

# Reinterpretation of Scripture in *Hymn to the Creator*

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## 1. Summary

Psalms Scroll 11QPs<sup>a</sup> (=11Q5) is the largest of all extant Psalms manuscripts found at Qumran.<sup>1</sup> It is made up of forty-nine compositions, seven of which are not found in the MT collection. While four of these extra compositions are attested elsewhere in ancient literature, three are unique to 11QPs<sup>a</sup>. They are known as *Plea for Deliverance*, *Apostrophe to Zion* and *Hymn to the Creator*.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, we argue that the composer of *Hymn to the Creator* copies the structure of a biblical hymn and cites biblical hymnic verses. However, he reworks his biblical source material in a way that eliminates a theological motif present in the biblical contexts of the passages he cites. Through omission, source substitution, and re-contextualization, the composer of *Hymn to the Creator* eliminates all traces of the biblical portrait of an animate nature. Vitality applies only to God and his angels.

## 2. Background to 11QPs<sup>a</sup>

Much discussion has centered on whether and to what extent 11QPs<sup>a</sup> reflects a canonically recognized tradition. In what has become known as the “Qumran Psalms Hypothesis,” J. Sanders argues that 11QPs<sup>a</sup> represents one of the “various biblical texts [that] were clearly available in the late period of the Second Temple” prior to the biblical Psalter’s formation and canonization.<sup>3</sup> Sanders’ hypothesis has had both supporters and opponents. G. Wilson agrees that 11QPs<sup>a</sup> reflects a true scriptural Psalter and not a secondary collection, pointing to the similar organizing principles behind 11QPs<sup>a</sup> and the latter part of the MT Psalter.<sup>4</sup> P. Flint claims that 11QPs<sup>a</sup> is a “scriptural” witness to the gradual stabilization of the biblical Psalter and points

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<sup>1</sup> 11QPs<sup>a</sup> was copied in the early to mid first century C.E. For a discussion on the comparative dating of various Psalms Scrolls see P. Flint, “Psalms and Psalters in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. J. Charlesworth; Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2006), 233-72.

<sup>2</sup> The previously known compositions are Sir 51:13-30, Ps 151 and Syriac Pss 154 and 155.

<sup>3</sup> J. Sanders, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1967), 14. Sanders argues that Psalms Scroll 11QPs<sup>a</sup> attests to the finalization of contents and arrangements of Psalms 1-89 and fluidity of Psalms 90 onwards in the early first century C.E. Sanders has recently defended this position, contending that there is “no evidence” to support the theory that Psalms scrolls are somehow derivative of an already set Psalter. See J. Sanders, “The Modern History of the Qumran Psalms Scroll and Canonical Criticism,” in *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov* (ed. S. Paul et al.; Boston: Brill, 2003), 404.

<sup>4</sup> G. Wilson, “Qumran Psalms Manuscripts and Consecutive Arrangement,” *CBQ* 45 (1983): 377-88; idem, “The Qumran Psalms Scroll Reconsidered: Analysis of the Debate,” *CBQ* 47 (1985): 624-42.

to the absence of confirmation at Qumran for the longer order of the received MT against the 11QPs<sup>a</sup>.<sup>5</sup>

However, other scholars dispute the scriptural status of 11QPs<sup>a</sup>, arguing that it is a non-authoritative arrangement of psalms collected after the fixation and canonization of the MT Psalter. P. Skehan suggests that 11QPs<sup>a</sup> is a library edition or an instruction book,<sup>6</sup> while S. Talmon, M. Goshen-Gottstein, and M. Haran propose that it was composed for liturgical purposes.<sup>7</sup> M. Weinfeld even attempts to identify fixed times when 11QPs<sup>a</sup> psalms were recited liturgically.<sup>8</sup> Evidence cited in support of the secondary status of 11QPs<sup>a</sup> includes the similar (though not identical) chapter divisions and ordering of the psalms in the Qumran, MT, and LXX Psalters, as well as the *pesharim*, and the Qumran commentaries on the biblical books of Psalms.

Whether 11QPs<sup>a</sup> is a true scriptural Psalter or a secondary selection from an already finalized arrangement scholars agree that psalter texts played a significant role in the Qumran community that preserved several versions.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, whether it originated within or outside of Qumran,<sup>10</sup> some of 11QPs<sup>a</sup>'s unique features, such as the three compositions that are attested in 11QPs<sup>a</sup> but absent in the MT, may reflect distinct and even divergent viewpoints current in the Qumran period and considered important enough to be copied and preserved at Qumran.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> P. Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll and the Book of Psalms* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 157. Flint argues, however, that the term canonical is inappropriate for this period. Hence, while the Psalms Scroll might have been perceived to be of divine origin, it was not necessarily scriptural.

<sup>6</sup> P. Skehan, "A Liturgical Complex in 11QPs<sup>a</sup>," *CBQ* 34 (1973): 195-205.

<sup>7</sup> S. Talmon and M. Goshen-Gottstein assert that 11QPs<sup>a</sup> is a liturgical compilation selected from an already finalized MT Psalter. See S. Talmon, "The Order of Prayers of the Sect from the Judean Desert," *Tarbiz* 29 (1959): 1-20; idem, "Pisqah Be'emsā' Pasuq and 11QPs<sup>a</sup>," *Text* 5 (1966): 11-21; M. Goshen-Gottstein, "The Psalms Scroll (11QPs<sup>a</sup>): A Problem of Canon and Text," *Text* 5 (1966): 22-33; M. Haran, "11QPs<sup>a</sup> and the Canonical Book of Psalms," in *Minhah le-Nahum* (ed. M. Brettler and M. Fishbane; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 193-201.

<sup>8</sup> M. Weinfeld has shown that sections of the Psalms Scroll reflect the sequence of the morning psalms recited in Jewish liturgy. He has also shown that *Hymn to the Creator* contains the basic elements of the *Qedushah* liturgy. M. Weinfeld, "Angelic Song over the Luminaries in the Qumran Texts," in *Time to Prepare the Way in the Wilderness: Papers on the Qumran Scrolls by Fellows of the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1989-1990* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 135-57; idem, "Traces of the Qedushat Yoser and Pesukei de-Zimra in the Qumran Literature and in Ben Sira," *Tarbiz* 45 (1975-76): 15-26 (Hebrew); idem, "The Morning Prayers (*Birkhoth Hashachar*) in Qumran and in the Conventional Jewish Liturgy," *RevQ* 13 (1988): 481-94; idem, "Prayer and Liturgical Practice in the Qumran Sect," in *Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research* (ed. D. Dimant and U. Rappaport; STDJ 10; Leiden: E.J. Brill; Jerusalem: Magness Press and Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1992), 241-57.

<sup>9</sup> Other Psalms Scrolls include 4QPs<sup>e</sup>[=4Q87] and 11QPs<sup>b</sup>[=11Q6].

<sup>10</sup> Scholars argue over whether 11QPs<sup>a</sup> was compiled at Qumran or originated outside of the Qumran community. Sanders initially agreed with his opponents who argued that 11QPs<sup>a</sup> was actually compiled at Qumran. (For instance, Haran, "11QPs<sup>a</sup>," 193-201, supports its Qumran origin.) Sanders has since retracted this position and now suggests that 11QPs<sup>a</sup> was brought to Qumran from the outside ("The Modern History," 393-411.) In support, Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll*, 199, points out that "the individual compositions in 11QPs<sup>a</sup> all seem to predate the Qumran period and there is no "secularly explicit" Qumranic indicators in 11QPs<sup>a</sup>. He similarly cautions that 11QPs<sup>a</sup> was likely compiled by wider Jewish circles and only copied at Qumran. Nevertheless, Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll*, 218, concedes that "secondary compilations of Psalms for liturgical purposes are very possible" and it is possible that the Qumran covenanters assembled 11QPs<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Haran, "11QPs<sup>a</sup>," 197. Flint rejects this opinion and asserts that the Psalm Scroll should not be viewed as a sectarian version of a psalter, secondary to the MT. Nonetheless, he accedes that, "secondary compilations of Psalms for liturgical purposes are very possible" (*The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll*, 218).

3. 11QPs<sup>a</sup> 26.9-15

The transcription and translation of *Hymn to the Creator* below are from James Sanders' *DJD* edition:<sup>12</sup>

9	גדול וקדוש יהוה קדוש קדושים לדור ודור
9-10	לפניו הדר ילך ואחריו המון מים רבים
10-11	חסד ואמת סביב פניו אמת ומשפט וצדק מכון כסאו
11-12	מבדיל אור מאפלה שחר הכין בדעת לבו
12	אז ראו כול מלאכיו וירננו כי הראם את אשר לוא ידעו
13	מעטר הרים תנובות אוכל טוב לכול חי
13-14	ברוך עושה ארץ בכוחו מכין תבל בחכמתו
14-15	בתבונתו נטה שמים ויוצא [רוח] מאו[צרותיו]
15	[ברקים למט]ר עשה ויעל נשיא[ים מ]קצה [ארץ]

- 9 Great and holy is the Lord, the holiest unto every generation.
- 9-10 Majesty precedes him, and following him is the rush of many waters.
- 10-11 Grace and truth surround his presence; truth and justice and righteousness are the foundation of his throne.
- 11-12 Separating light from deep darkness by the knowledge of his mind he established the dawn.
- 12 When all his angels witnessed it they sang aloud for he showed them what they had not known:
- 13 Crowning the hills with fruit, good food for every living being.
- 13-14 Blessed be he who makes the earth by his power, establishing the world in his wisdom.
- 14-15 By his understanding he stretched out the heavens, and brought forth [wind] from his st[orehouses].
- 15 He made [lightning for the rai]n, and caused mist[s] to rise [from] the end [of the earth].

In composing this hymn, the songwriter copied the structure, motifs, and language found in biblical poetry. Sanders describes the language as “forced and pedestrian”<sup>13</sup> and Haran argues that the Qumran author of this psalm (and the other two unique psalms in 11QPs<sup>a</sup>) tries to emulate biblical poetry, through “secondary and imitative” language.<sup>14</sup>

However, more recently scholars have recognized and emphasized the sophistication with which the composer of *Hymn to the Creator* manipulates and interprets the biblical material that he cites.<sup>15</sup> This new awareness stems from an interest in how composers of poetry found at Qumran create new messages through their citations and allusions to biblical material.<sup>16</sup> A.

<sup>12</sup> J. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 (11QPs<sup>a</sup>)* (DJD 4; Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 89-91.

<sup>13</sup> Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 89.

<sup>14</sup> Haran, “11QPs<sup>a</sup>,” 199.

<sup>15</sup> J. Kugel, *Studies in Ancient Midrash* (Cambridge: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 2001), 155-69.

<sup>16</sup> Sanders describes a “hermeneutic triangle” in which three factors are addressed and studied. These are “a. the passage called upon or cited; b. the socio-political situation of the community for whom the new writing was intended; and c. the hermeneutic of the tradent writing it for that community.” Sanders, “The Modern History,” 409. See also G. Brooke, “Biblical Interpretation at Qumran,” *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. J. Charlesworth; Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2006), 287-319.

Berlin explores just how Qumran prayers and hymns “employ biblical verses, and by definition the meaning that adheres to those verses, as a means rather than as an end.” She explains that by “pulling meaning from one context and inserting it into another” Qumran poets “create new meaning through the juxtaposition of old interpretations.”<sup>17</sup>

Such techniques are used in *Hymn to the Creator*. E. Chazon observes that through juxtaposition, the composer of the hymn brings to the fore concepts present in their original biblical contexts.<sup>18</sup> Conversely, Chazon demonstrates how the composer re-contextualizes biblical material so that his new composition conveys meaning *not* originally emphasized or even extant in the verses’ former biblical contexts.<sup>19</sup> In this paper, we further elucidate how the composer of *Hymn to the Creator* manipulates his biblical source material. We argue that he fashions his work after a biblical hymn, but reworks the biblical source material in a way that eliminates a motif present in its original biblical contexts: a sentient natural world.<sup>20</sup>

#### 4. Mimicking a Biblical Hymn

*Hymn to the Creator* resembles biblical hymnic psalms in that it is a call to the angels to praise God, the creator and sustainer. According to H. Gunkel’s form critical criteria, biblical hymns contain a unique structure and set of motifs and phrases.<sup>21</sup> More recently, Erhard Gerstenberger has enumerated three frequent and defining elements of biblical hymns: 1) a summons to praise/call to worship, 2) praise of God because of his works, deeds and qualities and 3) blessings/wishes.<sup>22</sup> *Hymn to the Creator* fulfills many of Gunkel’s criteria and contains the defining elements identified by Gerstenberger.<sup>23</sup> This suggests that the poet based his work on, and composed it to resemble, a biblical hymn.

<sup>17</sup> A. Berlin, “Qumran Laments and the Study of Lament Literature,” in *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the Fifth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 19-23 January, 2000* (ed. E. Chazon; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003), 17. In her discussion about the compositional techniques used by the poet of 4Q179, Berlin presents examples of such practices. A poet might cite a biblical phrase but substitute a more common biblical term for a less common biblical term. A poet might also conflate biblical phrases.

<sup>18</sup> E. Chazon, “The Use of the Bible as a Key to Meaning in Psalms from Qumran,” *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 86.

<sup>19</sup> Chazon, “The Use of the Bible,” 91. Chazon points out that by quoting verses in Jeremiah that originally refer to doom prophecies, and prefacing them with the word בְּרִיךְ, the composer re-contextualizes the verses as a doxological blessing.

<sup>20</sup> For recent discussions on interpreting biblical material in Qumran poetry see J. Vanderkam, “To What End? Functions of Scriptural Interpretation in Qumran Texts,” in *Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Qumran and the Septuagint: Presented to Eugene Ulrich* (ed. P. Flint et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 303-20; E. Schuller, “The Use of Biblical Terms as Designations for Non-Biblical Hymnic and Prayer Compositions,” in *Biblical Perspectives: Early Use and Interpretation of the Bible in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the First International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 12-14 May, 1996* (ed. M. Stone and E. Chazon; Kinderhook, NY: Brill, 1997), 207-22.

<sup>21</sup> H. Gunkel, *Introduction to Psalms* (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1998), 25-36.

<sup>22</sup> Pss 33:1; 34:4; 47:2; 95:1-2; 96:1-3; 98:1; 100:1-4; 105:1-3; (2) Pss 8:3-9; 19:8-11; 46:5-8; 47:3-10; 96:4-6; 103:3-19; (3) Pss 29:11; 65:5; 67:2, 7-8; 85:5-6, 13; 104:33-35; E. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part I* (FOTL; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 17.

<sup>23</sup> Gerstenberger (*Psalms*, 17) identifies “calling on Yahweh” as another defining feature of hymns. However, he notes that this feature is also very often missing. It is absent in *Hymn to the Creator*. For another approach see H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms 1-59* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988 [orig. 1978]), 43-47.

In contrast to a biblical prayer, a biblical hymn normally addresses God in the third person and contains a summons to many to praise God.<sup>24</sup> The praise, which is marked by terms such as, *ירננו*,<sup>25</sup> *נגילה*,<sup>26</sup> *גודה*,<sup>27</sup> *נשמחה*<sup>28</sup> and *ברוך*,<sup>29</sup> establishes the celebratory mood of the poem. *Hymn to the Creator* offers such communal praise in line 12, *אז ראו כול מלאכיו וירננו* and blessing in lines 13-14, *ברוך עושה ארץ בכוחו*.

In biblical hymns, the term *כי* introduces the rationale for summoning to praise, and is followed by a list of the various acts of God that merit such praise. For example, Psalm 97:8-9a reads, *שמעה ותשמח ציון, ותגלנה בנות יהודה למען משפטיך יהוה: כי-אתה יהוה עליון על-כל-הארץ*, “Zion hears and is glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoice, because of your judgments, O Lord. For you, O Lord are most high over all the earth.”<sup>30</sup> In *Hymn to the Creator*, the rationale for the angels’ praise is similarly initiated with the word *כי* in line 12, *כי הראם את אשר לא ידעו*. This is followed by an enumeration of God’s praiseworthy acts of creation and sustenance in lines 13-15.

*Hymn to the Creator* possesses many of the motifs found in biblical hymns. These include praise of a god whose attributes flank him,<sup>31</sup> God’s creation and nourishment of the natural world, as well as his sovereignty over the elements of nature.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the elements of nature enumerated in *Hymn to the Creator* are the same elements cataloged in biblical hymns. They are mountains, land, skies, and waters.

At first glance it might appear that the composer simply mimics a biblical hymn. However, upon closer scrutiny it emerges that a motif that predominates in biblical poetry is absent in *Hymn to the Creator*. The elements of nature are portrayed as animated and lively in their original biblical contexts. However, in *Hymn to the Creator*, these same elements of nature are depicted without vivacity. The composer accomplishes this by: a. reproducing biblical themes only partially; b. inserting non-hymnic biblical material into citations of biblical hymns; c. re-contextualizing biblical phrases; and d. replacing a biblical theme with a similar, but not identical, Qumran theme.<sup>33</sup>

## 5. Demythologizing Mountains by Reproducing Biblical Themes only Partially

Both the biblical hymnic psalms and *Hymn to the Creator* enumerate God’s creation, sustenance, and sovereignty over mountains. The psalms describe God’s sovereignty over the mountains as well as the mountains’ reactions, *בטרם הרים ילדו ותחולל ארץ ותבל*, “Before

<sup>24</sup> Pss 33 and 46.

<sup>25</sup> Ps 98:4, 8.

<sup>26</sup> Ps 118:24; Isa 25:9.

<sup>27</sup> Ps 79:13.

<sup>28</sup> Ps 118:24.

<sup>29</sup> Ps 66:20; 113:2; 124:6.

<sup>30</sup> Other examples include Pss 96:12-13; 98:8-9; 100:4-5. Biblical translations follow NRSV unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>31</sup> For example, God’s attributes flank Him in both Psalm 96:6 and in *Hymn to the Creator* lines 10-11.

<sup>32</sup> Pss 93 and 96-99 have been identified as kingship psalms. Though some scholars perceive Pss 94-95 to be liturgical intrusions and Ps 100 a doxology, the Psalter itself places these psalms together. This is a good reason to study them as a unit. On this see D. Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 42-59 and 90-97.

<sup>33</sup> To be sure, not all biblical hymns portray all the elements of nature as animated (see Ps 104:6 on the mountains). However, it is possible that the composer of this hymn uses these methods to purposefully eliminate references to an animate nature.

the mountains were brought forth, or you had ever borne the earth and the world” (90:2);<sup>34</sup> ותועפות הרים לו, “The heights of the mountains are his also” (95:4). The mountains respond to God’s sovereignty with fear, הרים כדונג נמסו מלפני יהוה, “The mountains melt like wax before the Lord” (97:5); וההרים רקדו כאלים נבעות כבני־צאן, “The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs” (114:4). They also express their devotion to him through song, יחד הרים ירננו, “Let the hills sing together for joy” (98:8).

*Hymn to the Creator* invokes mountains as well, however, it does not include the psalms’ accounts of the mountains’ reactions. In line 13, the hymn elaborates upon how God naturally sustains the mountains by watering them, מעטר הרים תנובות. By only partially reproducing the psalmic motif God’s sovereignty over animated mountains, the composer of the hymn mimics biblical hymns without affirming the anthropomorphism therein.

## 6. Demythologizing Land and Skies by Inserting Non-Hymnic Material

Both the biblical hymnic psalms and *Hymn to the Creator* recall God’s creation and sustenance of the land and skies. God creates the earth and skies, אף־תכון תבל, “He has established the world” (93:1, 96:10); ויהוה שמים עשה, “But the Lord made the heavens” (96:5). God is sovereign over the earth, הנשא שפט הארץ, “Rise up, O Judge of the earth” (94:2); אשר בידו מחקרי־ארץ, “In his hand are the depths of the earth” (95:4); כי־אתה יהוה עליון על־כל־הארץ, “For you, O Lord, are most high over all the earth” (97:9); כי בא לשפט הארץ, “For he is coming to judge the earth” (98:9). The earth responds to God’s sovereignty with terror, ארץ רעשה, “The earth quaked” (68:9); ראתה ותחל הארץ, “The earth sees and trembles” (97:4). The earth responds also with rejoicing, ותגל הארץ, “And let the earth rejoice” (96:11); תגל הארץ, “Let the earth rejoice” (97:1). The skies rejoice over God as well and proclaim his attributes, ישמחו השמים ותגל הארץ, “Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice” (96:11); השמים מספרים כבוד־אל, “The heavens are telling the glory of God” (19:2); הגידו השמים צדקו, “The heavens proclaim his righteousness” (97:6).

*Hymn to the Creator* similarly describes God creating the skies in line 14, בתבונתו נטה שמים. However, it does not mention any response by the skies, as do the biblical hymnic psalms. Notably, *Hymn to the Creator* illustrates God’s sovereignty over the land and skies, as is customary of the biblical hymnic psalms, but chooses to draw his language from Jeremiah 10:12 and not from the biblical hymns, עשה ארץ בכחו מכין תבל בחכמתו ובתבונתו נטה שמים, “It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.” This choice of verse is particularly striking since there are numerous descriptions of God’s sovereignty over the land and skies in the hymnic psalms.<sup>35</sup> Why did the composer of *Hymn to the Creator* turn to Jeremiah and not remain within the biblical hymnic tradition that he otherwise emulates?

The composer’s surprising insertion of Jeremian material may be guided by his attempt to avoid describing the elements of nature as lively, as do the biblical hymnic psalms. While the biblical psalms present an animated land and skies, the verses in Jeremiah do not describe any response by created objects. By veering from the descriptions in the biblical hymnic psalms, the composer of *Hymn to the Creator* is able to adopt a motif present in the group of hymnic psalms - cataloguing the elements of nature over which God is sovereign - but exclude the psalmic depiction of nature as animated. Again, the scribe of *Hymn to the Creator* strips nature of its vitality.

<sup>34</sup> NRSV translates, “had formed the earth and the world.”

<sup>35</sup> This was first noticed by Sanders in his original publication. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 89-91.

## 7. Demythologizing Mighty Waters through Re-contextualization

The biblical psalms accompany their depictions of God's sovereignty over mountains, land and skies by descriptions of God's power over waters. The psalms read, *מקלות מים רבים אדירים*, "More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord" (93:4); *אשר-לו הים והוא עשהו*, "The sea is his, for he made it" (95:5). We have seen that the mountains, land and skies are animated in the psalms, and we find that the waters are animated as well, *ירעם הים ומלאו*, "Let the sea roar, and all that fills it" (96:11 and 98:7). Like the land, the waters are terrified, *על-הרים יעמדו-מים*: *מן-גערתך ינסון מן-קול רעמדך יחפזון*, "The waters stood above the mountains. At your rebuke they flee; at the sound of your thunder they take flight" (104:6b-7); *הים ראה וינס*, "The sea looked and fled" (114:3).

*Hymn to the Creator* does not include waters in its blessing of God who creates the earth, land, heavens, wind, lightning and mist.

13 מעטר הרים תנובות אוכל טוב לכול חי  
13-14 ברוך עושה ארץ בכוחו מכין תבל בחוכמתו  
14-15 בתבונתו נטה שמים ויוצא [רוח] מאו[צרותיו]  
15 [ברקים למט]ר עשה ויעל נשיא[ים מ]קצה [ארץ]

Instead, the hymn cites many waters earlier, in line 10, as God's escort, along with his majesty, grace and truth, *לפניו הרר ילך ואחריו המון מים רבים חסד ואמת סביב פניו אמת* (9-10). The placement of waters outside the catalog of created elements and, peculiarly, in the company of intangible divine qualities instead is particularly surprising because the passage that the composer cites to describe God's creation of the elements of nature, Jeremiah 10:12-13, does include water among God's created elements.

12 עשה ארץ בכוחו מכין תבל בחוכמתו ובתבונתו נטה שמים  
13 לקול תתו המון מים בשמים ויעלה נשאים מקצה ארץ ברקים למטר עשה ויוצא רוח מאצרתיו

- 12 It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.
- 13 At the thunder of his voice,<sup>36</sup> there is the rush of many waters in the heavens, and he makes the mist rise from the ends of the earth. He makes lightnings for the rain, and he brings out the wind from his storehouses.<sup>37</sup>

In fact, the LXX as well as 4QJer<sup>a</sup> and 4QJer<sup>b</sup> that reflect the MT and the Hebrew Vorlage of the LXX, respectively<sup>38</sup> – also cite many waters, *המון מים*. The attestation of waters among the list

<sup>36</sup> Though the Septuagint version of Jeremiah 10 also omits this phrase in verse 13 *לקול תתו*, it includes the phrase in 51:16. BHS suggests, *לקולי נתך*, "At his voice pour forth ..." (following Duhm). For discussion see W. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1* (Hermeneia: Fortress Press, 1986), 324. We translate with NEB, "at the thunder of his voice" to underscore the potential presence of the combat motif.

<sup>37</sup> The explicit context of these verses is Jeremiah's prophecy of doom against Israel. On this, see Chazon, "The Use of the Bible," 91.

<sup>38</sup> 4QJer<sup>a</sup> dates from 225-175 BCE and 4QJer<sup>b</sup> dates to the mid second century BCE. 4QJer<sup>c</sup> also contains a proto-MT version of Jeremiah 10:12-13; it dates to 30-1 BCE. Since both the MT and LXX versions of Jeremiah 10:13-15 are attested at Qumran either of them could have informed this hymn. M. Sweeney, *Form and Intertextuality in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 45; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 66. For more on the Jeremiah fragments see

of natural elements in the MT, LXX and Qumran versions suggests that the composer of *Hymn to the Creator* purposefully moved the words, לקול תתו המון מים out of their original Jeremian context.

*Hymn to the Creator* diverges from the MT Jeremiah citation in another interesting way as well. In the MT, God's thunder precipitates the rushing waters, לקול תתו המון מים בשמים. However, *Hymn to the Creator* offers no mention of God's thunder. One could reasonably suggest that the composer relies on the proto-LXX version which also does not reference God's thunder, לקול תתו. However, since the composer already altered the earlier citation by removing the waters from its original context, it is not unlikely that he also deviates by omitting God's thunder.<sup>39</sup>

Presuming this, Chazon argues that the composer omits לקול תתו for exegetical reasons.<sup>40</sup> We argue similarly that the composer relies on a proto-MT text but diverges from it for interpretive reasons. Specifically, we suggest that the composer refrains from pairing God's thunder and cosmological waters in order to avoid the combat motif present in creation accounts throughout the Bible and evoked by Jeremiah 10 (as well as by Jeremiah 31:35).

Jeremiah 10 describes God's "thunder" precipitating rushing waters, לקול תתו המון מים בשמים ויעלה נשאים מקצה ארץ ברקים למטר עשה ויוצא רוח מאוצרותיו. Elsewhere throughout the Bible, when God's powers of storm and his sovereignty over waters are described side by side, especially in a creation context, they allude to a larger combat motif prevalent throughout the Bible. The combat motif hearkens back to a pre-biblical myth in which a storm god proves his sovereignty by defeating a mighty water deity, as can be seen in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle and in the Babylonian creation account, Enuma Elish.<sup>41</sup>

For instance, in some psalms, God's storm attributes subdue the waters and their entourage. In Psalm 77, the terrified waters flee God's thunder and lightning, ראוך מים אלהים ראוך, "When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid; the very deep trembled. The clouds poured out water; the skies thundered; your arrows flashed on every side" (77:17-18). In Psalm 74 God defeats Sea,<sup>42</sup> the mighty Leviathan and the Tannin.

11 אתה פוררת בעוז ים שברת ראשי תנינים על-המים  
14 אתה רצצת ראשי לוייתן תתנו למאכל לעם לציים  
15 אתה בקעת מעין ונחל אתה הובשת נהרות איתן

- 13 You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters.  
14 You crushed the heads of Leviathan; you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.  
15 You cut openings for springs and torrents; you dried up ever-flowing streams.<sup>43</sup>

E. Tov, "The Jeremiah Scrolls from Qumran," *RevQ* 14 (1989): 189-206; idem, "Three Fragments of Jeremiah from Qumran Cave 4," *RevQ* 15 (1992): 531-41.

<sup>39</sup> In any case, the order of the list of God's created objects in *Hymn to the Creator* (14-15) deviates from the order presented in the MT and LXX versions (Jer 10:13).

<sup>40</sup> Chazon observes that, with the omission of the phrase, לקול תתו המון מים, the hymn conveys the message that God brings down rain from heaven and earth. Chazon, "The Use of the Bible," 92.

<sup>41</sup> S. Parker (ed.), *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (Scholars Press, 1997) 81-180; "Epic of Creation," translated by Benjamin Foster (COS 1.111:390-402). For more on this topic see A. Curtis, "The subjugation of the waters motif in the psalms; imagery or polemic?" *JSS* 23 (1978): 245-56.

<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, in Psalm 74, the term Sea lacks a definite article. This may serve to emphasize the animated character of the waters by suggesting that, as in the Baal Epic, Sea is a personal name.

<sup>43</sup> Isaiah 27:1 similarly reads, ביום ההוא יפקד יהוה בחרבו הקשה והגדולה והחזקה על לוייתן נחש ברח ועל, "On that day the LORD with his cruel and great and strong

By describing God's storm attributes of thunder, lightning and wind causing waters to rush<sup>44</sup> Jeremiah 10 alludes to this combat myth.<sup>45</sup> Since, as Berlin observes, citations bring with them allusions from their original context, had the composer of our hymn quoted Jeremiah 10:13-14 verbatim, the allusion to the combat myth, in which the waters are an active party influenced by God's thunder, would have remained.<sup>46</sup> By moving **מים המון** adjacent to God's grace, truth and majesty,<sup>47</sup> and omitting **לקול התו**, the composer avoids the pair of images – God's storm attribute and his sovereignty over waters – that when cited together, allude to the combat myth.<sup>48</sup> By sidestepping the combat myth, the composer distances his text from any allusion to animated waters. He presents a version of the creation story in which the primordial battle is absent. In its place, he paints a majestic scene in which waters are present among God's divine creations but no longer animated. Once again, nature is rendered lifeless.<sup>49</sup>

## 8. Demythologizing Nature by Replacing a Biblical Theme with a Similar Qumran Theme

In biblical hymnic psalms, the elements of nature join together joyfully, often with humanity, in exaltation of God. The land, the trees of the forest and the mountains all sing to God and the land rejoices and shouts, **ישמחו השמים ותגל הארץ**, “Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice” (96:11); **נהרות ימחאו כף יחד הרים ירננו**, “Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy” (98:8). The composer of *Hymn to the Creator* includes this hymnic theme of joining in song before God, but instead of describing the elements of nature singing, the hymn describes the angels singing, **ונגריו ויכאלמו לוכ ואר זא** (12). Angels singing in praise of God is a theme present in the Bible (Isaiah 6) and prevalent at Qumran.<sup>50</sup> The composer, thus,

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sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea.” Other psalmic verses present a muted version of the myth, perhaps similar to Jeremiah 10. In Psalm 93, the waters are mighty but no longer personified, **מקלות מים רבים אדירים משברי ים**, “More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea” (93:4). In Psalm 18, God's storm attributes overpower waters in what appears to be a battle, but the waters are neither personified nor mighty, **ויראו אפיקי מים...מנערתך יהוה מנשמת רוח**, “Then the channels of the sea were seen...at your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of your nostrils” (18:16).

<sup>44</sup> Chazon, “The Use of the Bible,” 92.

<sup>45</sup> For the combat motif elsewhere in the prophets see Isa 27:1; 51:9-11.

<sup>46</sup> Berlin, “Qumran Laments,” 1-17.

<sup>47</sup> Chazon points out that the composer of *Hymn to the Creator* does not ignore the waters altogether. They are re-contextualized in a royal enthronement setting. Chazon, “The Use of the Bible,” 92-93. The waters are set among the attributes of God. Reminiscent of the hymnic psalms (like Psalm 97) **הדר** goes before God, **הסד** and **אמת** surround God and **מים** is behind Him (9-11). In *Hymn to the Creator*, the waters are behind him as he sits on his celestial throne **מים רבים**.

<sup>48</sup> We suggest that the reference to water, **מים המון** would not have been moved to a peculiar position as parallel to God's attributes had it not been linked, in the composer's base text, to God's thunder. Adjacent to God's attributes, in line 10, waters are not immediately associated to God's thunder by those who hear the hymn (and are familiar with the MT that cites God's thunder).

<sup>49</sup> Just like in Genesis 1, where the combat myth has been suppressed and God simply moves around waters to create the universe, so too in *Hymn to the Creator* the waters are reduced to a mere creation of God employed by God to sustain His other creations.

<sup>50</sup> In fact, whereas the MT of Deuteronomy 32:43 depicts the nations praising, **הרנינו גוים עמו**, 4QDeut<sup>a</sup> matches the LXX in its description of the heavens praising and heavenly beings bowing, **הרנינו שמים**, **עמו והשתחויו לו כל אלהים** (cf. also Heb 1:6). For more on types of angelic praise in Qumran literature see E. Chazon, “Human and Angelic Prayer in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the Fifth International Symposium*

includes a theme present in the group of hymnic psalms, while not mentioning the biblical anthropomorphic portrayal of nature that is implied in the theme's original formation.<sup>51</sup>

## 9. Concluding Points

Scholars have long noticed that texts found at Qumran employ phrases and formulae derived from the Bible but reshaped to fit dissimilar contexts.<sup>52</sup> We observe here that the composer of *Hymn to the Creator* adopts the structure of biblical hymns as well as several motifs found therein. Given the bulk of citations from Psalms 93-100, one might even suggest that the composer based his hymn on the enthronement psalms in particular. As in the biblical hymnic psalms, *Hymn to the Creator* catalogs the aspects of nature over which God is sovereign. Also like biblical hymns, *Hymn to the Creator* incorporates the motif of joining together in song to exalt God. However, it does not adopt these themes in their entirety. In the biblical psalms, the elements of nature are depicted as full of life and energetically exalting God or fleeing from His mighty blows. *Hymn to the Creator* does not presume an animate nature that can praise God.<sup>53</sup> Through omission, source substitution, and re-contextualization, the composer of *Hymn to the Creator* adeptly wipes out all traces of this biblical theme rendering the elements of nature lifeless.

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of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 19-23 January, 2000 (ed. E. Chazon; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003), 35-48; idem, "Is Divrei Ha-me'orot a Sectarian Prayer," *Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research* (ed. D. Dimant and U. Rappaport; STDJ 10; Jerusalem: Magnes Press and Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 3-17.

<sup>51</sup> Scholars have long noticed the likely allusion in *Hymn to the Creator* (9-12) to Isaiah 6. In both cases there is a threefold repetition of the term קרושׁ in the context of heavenly beings joining together to praise God. In *Hymn to the Creator*, God's attributes surround him and in Isaiah 6, the heavenly beings surround him. Both texts evoke the image of God's kingship by mentioning the divine throne. Chazon sees in these similarities the composer's attempt to "carry over the immediate context of Isaiah's throne vision," thus, "juxtaposing and essentially harmonizing the two prophetic throne visions [Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel's *merkabah* visions] in a manner typical of *merkabah* exegesis and the Qedushah liturgy." Chazon, "The Use of the Bible," 93.

<sup>52</sup> For a discussion on how Qumran hymns and prayers adopt and adapt creation imagery see M. Gordley, "Creation Imagery in Qumran Hymns and Prayers," *JJS* 59 (2008): 252-72; M. Daise, "Creation Motifs in the Qumran Hodayot," *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000), 293-305.

<sup>53</sup> Perhaps the absence of an animated natural world is related to the emphasis on monotheism in Qumran literature about creation, so B. Nitzan, "The Idea of Creation and its Implications in Qumran Literature," in *Creation in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 240-64. Alternatively, it may be related to the perspective, reflected in the Hodayot material, that humans can praise and bless God because they are in distinct possession of intellect to know God שכל and a spirit that allows them to speak his praises, רווח בלשון. R. Kvaalvaag, *Qumran between the Old and New Testaments* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press), 159-180. This would preclude the elements of nature from praising God. A wider study of evidence for the de-animating of nature, is warranted and could, potentially, shed light on the extent of purposefulness involved in the absence of anthropomorphisms in *Hymn to the Creator*.