Rapids MI, Zondervan, 1982), pp. 221-50.

the celestial temple is a *living, animate* structure of praise, comprised of graded hierarchies of angelic functionaries (from archangels to pillars).

Strikingly, both texts may also be described as a ‘rhapsody’ on the sacred number seven, informed by the liturgical context in which each text is explicitly positioned (Sabbath/Lord's Day (cf. Rev. 1:10)). Such a conclusion raises broader questions concerning the composition and early reception of the Apocalypse. To what extent might the Apocalypse's imagery correlate with liturgical festivals in a comparable way to *Songs* 11-12, which are integrally linked with the *Festival of Weeks* (4Q Berakoth)? Although previous, creative, attempts to discern a lectionary pattern in the Apocalypse foundered on a lack of lectionary evidence,⁴⁵ resonant parallels with the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, and its evident liturgical positioning, suggest that this issue may merit renewed investigation.

⁴⁵ See especially Austin Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images. The Making of St John's Apocalypse* (London, Dacre Press, 1949), and Michael D. Goulder, ‘The Apocalypse as an Annual Cycle of Prophecies,’ *NTS* 27 (1981), pp. 342-67. For critical evaluations of the existence of Jewish lectionary cycles in the first century CE see Mark S. Goodacre, *Goulder and the Gospels: An Examination of a New Paradigm* (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), Part III.