

Article

Nominal Density and Semantic Compression in the Liturgical Style of 4QBerakhot

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Abstract

This article examines the stylistic and rhetorical function of the construct state in a liturgical pericope from 4QBerakhot (4Q286, frg. 1a ii, lines 1–11), one of the densest concentrations of construct chains in the Qumran corpus. Through close philological reading, colometric analysis, and systematic comparison with related Yahad compositions—chiefly the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, the Community Rule, and the Hodayot—it argues that the construct state functions here not merely as a syntactic relation but as a stylistic and theological device. Sequences of construct phrases compress multiple semantic relations into compact nominal units, multiply rare plural forms (“double plurality”), and recast abstract concepts as fixed entities within a heavenly architecture. The suppression of finite verbs produces a non-eventive, static mode of representation: rather than recounting a visionary event, as in Ezekiel’s throne theophany, the text presents the worshipper with a static heavenly reality and a calendar of fixed times for praise. The pericope thereby reworks prophetic vision into nominal liturgy, constructing the community’s presence within sacred space through language itself. The study illuminates how nominal density operates as a constitutive feature of Qumran liturgical style and invites broader comparison across the Scrolls.

Keywords: 4QBerakhot; Dead Sea Scrolls; Qumran Hebrew; construct state; nominal density; liturgical poetry; Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice; non-eventive representation; Merkavah tradition

1. Introduction

Poetry has to do with vocabulary just as prose has not. ... It is a vocabulary entirely based on the noun as prose is essentially and determinately and vigorously not based on the noun.

Gertrude Stein, “Poetry and Grammar” (from *Lectures in America*). Writings 1932–1946. New York: Library of America, 1998. p. 327

The Hebrew of the Qumran Scrolls is distinguished by its linguistic richness and by its variety of distinctive grammatical features.¹ Beyond its contribution to historical linguistics and lexicography, it raises significant questions for the study of style and poetics: many compositions display linguistic density, extended nominal sequences, and the compression of multiple semantic relations into compact structures. One of the most conspicuous phenomena in this context is the intensive use of construct state phrases, especially sequences of construct chains. In linguistic research, the construct state has usually been de-



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scribed as a syntactic phenomenon within the morpho-syntactic system of Hebrew (Joüon and Muraoka 2006, §129; Waltke and O'Connor 1990, §9.1–9.7; for the Scrolls, Qimron 2019, pp. 281–99). This article argues that, in the liturgical pericope examined here, the construct state goes even further: it functions as a stylistic and rhetorical device that condenses semantic units, constructs heavenly space through nominal cataloging, and converts sequential, event-driven narration into dense nominal representation. This article examines the stylistic, literary, and theological function of such construct state chains in a liturgical pericope from 4QBerakhot (4Q286, frg. 1a ii). It describes how patterns of nominal density create the non-eventive, static, somewhat anti-narrative character of the passage and shape its liturgical register. By a “non-eventive” (or “static”) mode of presentation, we do not mean the absence of meaning or sequence but the replacement of event-driven verbal narration by a nominally organized mode of presentation; where the looser term “non-narrative” is used below, it should be understood in this restricted, technical sense.

The primary text 4Q286, frg. 1a ii, lines 1–11, is read principally according to Nitzan's critical edition in DJD 11 (Nitzan 1998), with selected readings from Qimron (2020), adopted where contextually and paleographically preferable, as detailed in the notes below. Comparative material is drawn from other Qumranic poems, chiefly from the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (Newsom 1985, 1998), the Community Rule (Licht 1965; Hempel 2020), and the Hodayot (Schuller and Newsom 2012), to situate the pericope within the broader stylistic and ideological context. The fragmentary state of 4Q286 frg. 1 requires caution: since the beginning of the syntactic unit is not preserved, the construct chains cannot always be assigned a secure syntactic function. The analysis therefore focuses not on reconstructing a complete sentence but on the rhetorical and stylistic effect produced by the preserved nominal sequence.

2. The Pericope and Its Textual Tradition

The pericope discussed here, characterized by an unusual density of construct phrases, is part of a liturgical composition known as 4QBerakhot. The fragments of this composition were first published and discussed by Billah Nitzan, who had already addressed the composition in her monograph (Nitzan 1994, pp. 52–57) and later presented wider analyses (Nitzan 1995, 1998, 2000). Nitzan identified five fragmentary copies (4Q286–4Q290) and showed that three of them share a degree of overlap (Nitzan 1998, pp. 1–5). In his edition, Qimron termed the composition “Blessings and Curses” and distinguished several compositions: the first is represented by three copies, 4Q286, 287, and 288, alongside two additional compositions whose degree of overlap is unknown (Qimron 2020, pp. 266–68).

Alongside her pioneering work in deciphering and editing the text, Nitzan established its function as the central liturgy of the Yahad community's ceremony of blessings and curses and pointed out its stylistic and thematic similarity to the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice. Mika Pajunen analyzed the motif of creation in this composition, primarily in fragments 3 and 5 of 4Q286, and proposed that creation functions as the liturgical axis connecting the blessing and curse units of the composition (Pajunen 2018). Jutta Jokiranta drew attention to the dense style of the present pericope and interpreted it as a “list style” (Jokiranta 2017, p. 440). She underscored the poetic effect of the list, unusually employed as a liturgical text, and argued that the near-complete absence of conjugated verbal forms, together with the chain of nouns and adjectives, shifts the center of gravity from verbal syntax to the very act of enumeration. In this way, the list is not merely a form of presentation but a rhetorical technique, requiring the recipient to organize and decode the meaning relations among the items.

The discussion focuses on the well-preserved lines 1–11. An additional broken construct phrase appears in line 12, followed by remnants of two words in line 13, but the

degree of preservation does not allow for secure interpretation. In the photograph available on the Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library website, the ends of the lines have faded.² These lines are more clearly attested on the older PAM image 42.415.³

As can be seen in the image, the pericope is preserved on the second column of a medium-sized fragment (1 ii), completed by an additional small fragment (2). Preceding it on fragment 1 is another column, from which the ends of two lines in the middle of the column are preserved (Nitzan 1998, pp. 1–5). The existence of a preceding column indicates that the pericope did not stand as an independent literary composition. Therefore, the dense sequence of construct state phrases, which appear as an ambiguous chain without a clear syntactic function, may stem from the absence of the preceding lines. It is therefore possible that the construct phrases constitute a long chain of appositions within the predicate component of a sentence that began earlier. But, in fact, any syntactic relationship is possible, both at the opening and at the close of the pericope.

Most of the pericope describes the wonders of the divine throne, but at the end of line 8, a sharp turn occurs, both formal and thematic. Construct phrases continue, but each is now followed by an additional prepositional phrase, and the content shifts to the appropriate times of prayer. It may be tentatively proposed that the preceding lines on column 1 conveyed praise to the deity, as in the continuation of 4QBerakhot and in many prayer compositions from Qumran. If so, within the words of praise, there occurs a lengthy parenthetical excursus about the praise of the divine throne (lines 1–8), after which the poet returned to recount the times of prayer.

2.1. Text and Translation of the Pericope

The following transcription follows Nitzan's DJD 11 edition with modifications as noted (square brackets = lacuna; ○ = illegible letter; {x} = scribal correction):

- 1 מושב יקרכה והדומי רגלי כבודכה ב[מ]רומי עומלכה ומד[ס]⁴
- 2 קודשכה ומרכבות כבודכה כרוביהמה ואופניהמה וכול סודי[המה]
- 3 מוסדי אש ושביבי נוטה וזהרי הוד נה[ר]⁵ אורים ומאורי פלא
- 4 [הו]ד והדר ורום כבוד סוד קודש ומק[ר]ז[ו]הר⁶ ורום תפארת מ[קור]
- 5 [דע]זת⁷ ומקוה גבורות הדר תשובחות וגדול נוראות ורואש⁸ ○○○○
- 6 ומעשי פלאים סוד חוכמה ותבנית דעה ומקור {מ}בינה⁹ מקור¹⁰ ערמה
- 7 ועצת קודש וסוד אמת אוצר שכל מבני צדק ומכוני יוש[ר] רוב
- 8 חסדים וענות טוב וחסדי אמת ורחמי עולמים ורזי פל[א]¹¹ ימי ○○○
- 9 בהר[אותמה] ושבועי קודש בתכונמה ודגלי חודשים []
- 10 [וראשי ש]ים בתקופותמה ומועדי כבוד בתעודות[מה] []
- 11 [ושבחות ארץ במהל[קתמה] ומו[עדי דרו]ר]

The translation is based on Nitzan in DJD 11, except where the reading has been altered following Qimron or where minor adjustments are required by the reconstruction adopted here. As a rule, construct phrases are rendered by genitive constructions of the form “[nomen regens] of [nomen rectum]” (e.g., “chariots of glory” rather than “glorious chariots”). This choice is intended to leave open, as far as possible, the semantic range of the Hebrew construct state rather than to prejudge it, as the genitive relation between two nominal components may encode source, domain, quality, affiliation, or mode of being. Adjectival renderings are used only where they are required by English idiom, since they often collapse the multivalency of the Hebrew construct into a single descriptive reading.

Another change in the translation involves a different sense division than the one adopted by Nitzan. In her translation, the entire line 2 constitutes one sentence, which results in line 3 being a raw sequence of nouns without a clear syntactic structure. In contrast, we place a period after “and their wheels”, beginning a new sentence with “All

[their] councils (are)”. Although the placement of this sense-division is an interpretive decision, it is grounded in the colometry and syntax of the passage: reading “all [their] councils” as the subject of a long nominal sentence yields a coherent subject–predicate structure for lines 3–8, rather than an unstructured run of nouns.

Translation

1. The seat of Your honor and the footstool of the feet of Your glory in the [h]eights of Your standing place and the trea[d]
2. of Your holiness; and the chariots of Your glory, their cherubim and their wheels. All [their] councils (are)
3. foundations of fire and flames of brightness, and flashes of splendor, str[eam]s of light and wondrous lights.
4. [Majes]ty and splendor, and height of glory, foundation of holiness and foun[tain of b]rightness, and height of beauty; foun[tain]
5. [of knowl]edge and a well of powers, splendor of praises and greatness of awesome deeds, and the head of []
6. and miraculous works; a foundation of wisdom and a pattern of knowledge and a fountain of insight, a fountain of prudence
7. and a counsel of holiness, and a foundation of truth, a treasury of understanding; structures of justice and foundations of uprightness;
8. [abundance] of kind deeds and virtuous humility, and loyal kindness and eternal mercies. And wo[ndrous] myster[ies]. Days of []
9. in their app[earance] and holy weeks in their fixed order, and divisions of months, []
10. [beginnings of y]ears in their cycles and festivals of glory in times ordained [for them,]
11. []and the sabbatical years of the earth in [their] divi[sions and appo]inted times of liber[ty]

2.2. Structure of the Pericope and Division into Units

The pericope contains no morphological markers that would support its division into units (on the scribal markers that elsewhere signal textual division in the Scrolls, see [Tov 2004](#)). The division must therefore be made primarily on thematic grounds. An additional difficulty is that parallelism in Qumranic poetry does not follow the framework of two or three parallel cola conventional in biblical poetry but may extend over four, five, or more cola ([Reymond 2006](#); [Miller 2012](#); [Stökl Ben Ezra 2019](#)). Before examining the stylistic function of construct state phrases, the principal themes, prosodic features, and biblical background of each part will be indicated.

The first chain, whose beginning is broken, presents an extravagant description of the seat of the divine glory:

2.2.1. Part A

והדומי רגלי כבודכה ב[מ]רומי עומדכה ומזר[ס] קודשכה ומרכבות כבודכה כרוביהמה ואופניהמה
מושב יקרכה

The seat of Your honor and the footstool of the feet of Your glory in the [h]eights of Your standing place and the trea[d]
of Your holiness; and the chariots of Your glory, their cherubim and their wheels.

The construct phrases in Part A are not morphologically uniform and reveal from the very opening the sophisticated way construct phrases are deployed. Alongside simple phrases such as *מושב יקרכה* and *קודשכה* [מזל] there appear two expanded expressions:

- (1) *והדומי רגלי כבודכה ב[מ]רומי עומלכה*—and the footstool of the feet of Your glory in the [h]eights of Your standing place
- (2) *ומרכבות כבודכה כרוביהמה ואופניהמה*—and the chariots of Your glory, their cherubim and their wheels

Expression (1) is in fact a chain of two construct phrases: first comes a long phrase with two nomina regentia, followed by a second phrase attached to it as a prepositional phrase. Expression (2) appends two additional components dependent on the construct phrase by means of a possessive suffix.

In describing the divine throne, the author weaves together four manifestations of the divine seat: the throne (*מושב*), the footstool (*הדום*), the treading place (*מדרס*), and the chariot (*מרכבות*). Rather than directly elaborating the throne scene of Ezekiel 1, the passage draws on a broader merkavah vocabulary associated with Ezekiel's throne vision and related liturgical traditions, especially the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice.¹² The footstool and the tread are not mentioned in Ezekiel, nor is the term *מושב* used; only a “seat” (*כסא*) appears there. The combination of these elements is well attested in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, and indeed the present pericope shows substantial affinities with portions of those songs, particularly the eleventh and following Sabbath songs, which describe the dwelling of the deity and the heavenly sanctuary. At the end of the final song, the cycle concludes with a summary-like catalogue of the parts of the heavenly sanctuary, from the inside outward (Mizrahi 2020).¹³ That description is preserved on column 10 of the scroll 11Q17 and includes expressions like those appearing in the present pericope (Qimron 2020, p. 380):

משאי קודש ולכסאי כבודו ולהדום ר[גליו ולמר] כבות הדרו

(11Q17 frags. 23–25, lines 6–7)

the carrying frames of holiness, and the thrones of His glory, and the footstool of His [feet, and the cha]riots of His splendor.

The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice mention the footstool elsewhere, and alongside it the eleventh Sabbath Song also mentions the treading place, *מדרס* (4Q405 19 1).¹⁴ The plural form *מרכבות* (“chariots”) is also common in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, appearing for example in the seventh Sabbath Song in a line very similar to the present one:

והללו יחד מרכבות דבירו וברכו פלא כרוביהם ואופניהם

(4Q403 1 ii 15)

And they shall praise together the chariots of his innermost sanctuary and bless them wondrously, their cherubim and their wheel[s]

Returning now to the opening of 4QBerakhot (Part A), we note the author's deliberate emphasis on the word *כבוד* (“glory”), which appears in construct form twice in Part A (namely, in “the footstool of the feet of Your glory” and “the chariots of Your glory”) and once more in the parallel Aramaic term *יקר*.¹⁵ Moreover, unlike the third-person descriptions in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, all the cola in this section are phrased as second-person address to the deity with the suffix *-כה*, a feature that distinguishes the Berakhot pericope from its closest liturgical parallel.

2.2.2. Part B

This section continues the account of the divine environment, focusing on five facets of divine glory: radiance (B1), glory and its derivatives (B2), works of creation (B3), wis-

dom (B4), and the throne as a stable structure founded on steadfast righteousness and mercy (B5).

Part B1

וכול סודי[המה] מוֹסְדֵי אֵשׁ וּשְׁבִיבֵי נוֹגֶה וְזֹהָרֵי הוֹד נֶהְ[ר] יְאֻרִים וּמֵאֹרֵי פֶלֶא

All [their] councils are foundations of fire and flames of brightness, and flashes of splendor, str[eam]s of light and wondrous lights.

Part B2

[הוֹ]ד וְהֶדֶר וְרוֹם כְּבוֹד סוֹד קוֹדֵשׁ וּמֶלֶךְ[וֹר ז] וְזֶהָר וְרוֹם תְּפָאֶרֶת

[Majes]ty and splendor, and height of glory, foundation of holiness and foun[tain of b]rightness, and height of beauty;

Part B3: The Works of Creation

מִן[קוֹר דַּע]וֹת וּמִקּוֹה גְבוּרוֹת הָדָר תְּשׁוּבוֹחוֹת וּגְדוֹל נוֹרָאוֹת וְרוֹאֵשׁ וּמַעֲשֵׂי פֶלֶאִים

foun[tain of knowl]edge and a well of powers, splendor of praises and greatness of awesome deeds, and the head of [] and miraculous works.

Lines 5–6 form a distinct cluster within Part B, praising the deity for the works of creation. Following Qimron's reading מִן[קוֹר דַּע]וֹת ("fountain of knowledge"), the sequence מִן[קוֹר דַּע]וֹת וּמִקּוֹה גְבוּרוֹת הָדָר תְּשׁוּבוֹחוֹת וּגְדוֹל נוֹרָאוֹת coheres as praise of the creator. The phrase מִקּוֹר דַּעוֹת echoes the designation of the deity as creator in 1QS III, 15: מֵאֵל הַדַּעוֹת "From the God of knowledge... comes all that is and shall be".

The cluster's closing phrase מַעֲשֵׂי פֶלֶאִים renders the creation theme explicit. The lexeme מעשה, especially its plural construct מעשֵׂי, is markedly more frequent in the language of the Scrolls than in the Hebrew Bible, and is heavily concentrated in liturgical and sapiential texts, where it functions as a standard component of the praise of the deity as creator: in Jubilees 2:2–3 (4Q216 V 10); in Ben Sira's hymn to the creator (Sir 42:15–43:33); in the Hodayot (e.g., 1QH^a V, 17–25); in the Hymn of the Maskil in the Rule of the Community (1QS X, 17; XI, 16); in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (4Q403 1 i 35; 4Q405 19–23); in the wisdom compositions Mysteries (4Q299–301) and 4QInstruction (4Q415–418, 423); and within 4QBerakhot itself. Within this established lexical pattern, the closing phrase of B3 is naturally read as praise of the divine acts of creation.

Part B4

סוֹד חֹכְמָא וּתְבִנִּית דַּעָה וּמִקּוֹר {מ}בִּינָה מִקּוֹר עֵרְמָה וְעֵצָת קוֹדֵשׁ וְסוֹד אִמְתָּ אֹצֵר שְׁכֶל

a foundation of wisdom and a pattern of knowledge and a fountain of insight, a fountain of prudence and a counsel of holiness, and a foundation of truth, a treasury of understanding;

Part B5: The Throne as a Stable Structure

מִבְּנֵי צֶדֶק וּמִכּוֹנֵי יוֹשֶׁר[וֹר רֹב] חֲסִידִים וְעִנּוֹת טוֹב וְחֲסִידֵי אִמְתָּ וּרְחֲמֵי עוֹלָמִים וְרוֹזֵי פֶלֶא

structures of justice and foundations of uprightness; [abundance] of kind deeds and virtuous humility, and loyal kindness and eternal mercies. And wo[ndrous] myster[ies].

Part B of the pericope opens with the term סוֹד in the phrase [המה]סודי, followed immediately by אֵשׁ מוֹסְדֵי, and later develops the same semantic field through סוֹד קוֹדֵשׁ, סוֹד חֹכְמָא, as well as through the structurally related terms מִבְּנֵי צֶדֶק and מִכּוֹנֵי יוֹשֶׁר (4Q286

1a ii 2–8). In Qumran Hebrew, סוד may retain its biblical sense of “council” or “assembly” (cf. Jer 6:11; 15:17), but it can also approach the sense “foundation,” through association or graphic/phonetic proximity with מוסד / יסוד, “foundation” (Licht 1965, pp. 179, 229–31; Fabry 2013, pp. 1073–79). Thus, in the present passage, סוד is not a merely lexical item but a hinge-word: it evokes both the heavenly council surrounding the deity and the stability of the heavenly structure. A further semantic axis is created by the repeated use of terms for “source”, especially מקור דעות and מקור בינה / מקור מבינה, together with מקור גבורות and מקור ערמה (4Q286 1a ii 5–6; Qimron 2020, pp. 266–68). The result is a compact cluster in which the divine realm is imagined simultaneously as council, foundation, and source: it burns with fire and light (B1), is elevated, holy, awesome, and wondrous (B2) and becomes a locus of supernal wisdom, from which chosen humans may receive a share (cf. Prov 30:3; Job 15:8; 1QS IV, 22).

The construct phrase תבנית דעה (“pattern of knowledge”) should be understood with the broader semantic history of תבנית in mind. The noun, probably a loanword from Akkadian *tabnītu* with the sense “image”, gains the technical sense of an architectural model or plan in Late Biblical Hebrew and ultimately comes to express a metaphysical “prototype” (Fogielman 2025; Najman and Dietrich 2025). In biblical usage, תבנית may denote a concrete model revealed to a human figure—most famously the תבנית המשכן shown to Moses (Exod 25:9, 40)—but Najman and Dietrich trace a wider range of meanings, including a paradigmatic model that one is summoned to realize. When read within the surrounding chain of cognitive-architectural constructs, the phrase תבנית דעה participates in a broader tendency of the pericope whereby the architectural metaphor “structure of knowledge” is shifted to the heavenly sphere; knowledge is figured as a pattern or paradigm belonging to the divine order rather than associated with elements of masonry. The neighboring phrases “a foundation of wisdom” (with the nuances contained in the word סוד), “a fountain of insight” call for an abstract translation of תבנית and justify the choice of “pattern” or even “prototype” as suggested by Fogielman (2025, p. 11).

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Similarly, אוצר (“treasury”), which in the Hebrew Bible typically denotes a material storehouse, such as אוצרות שלג ואוצרות ברד (“storehouses of snow” and “storehouses of hail,” Job 38:22), is relocated in 4Q286 to the cognitive domain in the construct phrase אוצר שכל (“treasury of insight”), thereby transforming insight from an abstract property into something that can be stored, accessed, and situated within the heavenly order (cf. Ben-Dov 2007; Macaskill 2019).

The cumulative effect is that abstract concepts such as בינה, ערמה, שכל, צדק, and יושר acquire a quasi-material reality within the heavenly space of 4Q286. In each construct

phrase, an abstract noun stands in the nomen rectum slot of a phrase whose nomen regens is drawn from a concrete, spatial, or architectural domain—source (מקור), reservoir (מקוה), foundation (מבני/מוסד), emplacement (מכון), Pattern (מבנה/תבנית), or storehouse (אוצר). The construct relation forces the abstract term to be construed as the content, material, or domain of a bounded entity that occupies a place in the heavenly world. For example, שכל is stored in the אוצר. Because these same nomina regentia are elsewhere predicated of God's dwelling, the abstractions are thereby relocated into sacred space and ranged alongside its furniture. Morphology is thus enlisted in the service of rhetoric: the abstract becomes structured, localized, present, and classified.

Part B also portrays the divine throne as a structure or foundation (מכון), established by steadfast righteousness and truth. These attributes usually appear in the nomen rectum position of construct phrases, with the synonymous phrase אמת חסדי forming a notable exception (Avishur 1977, 1984). The imagery draws on biblical descriptions of the royal and divine throne, such as Isa 16:5 and Ps 97:2 ("righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne"), as well as Ps 89:3–5, where steadfast love is established forever and the throne is eternally fastened.

2.2.3. Part C

This section is different from its predecessors, both in content and in form. It deals with the times appropriate for praising the deity and resembles in its themes the prayer psalms of the Community Rule and the Hodayot:

The sequence of simple construct phrases now becomes a series of cola in each of which a construct phrase is followed by a prepositional complement. The turning point between Parts B and C has not been preserved, making it difficult to determine how the transition occurred; it involves a syntactic shift and appears very abrupt. As noted above, the end of line 8 is not preserved and the reconstruction requires the supplementation of "days" or of a phrase such as "days of light" to open the temporal chain.

The chain describes the times appropriate for the singing of praise: turning points and renewals in the movement of the celestial bodies, that is, the beginning of each temporal unit, from the shortest preserved unit ("days of ...") to the longest ("seasons of release," that is, the Jubilee year). The broken line 12 apparently designates an even longer period: נצח לורי ("generations of eternity"), but the context is fragmentary. All these times are engraved in the order of nature and in the movement of the luminaries. The prepositional phrase at the end of each colon expresses the fixity of the appointed times, which were planned, set, and measured ahead of time. Part C closely resembles the poem known as the "Hymn of the Seasons" in the Community Rule, 1QS X, 1–8 (Licht 1965, pp. 205–8; Newsom 2004, pp. 109–13; Ben-Dov 2008, pp. 44–47; Penner 2012, pp. 64–137; Hempel 2020, pp. 265–300). A paraphrase of that hymn also appears in Hodayot XX, 4–11 (Bakker 2023, pp. 127–31) and a distant echo appears in 4Q408 (see below).

To conclude, the pericope from the composition 4QBerakhot deals with the liturgical context of praise to the deity and to his dwelling. Various items of divine furniture are mentioned in Part A, after which the author proceeds to describe the greatness of the deity and of the divine council encompassing him (Part B). Parts A–B reveal extensive similarity to the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice. A formal transition at the end of line 8 leads to a thematic shift in which the poet moves to describe the fixity of the times for praising the deity. That section closely resembles the "Hymn of the Seasons" from the Community Rule and was apparently composed in its wake. It is difficult to determine the reason for such an abrupt and radical transition. As proposed above, we may surmise that Part C continues the text from the preceding column not preserved in the scroll; in which case, the pericope began with a statement about praise to the deity and its times, moved to a

parenthetical aside to discuss the greatness of the Throne of Glory, and then returned to the times of prayer.

3. Nominal Density

On the theoretical level, scholarship has proposed several ways of understanding how poetic language compresses meaning into a brief utterance. The discussion of “poetic density” emphasized the capacity of construct state structures to carry a descriptive and emotional charge that exceeds their narrow grammatical function (Sovran 2000, p. 126). Mizrahi’s study of the eleventh Song of the Sabbath Sacrifice analyzes its literary form and exegetical content. Analyzing fragment 19 of that song, he observes that the passage contains only a single finite verb. Building on Newsom’s description of its “long strings of elaborate construct chains,” he shows that it is nonetheless composed of well-formed verbless (nominal) sentences—an analysis that resolves the syntactic difficulty earlier interpreters had found in the text (Mizrahi 2020, pp. 13–15, and 14 n. 15, citing Zewi 1999, 2007). Research on biblical poetry has likewise shown that brief, parallel, word-pair-laden structures are among the central means by which poetry creates intensity and semantic density (Kugel 1981; Watson 1984; Alter 1985; Berlin 1985).

Nominal density is not unique to this pericope. Scrolls literature provides additional examples of passages in which construct state phrases and nominal sequences accumulate until they become the central expressive device. In liturgical, sapiential, and legal compositions alike, one can find expressions in which the content does not advance by means of explicit verbal syntax but is built from a chain of concepts. For instance, in 4QInstruction:

7 ולסגור בעד רשעים ולהרים ראוש דלים [--]
8 בכבוד עולם ושלוה עד ורוח חיים להבדיל [--]
9 כול בני חוה (חיה) ובכוח אל ורוב כבודו עם טובו [--]
(4Q418 126 ii 7–9)

to shut against the wicked and to lift the head of the poor... [] in eternal glory, and everlasting peace, and the spirit of life... to separate [] all the children of Eve, and with the power of God and the abundance of His glory [].

In this passage, several construct phrases appear in dense sequences such as בכבוד עולם and ושלוה עד, such that the expression is built from a chain of nouns alongside the explicit verbal syntax.

A more distinct pattern is discernible in the Hodayot, for instance in 1QH^a IX, 21–23

ואני יצר החומר ומגבל המים סוד הערוה ומקור הנדה כור העוון ומבנה החטאה רוח התועה ונעוה בלא בינה
I am a vessel of clay and kneaded with water, a foundation of shame and a spring of filth, a melting pot of iniquity and a structure of sin, a spirit of error, perverted without understanding (English translation: DSSEL)

The cluster of construct phrases רוח התועה and סוד הערוה ומקור הנדה כור העוון ומבנה החטאה creates language saturated with conceptual density and nominal concentration.

A similar tendency is visible in the Community Rule, for instance in the poetic line built on antithetical parallelism (1QS III, 19):

במעון אור תולדות האמת / וממקור חושך תולדות העול

In the abode of light are those born of truth, and from the source of darkness are those born of iniquity (our translation).

In this line, the construct state serves not only to link the nouns but also for the syntactic and poetic organization of antithetical parallelism. Each colon is an independent nominal sentence, with both the subject and the predicate built of construct phrases. The passage is thus distinguished not by the mere existence of nominal density but by its constitutive role in the poetic effect.

A further dimension of the 4QBerakhot's nominal character is the interplay between singular and plural forms among its constituent nouns. Lines 3–5 exhibit a striking morphological distribution: line 3 deploys a sequence of plural nomina regentia (מוסדי, שביבי, מאורי, נהרי, זהרי), whereas lines 4–5 favor singular nomina regentia (מקור, רום, סוד). This morphological play is not merely formal; it contributes to the rhetorical effect of exaggeration, multiplication, and intensification that characterizes the pericope. Two distinct phenomena should be distinguished here. First, several phrases display what may be termed double plurality, in which both components of a construct phrase appear in the plural: מעשי פלאים, דגלי חודשים, רחמי עולמים, רזי פלא. This phenomenon is well attested in Late Biblical Hebrew and becomes increasingly prevalent in Qumran Hebrew, even more so in Mishnaic Hebrew (Segal 1927, p. 187; Qimron 2019, pp. 406–7). As such, double plurality reflects a broad diachronic tendency of later Hebrew rather than a stylistic feature unique to this pericope. Second, and of greater stylistic significance, is that several phrases contain rare or formally innovative plural forms of nouns that in the Hebrew Bible appear predominantly or exclusively in the singular: זהרי הוד, שביבי נוגה, מכוני יושר, מבני צדק. The plural noun תעודות is another example. Some of these forms are rare or unattested elsewhere and lack clear biblical parallels. The transformation of rare abstract and poetic terms into plural forms and their incorporation into dense construct chains produces an impression of plenitude and enhances the abundance of the sacred world. Morphology is thus enlisted in the service of a rhetoric of sacred amplification.

From a semantic standpoint, this density is bound up with a process of nominalization. When abstract nouns such as בינה (“understanding”), אמת (“truth”), קודש (“holiness”), or צדק (“righteousness”) appear within construct phrases, they do not remain in the category of general ideas or purely abstract values. The construct phrase gives them a clearer framework; they are therefore presented as concepts within the heavenly world described in the text. Thus, in עצת קודש or סוד אמת, these concepts acquire the character of a source, domain, or sphere of activity. From a semantic standpoint, the language constructs these concepts as conceptual entities within an organized heavenly order. The construct state is therefore not merely a syntactic device for marking a relation but rather a stylistic and ideational device through which abstract values and forces become part of the theological architecture of the text.

In Sovran's definition, poetic density occurs when a compact construct phrase conveys the deep structure of a complete underlying sentence. Formation by means of a construct phrase also entails ambiguity, since decoding the phrase may permit different reconstructions of the underlying relation (Sovran 2000, pp. 126–9). Although Sovran (Forthcoming) developed her analytical tools through the examination of specific morphological phenomena in modern Hebrew poetry, her contribution extends beyond those sources. In contrast to relatively transparent phrases, where the relation between nomen regens and nomen rectum is self-evident, the phrases in 4Q286 connect distant conceptual fields: architectural or spatial terms such as מוסד, מקור, מבנה, and מכון are joined to abstract terms such as בינה, דעה, צדק, and יושר. The construct phrase therefore does not merely mark a collocative relation; it compresses a broader conceptual relation into a compact nominal form. Thus, מבני צדק does not merely mean “structures of righteousness”; it represents righteousness as a founding principle upon which the divine structure stands. At the same time, unlike in modern poetry, density here is not aimed primarily at lyrical ambiguity but at the con-

struction of liturgical presence. While the tendency toward nominality and nominalization is consonant with the diachronic development of later Hebrew, in this liturgical pericope, that tendency receives a stylistic realization that serves the shaping of holiness. The nominal density of the pericope is therefore not only a result of a later linguistic register but also one of the characteristic modes of operation of a distinctive cultic language.

A further feature reinforcing this nominal density is lexical concatenation (שרשור): the recurrence of the same lexemes across successive construct phrases, a device characteristic of both biblical and Qumran poetry. In the present pericope a small set of words is repeatedly redeployed in different constructs, in both singular and plural forms: סוד (with its variant מוסד), מקור, מקוה, תבנית, מבנה, רום, קודש, כבוד, הדר, and פלא. The same lexemes recur in the temporal section (e.g., מועדי כבוד, שבועי קודש), binding the two halves of the pericope together; the phrase מועדי כבוד recurs verbatim in CD III, 14–15. The density of the passage therefore lies not only in the sheer number of construct phrases but in this lexical interlacing, which weaves the individual phrases into a single, tightly knit conceptual network rather than a series of isolated units (cf. Yona 2007).

4. Non-Eventive Nominal Representation

The notion of a anti-narrative, non-eventive, static mode of representation invoked here is grounded in two converging bodies of scholarship: narratological work on the limits of narrative, and the study of ritual and liturgical language. Narrative theory has increasingly recognized that narrativity is a matter of degree and that texts may deliberately resist plot and event sequence; the plotless, the static, and the merely enumerative are now treated as legitimate objects of poetic analysis rather than as defective narration. To describe 4Q286 as operating in a non-narrative, low-narrativity register is therefore not to deny its meaning or order but to locate it on this recognized spectrum. The specifically liturgical dimension is illuminated by Wheelock's classic analysis of ritual language, which argues that such language shifts from an informational to a "situational" function: rather than conveying new propositional content or recounting events, the ritual utterance presents and constitutes a shared, fixed situation (Wheelock 1982). The dense, verbless chains of construct phrases in 4Q286 are an extreme realization of precisely this function: language that does not report a sequence of events but rather presents the worshipper with a heavenly reality. That this is a structural feature of liturgical poetry rather than an idiosyncrasy of 4Q286 is suggested by the poetics of later Jewish liturgical poetry (piyyut), whose artistry likewise rests on associative, enumerative, and image-centered structures rather than on narrative sequence (van Bekkum and Katsumata 2011).

The suppression of verbs creates an expression in which the described world is not conveyed as a sequence of events in time but rather as a network of states, relations, and fixed entities. Gesenius already noted that the nominal clause tends to designate an existing condition, while the verbal clause represents an occurrence or change (Gesenius 1910, §140e; §142a). Later research has further clarified that the nominal sentence is not timeless, since time may be clarified by copular verbs, temporal descriptions, and the broader context (Zewi 1999, 2007). This was also clarified by Frank Polak's study of biblical prose: Polak showed that narrative language oscillates between a rhythmic-verbal style, characteristic of the plot action sequence, and a complex-nominal style, which is especially prominent in expository, descriptive, evaluative, and formal speech passages (Polak 2001). In this style, there is a multiplication of nouns, expanded phrases, chains of modification, and subordinate clauses. For this reason, when a text like 4Q286 almost entirely avoids verbal syntax and prefers a dense chain of nominal construct phrases, it adopts a non-eventive, static mode of representation, in which reality stands firm. It does not "occur" but is framed as given, fixed, and charged with authority.

Ellen van Wolde surveyed other aspects of the verbless clause in biblical Hebrew. Following Paul J. Hopper, she distinguishes *foregrounding*, the sequence of events in the narrative conveyed by a verbal sequence, from *backgrounding*, additional information serving as background or elaboration expressed in different verbal forms or in nominal clauses (van Wolde 1999, pp. 323–25, 33). According to this principle, in 4QBerakhot the author focuses on the static background, on the entities that exist and stand in heavenly space. The absence of the verb suspends the sense of occurrence and replaces it with an impression of supra-temporal presence. As Jokiranta noted, it is precisely the syntactic sparseness of the pericope that imposes on the recipient the work of organization and decoding. The list is not merely a form of presentation but a rhetorical technique that requires active reading (Jokiranta 2017). Hence, the non-eventive, static character of 4Q286 is not merely the absence of verbs but a poetic form of organization: instead of narrative or argument, the text posits a dense list of nominal construct phrases, each of which is charged with meaning, which together construct a liturgical experience of plenitude and exaltation.

5. From Prophetic Vision to Nominal Liturgy: The Reworking of Scripture in the Construct Phrases of 4Q286

The Throne Vision in Ezekiel 1 serves as the foundational biblical text for the Merkavah tradition. 4Q286 clearly draws on it at the lexical level, when describing a heavenly space populated by exalted entities. But the relation to Ezekiel is not one of simple preservation but of stylistic reworking. In Ezekiel, the vision is conveyed within a narrative framework governed by verbs, sight, and motion: “the heavens opened and I saw visions of God... a fire blazing with radiance around it... the appearance of the wheels and their construction was like the gleam of beryl... the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord” (Ezekiel 1 excerpts). By contrast, in the composition 4QBerakhot the heavenly reality is conveyed through static chains of construct state phrases and nominal sequences. In this transition the Qumranic text converts a narrated and active vision into a liturgical edifice of presence. In Ezekiel’s visions the divine beings bearing the Chariot are engaged in frantic activity, moving and thundering incessantly; the deity enthroned above them in vv. 26–28 is distinguished from that activity by his quiet sublimity. In the Berakhot pericope, by contrast, the divine world stands in sublime stasis, whose impression is intensified by the construct phrases. No longer is a prophet contemplating the Chariot and attempting to describe it, but a praying community before whom the heavenly world is set in the very language of prayer. This feature is shared by both 4QBerakhot and the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice. The transition from the dynamic, sensory-rich, and deliberately indeterminate prophetic vision, especially as it appears in Ezekiel, to the nominal system that characterizes the language of 4Q286 is therefore not merely stylistic. This nominal organization conveys the community’s presence within the realm of the sacred and anticipates the temporal section of the pericope, where prayer times and appointed festivals become an additional expression of that distinctive sacred presence.

This reworking is evident already at the opening of the pericope. The phrase רגלי כבודי draws on the designation of the heavenly furniture “footstool of my feet” (e.g., Isa 66:1), but in place of the biblical formulation, 4Q286 yields an intensified construct form. Similarly, the phrase מרכבות כבודי רכוביהמה ואופניהמה reworks central elements from the language of Ezekiel but does not reproduce a concrete verse. 4Q286 thus adopts a visionary tradition in which motion and visual description are intermingled and concentrates its elements within a dense construct chain. What in Ezekiel is scattered across a broader trajectory of vision becomes a sequence of autonomous nominal entities perceived as fixed components of heavenly architecture.

This mechanism is especially prominent in lines dealing with light and radiance. מוסדי אש (“foundations of fire”) is not a direct biblical quotation but a reworking of a biblical construct pattern, such as מוסדי הרים (Deut 32:22; Ps 18:8), מוסדות תבל (2 Sam 22:16; Ps 18:16), and מוסדי ארץ (Ps 82:5). In the Hebrew Bible these phrases designate the foundations of the earthly world, typically in verbal contexts of cosmic convulsion or divine theophany; in 4Q286 the nomen rectum is replaced with אש (“fire”), transferring the term from the earthly domain to the heavenly space, in continuity with ancient sources that describe fire in the divine space but without the nomen regens “foundation” (Nah 1:6; Ps 18:9, 14; 104:4). Similarly, שביבי נוגה (“sparks of radiance”) draws on the language of Ezekiel 1, in which נוגה appears within a dynamic visionary description (cf. also Hab 3:4; Ps 18:13), while here it is absorbed into a construct phrase. Qumranic language takes apart, reworks, and reassembles biblical expressions to create a thick texture of echoes, without necessarily preserving their original syntactic or semantic context. This phenomenon corresponds to what Devorah Dimant described as the “anthological style,” built of allusions, echoes, and half-quotations (Dimant 1988), and to what Tooman described as the reworking of biblical expressions through their disassembly, adaptation, and redistribution within a new composition (Tooman 2011).

A similar process is discernible in the construction of phrases relating to wisdom and holiness. The phrase סוד קודש (“council of holiness”) appears to be a reworking of קדושים סוד (“council of holy beings,” Ps 89:8), but unlike the biblical text, it replaces the component קדושים, which designates concrete heavenly entities, with the abstract concept קודש. This is not merely a morphological substitution but rather indicates a transformation in the mode of representation: instead of a defined group of divine entities, there appears a more abstract concept designating a domain, quality, or space of holiness. Yet the Berakhot scroll also exhibits movement in the opposite direction, such as סודי[המה], which indicates multiplication and intensification. The scroll therefore operates with dual linguistic flexibility: on one side, a tendency toward abstraction of holiness and wisdom; on the other, a tendency toward multiplication and rhetorical amplification of the entities described.

6. Parallels in Yahad Literature

6.1. Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice

The linkage between the pericope from 4QBerakhot and the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice is conspicuous. The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice is a liturgical cycle of thirteen songs, one for each of the first thirteen Sabbaths of the year according to the 364-day solar calendar. It is among the most complex compositions discovered among the Judean Desert Scrolls (Newsom 1985; Nitzan 1994, pp. 52–57; Alexander 2006). The affinity between the cycle and 4Q286 does not reduce to incidental lexical sharing, though the shared vocabulary is impressive and includes terms such as תהלות, אופנים, כרובים, מרכבות, הדר, הוד, כבוד, הוד, הדר, מרכבות, כרובים, אופנים, תהלות. The core of the affinity lies in linguistic and poetic features: both compositions shape heavenly reality through dense nominal description, lists of nouns, and construct chains, rather than through an ordered visionary-narrative sequence. The affinity is therefore not only thematic but also stylistic-linguistic. In this context, it is important to stress Mizrahi’s conclusion that the language of the Songs does not derive directly from biblical priestly literature but rather reflects a deliberate stylistic choice of a distinctive post-classical feature (Mizrahi 2011). This conclusion equally pertains to 4QBerakhot, whose linguistic shaping is very close to that of the Songs. The link between the two compositions rests on a proximity of genre, style, and function: both present the heavenly sanctuary as a cataloging representation and as a ritual amplification of the world of supreme glory.¹⁶

6.2. Community Rule, Column X

The closing pericope of the Community Rule in 1QS constitutes a significant parallel to the passage from 4QBerakhot. After several lines describing the key turning-points in the daily movement of the luminaries, the author moves to describe the fixed prayer times (1QS X, 5–8, our translation):

5. ... ברשית ירחים למועדיהם וימי קודש בתכונם לזכרון במועדיהם
 6. תרומת שפתים הברכנו כחוק חרות לעד בראשי שנים ובתקופת מועדיהם בהשלם חוק
 7. תכונם יום משפטו זה לזה מועד קציר לקיצ ומועד זרע למועד דשא מועדי שנים לשבועיהם
 8. וברוש שבועיהם למועד דרור

5. On the beginnings of months in their seasons, and on holy days in their planned capacity as a memorial, in their seasons
 6. by a donation of my lips shall I bless Him, a statute forever engraved. On New Years and when their seasons turn, fulfilling the law
 7. of their decree, each day as set forth, day after day: harvest giving way to summer, planting to the shoots of spring. Seasons of years designed by weeks (of years)
 8. and on the beginnings of weeks of years, at the time of the release (Jubilee)

The “Hymn of the Seasons” in 1QS IX, 26–XI, 22 describes the Maskil, a sectarian leader, as the figure authorized to enumerate and formulate the times of praise, including a dimension of participation with the angels (Newsom 2004, pp. 132–69). The hymn organizes the obligatory praise according to cosmological time-units: days, months, seasons, new years, and sabbatical year-periods. The parallel is especially prominent in Part C of the Berakhot pericope: the adverbial clauses (בהראותמה, “at their appearances”) reflect the same liturgical-calendrical principle, as praise is conditioned on cosmic transitional moments. In the Hymn, the Maskil appears to be the authorized liturgical figure who knows the calendar reckonings and praises the deity accordingly (Nitzan 1994, pp. 227–72; Newsom 2004, pp. 134–35; Penner 2012, pp. 116–17, 190–95; Harkins 2020, pp. 134–35; Bakker 2024).¹⁷

The Hymn of the Seasons shares an affinity with 4QBerakhot through their possible shared connection to the annual covenant-renewal ceremony of the Yahad community. Since Nitzan demonstrated that 4QBerakhot was intended for use in that annual ceremony, it is intriguing to note the similarity between the “Hymn of the Seasons” (1QS X) and the ceremony described at the opening of the Community Rule (columns I–II) (Falk 1998, pp. 110–11, 237–38; Hempel 2020, pp. 270–74; Collins and Nati 2024, pp. 36–50, 121–37). The Hymn of the Seasons had considerable influence, since it is paraphrased both in 4QBerakhot and in a similar poem in 1QH^a XX, 7–14 (see Bakker 2023, pp. 127–31; Bakker 2022). The prayer in 1QH^a more closely resembles 4QBerakhot due to its clearer connection to liturgical performance.¹⁸

A further parallel of a thematic rather than verbal kind appears in the prayer of 4Q408, frags. 3+3a, lines 1–11, a copy of the Apocryphon of Moses (Goldman 2014, pp. 321–51). Although the composition is not sectarian, it displays affinities with sectarian hymnic traditions that coordinate praise with fixed prayer times. 4Q408 combines praise of the deity with prayer times determined by the celestial luminaries. Unlike 1QS, 1QH^a, and 4QBerakhot, where praise is associated with broader calendrical frameworks: days, months, weeks, festivals, and years, 4Q408 focuses on the diurnal rhythm of sunrise and sunset. The affinity with 4Q286 is therefore best understood at the level of liturgical conception: both texts bind praise to a divinely ordered temporal structure marked by the luminaries.

7. Discussion: The Liturgical Genre

The linguistic and literary analysis of the pericope from 4QBerakhot reveals that its language was not primarily intended to convey information, describe an event, or construct a discursive argument, but rather to forge a distinctly liturgical context.¹⁹ The very choice of expressive devices carries meaning: nominal density, the accumulation of brief linguistic units, and the suppression of verbal syntax are ways of shaping a distinct ritual discourse. The language does not “narrate” the holy but produces it as an effective utterance: it builds a style that aspires to evoke an impression of exaltation, authority, and distinction, and thus befits the function of the text within liturgy.

This liturgical function integrates well within the Yahad’s understanding of the communal prayer it maintains with the angels. This understanding recurs throughout the Qumranic compositions, describing how the flesh-and-blood members of the community participate in the heavenly assembly (see for example Chazon 2000; Schäfer 2009, pp. 125–26; Dimant 2014, pp. 465–72; Jost 2019, 2022). In contrast to the Throne Vision in Ezekiel, in which superior reality is conveyed through visionary action, the reader of 4Q286 encounters the heavenly world by means of nominal chains. The transition from verbal to nominal expression is fundamental: the praying community no longer stands outside the vision and hears of it from a prophet’s report; rather, language itself elevates it onto the heavenly assembly and its distinctive architecture. In this sense, nominal density largely eliminates the language of comparison and hesitation of the prophetic tradition—that is, the simile-language Ezekiel employs: כְּמֹרָא, כְּעֵין, דְּמוּת (“like an appearance,” “like the eye,” “a likeness”),²⁰ and substitutes it with direct, authoritative, and ritual language.

Liturgy seeks not to describe an experience but to produce it, since liturgy is a performative utterance that seeks to effect a change in the world (Austin 1975; Lesses 1995). Thus, an internal affinity between language, genre, and ideology is revealed: the liturgical genre dictates a dense linguistic structure; the linguistic structure presents an ordered heavenly reality; and that ordered reality expresses an ideology of a community that sees itself participating in the right times and with the right formulation, in the supreme cult. The mobilization of morphology to create nominal formations and the reworking of active biblical materials into dense construct phrases reveal that language stands in the service of ideology. The abstract becomes nearly material; time becomes structure; light, wisdom, righteousness, and holiness become elements in the heavenly space; and the community, through the act of uttering the text, locates itself within that order.

8. Conclusions

The present analysis may be summarized in three main points: (a) nominal density in 4Q286 is a deliberate stylistic strategy rather than a grammatical by-product; (b) the suppression of verbal syntax produces a liturgically effective mode of non-eventive representation; and (c) the reworking of biblical construct patterns reflects a conscious transformation from prophetic vision to nominal-liturgical presence. The pericope examined here demonstrates how chains of nouns in a construct state can bear the burden of meaning. One of the fundamental conclusions is that this density does not function at the level of syntax and morphology alone: the transition from verbal to nominal expression shifts the mode of representation from a narrated vision to a liturgy of presence. The Scroll, like others of its kind, creates a distinctive liturgical style aiming at shaping exaltation and holiness. Accordingly, while the analysis is anchored in a single pericope, it points beyond it to the distinctive liturgical idiom in Qumran literature. Broader claims about the role of such chains in the formation of communal identity would require systematic comparison with additional texts, which the present study can only invite.

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Notes

- ¹ The grammatical distinctiveness of Qumran Hebrew has been the subject of sustained scholarly attention. The foundations were laid by Kutscher's comprehensive study of the Great Isaiah Scroll (Kutscher 1974), while Qimron's grammar constitutes a standard point of reference for the description of Qumran Hebrew (Qimron 2019), and its syntax has now received a comprehensive treatment by Muraoka (2020). Ongoing discussion has been advanced especially through the continuing series of International Symposia on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira, whose proceedings appeared in several volumes: (Muraoka and Elwolde 1997, 1999, 2000; Joosten and Rey 2008; Fassberg et al. 2013; Tigchelaar and Van Hecke 2015; Joosten et al. 2018; Fassberg 2021). For concise overviews, see (Fassberg 2013; Raymond 2014); for a broader social-historical perspective, see (Schniedewind 2013).
- ² Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library, image B-370997, <https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/image/B-370997> (accessed on 28 June 2026).
- ³ Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library, image B-283901 (PAM 42.415), <https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/image/B-283901> (accessed on 28 June 2026).
- ⁴ The reading at the end of the line is blurred. Nitzan suggested נִימְרִיךְ, but we prefer the reading adopted here from the root DRS since this word appears in a similar context in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (see below). Qimron read נִימְרִי, while in the second edition of his book, he read נִימְרִי. The context, however, suggests that “tread” is preferable due to the chain of furnishings of the divine throne.
- ⁵ The broader lexical and semantic evidence favors Qimron's reconstruction נְהַרִי אֲוִירִים over Nitzan's נְהַרִי אֲוִירִים. The noun נְהַר “stream” is securely attested in both Biblical and Qumran Hebrew, and its construct plural נְהַרִי is well established (e.g., נְהַרִי כֹשֶׁשׁ, Isa 18:1). A construct plural נְהַרִי from נְהַר (“light”, itself an Aramaism that is rare in Hebrew), by contrast, is not otherwise securely attested in Qumran Hebrew. Semantically, נְהַרִי אֲוִירִים, “streams of light,” yields a natural and idiomatic poetic image, well suited to the cosmic-liturgical setting of fire, flames, lightning, and luminaries; the same image of a flowing river within a theophanic throne scene appears in Dan 7:10 נְהַר דִּי-נֹר נָגַד וְנִפְקַד מִן-קִדְמוֹתֵי זֶהר “a river of fire streaming forth from before” the divine throne (cf. שְׂבִיבִין דִּי-נֹר, “flames of fire,” in v. 9). see (Nitzan 1998, p. 12).
- ⁶ Qimron reads נִימְרִי אֲוִירִים based on the occurrence of this expression in the Songs of the Maskil, 4Q511 52–59 2. The expression is a hapax, however, and the reconstruction זֶהר (“radiance”) should not be excluded on contextual grounds.
- ⁷ The end of line 4 and the beginning of line 5 are extremely fragmentary. Nitzan read them as נִימְרִי אֲוִירִים “Wondrous thanksgiving”, but the plural הֲוִירִים is not attested elsewhere. Instead, we adopt Qimron's reading מְקִיר דַּעֲוִי, as the final extant letter in line 4 is broken and may equally be read as *mem* or *pe*.
- ⁸ The word at the end of the line has been erased. Nitzan read here נִימְרִי אֲוִירִים, but the vocabulary of healing seems out of place, and the form נִימְרִי is unusual. Qimron successfully identified the word נִימְרִי, but the nomen rectum of this word cannot be reconstructed.
- ⁹ Qimron observed that the word מְבִינָה had originally been written and that *mem* was later cancelled by dots above and below it, together with partial erasure, leaving the word בִּינָה. The form מְבִינָה is a Qumranic variant of the biblical noun בִּינָה (“understanding”).
- ¹⁰ Qimron proposes מְקִירֵה. Both readings are possible.
- ¹¹ Nitzan reconstructed here נִימְרִי אֲוִירִים בְּהַרְוֵתָהּ, whereas Qimron reconstructed נִימְרִי אֲוִירִים בְּהַרְוֵתָהּ. Qimron is right that “days” should be reconstructed at the end of line 8 to open the temporal sequence in the following lines: days—weeks—months—years—glorious, appointed times, sabbatical years of the land, appointed times of release. However, the unusual word בְּהַרְוֵתָהּ proposed by Qimron is not attested by the surviving traces on the fragment, and the parallel he cited from Ps 139:16 is not convincing. Since all the following cola present a construct phrase after the time-unit, such as “weeks of holiness,” a similar phrase may be

reconstructed at the end of line 8 with a short nomen rectum, for example ימי אור (“days of light”). There is room at the end of the line for such an additional short word.

- 12 On merkavah vocabulary and its exegetical reuse, see (Halperin 1988, pp. 115–56; Newsom 1987; Schäfer 2009, pp. 134–36; Gruenwald 1980). For the throne inventory of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice—chariots (מרכבות), cherubim (כרובים), wheels (אופנים), and footstool (הדום)—see the parallels adduced immediately below.
- 13 According to Mizrahi, the last five songs of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice describe an imaginative tour of the heavenly sanctuary from the outside inward, whereas the conclusion of the final song contains a closing passage that enumerates the components of the heavenly sanctuary in reverse order, from the inside outward.
- 14 For a detailed discussion of the throne, the pathway/treading-place, and the footstool, see (Mizrahi 2020, pp. 17–24).
- 15 On the stylistic emphasis created by repetition within parallelism, see (Yona 2007). Yona discusses the pattern of “expanded repetition using the construct” as a rhetorical mechanism in Biblical Hebrew.
- 16 For a broader interpretive comparison, see (Davila 2000, pp. 83–167).
- 17 On the organization of the obligation of praise in the “Hymn of the Seasons” according to cosmic time-units and on the liturgical role of the Maskil, see (Newsom 2004, pp. 134–35). On fixed patterns of prayer and the relation between prayer times, cycles of time, and the calendar, see (Nitzan 1994, pp. 227–72; Penner 2012, pp. 116–17, 190–95). For a concise comparison of the Hymn with 4QBerakhot see (Harkins 2020, pp. 134–35).
- 18 The actual performance of the Hodayot remains uncertain. It cannot be known with certainty whether, how, or when the Hodayot hymns were performed in communal contexts. See (Newman 2018, pp. 132–69).
- 19 These observations add to the basic characterization of liturgical language in the Dead Sea Scrolls as described by (Mizrahi 2013).
- 20 On this language in Ezek 1:27–28, see (Greenberg 1983, pp. 54–65; Block 1997, pp. 96–101).

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