

Enoch and the City of Zion

Can an Entire Community Ascend to Heaven?

David J. Larsen

The work of scholars such as George Nickelsburg and Hugh Nibley has opened our eyes to ancient traditions regarding the figure of Enoch, so that we, as Latter-day Saints, have come to realize what a wealth of knowledge the Prophet Joseph Smith provided when he produced his inspired renderings of the first several chapters in Genesis, including the greatly expanded story of Enoch. One of the most significant additions to the biblical record in Joseph's revelation on Enoch is not only that Enoch was taken up alive into heaven, as the Genesis passage implies, but also that the entire city of Enoch was eventually received up into heaven as well. Whereas the idea of Enoch, as an individual, ascending to heaven is common in the ancient religious literature regarding the patriarch, parallels to the notion of his entire community being translated and taken up as well are not so apparent.

In this article, I will explore the notion of communal ascent to heaven in ancient Jewish and Christian literature and seek to answer the questions, Can an entire community ascend to heaven? and Do we see this theme in ancient texts, or is this a complete innovation on the part of Joseph Smith as he sought to unite his followers around an inspiring and unifying goal? To arrive at the answers to these questions, I will analyze a number of ancient Jewish and Christian religious texts that feature the ascent to heaven motif and suggest that not only did their authors envision an individual ascent, but they also imagined groups or communities raised up to the celestial realm.

In chapter 7 of the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith provides us with an extensive account of how Enoch built a city

“called the City of Holiness, even ZION” (Moses 7:19). We are then told that “Zion, in process of time, was taken up into heaven” (Moses 7:21). Similarly, Moses 7:69 states, “And Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion; and it came to pass that Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom; and from thence went forth the saying, ZION IS FLED.” Because we are informed that God came and dwelled in Zion, it is probably safe to assume that Enoch’s city had a temple. This was the belief of Brigham Young, who stated: “I will not say but what Enoch had Temples and officiated therein, but we have no account of it.”¹

One of the most intriguing elements of Joseph Smith’s inspired translation of Genesis is that this concept of communal ascent is not limited to Enoch’s city of Zion. Once Zion had been elevated to the Lord’s presence, this established a pattern for others to follow. With Enoch’s Zion removed from the world, the “residue” of the people left behind continued to increase in wickedness—a downward spiral that ultimately ended with the coming of the Great Flood to cleanse the earth of their iniquity. Moses 7:27 informs us that the more righteous living between the time of Enoch and Noah were removed from this dismal situation: “and the Holy Ghost fell on many, and they were caught up by the powers of heaven into Zion.”

In an interesting New Testament parallel, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews mentions the translation of Enoch in his discussion of the faith of the ancients. He then goes on to mention how Abraham, while he was wandering in the land of promise, living in tents, “waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10, NKJV). The text goes on to imply that all of the patriarchs were seeking to reach, or return to, a country or a city—a heavenly city (Heb. 11:13–16). Hebrews 12:22 associates this city with Mount Zion.

The author contrasts the experience of the Israelites under Moses and how they were not able to even touch Mount Sinai with that of the followers of Jesus Christ, who were given full access to Mount Zion. Speaking to a community of Christian believers, the author declares, “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, . . . and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven” (Heb. 12:22–23, KJV).

1. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 18:303, January 1, 1877.

Aquila Lee argues that “the idea about Mt. Zion as ‘heavenly Jerusalem’ was taken up by the early church when they read Ps 2 together with Ps 110 as applying to Jesus.”² Psalm 110:4 is, of course, one of only two passages in the Hebrew Bible that make mention of Melchizedek. Lee observes that the early Christian church understood Psalm 110:1 to refer to Jesus, who had taken up his throne on Mount Zion (Ps. 2:6) at God’s right hand. Psalm 110:4 was understood to declare that Jesus’s priesthood was related to the priesthood of Melchizedek. This is the connection that the author of Hebrews makes—that Jesus’s priesthood is the priesthood of Melchizedek.

In a similar vein, Joseph Smith, in his inspired expansion of the Melchizedek pericope in Genesis 14, depicts the priesthood of Melchizedek as following the order of the priesthood of Enoch, which, in turn, is derived from the order of the priesthood of the Son of God (Gen. 14:27–28, JST). Furthermore, the text says that men who came “up unto this [priesthood] order of God, were translated and taken up into heaven.” Melchizedek, we are told, “was a priest of this order” and was able to obtain peace in the city he ruled, the city of Salem. As a result, the text says, “his people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, separating it from the earth, having reserved it unto the latter days, or the end of the world; And hath said, and sworn with an oath, that the heavens and the earth should come together” (Gen 14:32–35, JST).

The idea of Melchizedek (if not his city with him) being taken up into heaven is not unknown in the ancient literature. Jim Davila has noted that in *2 Enoch* (71–72) we find the unusual tale of Melchizedek being “taken away to paradise during the Flood so that he may serve later as a high priest.”³ Additionally, in the Qumran texts known as 11QMelchizedek and the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, Melchizedek appears to be depicted as a high priest who serves in the heavenly temple.⁴ Davila describes the trajectory of the figure of Melchizedek

2. Aquila H. Lee, *From Messiah to Preexistent Son* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 258.

3. James R. Davila, “Heavenly Ascents in the Qumran Scrolls,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment*, ed. Peter W. Flint and James C. VanderKam, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 2:465. Melchizedek, in this account, is the son of Noah’s brother, Nir.

4. See Davila, “Heavenly Ascents,” 464.

in ancient literature as moving “from Melchizedek the priest-king to Melchizedek the god.”⁵

This is the trajectory that Joseph Smith elaborates in his grand revelation on the kingdoms of heaven recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 76. Regarding those who are destined for celestial glory, it says, “They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory; And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son. Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God” (D&C 76:55–58).

Although these parallels are interesting, we are still not seeing in the ancient texts the idea of entire communities being taken up into heaven, as described in Joseph Smith’s revelations. There are numerous biblical and pseudepigraphal texts that relate the ascensions of great biblical heroes such as Abraham, Jacob, Levi, Moses, Isaiah, Jesus, and Paul. However, these are all narratives of the ascension of a single exceptional individual allowed to partake in, generally, a single exceptional experience. For example, Moses, when he ascended Mount Sinai into the presence of God, left the general body of the Israelites down at the bottom of the mountain and even left the seventy specially chosen elders at the halfway point before ascending to the heights.

The motif of the ascent of the community to the heavenly realm, although perhaps not as well known as the great stories of individual ascenders, is not as difficult to find as it may initially appear. Hugh Nibley, in his book *Enoch the Prophet*, pulls from Adolph Jellinek’s collection of Jewish traditions, *Bet ha-Midrash*, a story of more than eight hundred thousand men who followed Enoch and refused to leave him as he was about to be taken up into heaven riding a chariot of fire. Although the text does not explicitly depict this large company ascending into heaven together with Enoch, it does state that when the kings of the land came to find these thousands of followers of Enoch, they were not found and were thought to be dead.⁶

5. James R. Davila, “Melchizedek: King, Priest, and God,” in *The Seductiveness of Jewish Myth: Challenge or Response*, ed. S. Daniel Breslauer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 224.

6. Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS), 252–53.

Another account that is very similar to the story of Enoch and the City of Zion, but which involves the ascension of a different group, is the early Jewish story entitled “The History of the Rechabites.” This document tells of a man named Zosimus, who was taken up into Paradise, where he encountered a group of luminous beings called the “Blessed Ones.” These Blessed Ones, to whom Zosimus also refers as “earthly angels,” were surprised to see him in their midst and expressed that they did not expect to meet mortals until the end of the world. They asked Zosimus all about the happenings on Earth and then proceeded to recount their own history and how they came to live in Paradise. They declared that they were originally from Earth, where they were known as the “sons of Rechab.” Because they would not obey the wicked King Jehoiakim’s request that they renounce their covenants and abandon the Lord, they were imprisoned. They were then miraculously freed from prison by angels who came from heaven in a brilliant light and were lifted up to dwell in Paradise. They lived there as mortals but were without sin, purified and spotless, cleansed from all corruption. They lived in the light of God and had a shining appearance. Angels came among them and told them of the righteousness and wickedness of the world, which caused them to grieve over those who were lost to sin. Regarding their sinless and harmonious state, they explained, “Among us there is no sickness, pain, fatigue to our bodies, mutilation, weariness, or temptations; not even Satan’s power can touch us, for there is not among us rage, jealousy, evil desire, or hateful thoughts. But (we experience only) quietness and gladness; and (exhibit) love and affection toward God and each other.”⁷

The parallels here between the story of the Rechabites and the account of Enoch’s people in the Book of Moses are numerous. Although there is no apparent connection to Enoch in the Rechabite story, the mere existence of a tradition in which a group of people is taken up as mortals to live in Paradise and reside there in an altered, purified state until the end times is very significant.

7. “The History of the Rechabites,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 2:453, 454, 458. There are several versions of this history, but the earliest English translation came long after Joseph Smith’s work on the Book of Moses. On the origins of this text, see John W. Welch, “The Narrative of Zosimus (History of the Rechabites) and the Book of Mormon,” in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited*, ed. Noel Reynolds (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 323–74, an expanded and updated version of “The Narrative of Zosimus and the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 22 (1982): 311–32.

Although other such accounts that parallel the Book of Moses narrative may exist, the remainder of this article will focus not on attempting to identify further parallels of this nature but on highlighting examples in early Jewish and early Christian literature that depict this motif in a different way. Although they do not feature Enoch or his city explicitly, there is a recurring theme in some of the texts that corresponds to the idea of a priestly figure who leads a community of priests in an ascension into the heavenly realm. In fact, this concept has become so apparent to me in the research I have done that I must limit my analysis here to just a few representative examples.

We observed that the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of Christians gaining access to the heavenly city, which was also referred to as Mount Zion. Hebrews is structured around the ideas of Jesus Christ's high priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, his ascension into heaven, and his enthronement in the celestial sanctuary. The author of the epistle treats at length the notion that the followers of Christ, because of his exaltation, are, in like manner, now able to enter the heavenly sanctuary.⁸ The exact function and use of the epistle have long been debated by scholars. Harold Attridge believed it to have been presented as an "oratorical" performance.⁹

8. Although one could argue that there is an apparent discrepancy in this paper between the type of experience described for Enoch (and others—for example, the Rechabites), which may be seen as a more temporary transfiguration, and that described in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which may be seen as a more permanent transition into exaltation, I do not find these traditions to be incompatible. The intent of this paper is to compare traditions that utilize similar themes relating to the idea of communal ascent to heaven—the ultimate goal of the ascent is not of particular relevance here. In the end, I would suggest that the ultimate goal of the various ascents described is similar—whether, like the city of Enoch, the community expects to return to the world and inherit it in its paradisiacal (and eventually celestial) state, or if such a return is not directly delineated, the result is the same in the end. To use an example that I see as similar, the temporary transfiguration of Christ on the mountain height was, if anything, a preview of his anticipated exaltation and heavenly enthronement. The ritual ascent described in Hebrews was merely a temporary, terrestrial preview of the glory they hoped to eventually share in heaven with Christ.

9. Harold Attridge, "Paraenesis in a Homily (λόγος παρακλήσεως): The Possible Location of, and Socialization in, the 'Epistle to the Hebrews,'" *Semeia* 50 (1990): 217. As George Nickelsburg has argued, it is very possible that the Enochic Book of Parables was originally meant to be an oral performance, an idea that he discusses in depth in the second volume of his commentary on *1 Enoch*, in the section entitled "Orality and Performance." George W. E.

Scott Mackie refers to it as a “mystical drama.”¹⁰ Similarly, a number of scholars in recent years, including Crispin Fletcher-Louis, John Dunnill, Luke Timothy Johnson, and Silviu Bunta, have described Hebrews as a symbolic, participatory liturgy that moves worshippers from the profane to the sacred sphere.¹¹ In other words, the epistle, or at least parts of it, was plausibly meant to have been performed, or acted out—with a series of events set in the heavenly temple, which would be dramatically brought to life through the use of visually oriented literary practices such as dramatized “narrative with speaking actors,” visual imagery, cues, and commands—including directions to “behold,” “gaze upon,” “draw near,” and “enter.”¹² Scott Mackie has attempted a reconstruction of this dramatic portrayal, which he understands to be a “divine adoption ceremony.” He outlines the following elements in Hebrews:

1. Depiction of Jesus’s ascent to heaven and entry into the celestial temple—“a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens” (4:14)—Christ entered “into heaven itself” (9:24).
2. “Dramatic [re]enactment of the Son’s exaltation (chs. 1 and 2)” —“Now see Jesus crowned with glory and honor” (2:9)¹³ —“Sit on my right hand” (1:13).
3. Declaration of familial relationship between Father and Son (“naming ritual”)—“Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (1:5; 2:12–13).

Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 37–82* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 36–38.

10. Scott D. Mackie, “Heavenly Sanctuary Mysticism in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 62 (April 2011): 78.

11. See Scott D. Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 170–71; John Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 261; Luke Timothy Johnson, “The Scriptural World of Hebrews,” *Interpretation* 57 (July 2003): 238; Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), xii; and Silviu Bunta, “The Convergence of Adamic and Merkabah Traditions in the Christology of Hebrews,” paper presented at the 2010 SBL Annual Meeting, Atlanta, November 21, 2010.

12. Scott D. Mackie, “Ancient Jewish Mystical Motifs in Hebrews’ Theology of Access and Entry Exhortations,” *New Testament Studies* 58 (January 2012): 98 n. 33; Mackie, “Heavenly Sanctuary Mysticism,” 78.

13. Translation of Hebrews 2:9 is Mackie’s.

4. Son confers family membership on community (they are his siblings)—“Behold I and the children which God hath given me”—“bringing many sons unto glory”—“not ashamed to call them brethren” (2:10–15).
5. Community is provided access to the heavenly temple by Jesus, their High Priest—they are exhorted to boldly “enter” the heavenly sanctuary and “draw near” to God’s throne (4:14–16; 10:19–25).¹⁴

Upon entry into the heavens, the Christian community hears the declaration, “Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant” (Heb. 12:22–24).

According to Mackie, all of this would have been performed by actors or described in a way that the participants could vividly imagine themselves as being in the heavenly temple and visualize Christ on his throne and so on. I would also note here that Hebrews 6:13–18 indicates that the participants were the recipients of promises, or covenants, from God that are associated with the Abrahamic covenant. The confirmation of the divine oath with these “heirs of promise” served to give them hope. Verse 18 indicates that those who have received this covenant have “fled” in order to “take hold upon the hope set before” them. There is, perhaps, a comparison that we can make here between the idea that this community has “fled” and the statement in Moses 7:69, “ZION IS FLED.” Importantly, the “church” that can be found in this city on Mount Zion is actually the Church of the Firstborns, plural, in the Greek. Verses 19–20 of Hebrews 6 tell of the hope that the community holds dear: “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain [veil], where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” (NIV).

Summarizing his findings regarding this ritualized ascent, Mackie concludes, “Hebrews depicts Jesus’ exaltation as involving an ascent, as he ‘passed through the heavens’ (4:14; see also 1:6; 7:26) and ‘entered into heaven itself’ (9:24). He is also said to be ‘leading . . . many children’

14. Mackie, “Ancient Jewish Mystical Motifs,” 98–99 n. 34. See also Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*.

into the same ‘glory’ he possesses (2:10). Most importantly, the two key entry exhortations, 4:14–16 and 10:19–23, both commend an act of entry that follows and imitates Jesus’ own heavenly ascent (4:14) and passage ‘through the curtain’ (10:20). Therefore, a mystical, heavenly ascent of the whole community would appear to be envisaged.”¹⁵ Indeed, Jesus himself declares as much in John 14:2.¹⁶ He says, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” As Andrew Louth has argued, those Christians who embark on the mystical journey to reach God do so not individually, but as a community—as the body of Christ.¹⁷

A number of scholars have picked up on the similarity between the Epistle to the Hebrews and a collection of hymns found among the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran and also at the Jewish fortress of Masada. This collection is known as the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, or the Angelic Liturgy, and consists of thirteen songs meant to be sung or recited on each of the first thirteen Sabbaths of the year. Although the texts are highly fragmentary, which makes their full content and purpose difficult to establish, they appear to have been designed to take worshippers on a tour through the celestial realms, introducing them to the angelic priesthood and the songs they sing in praise of God, guiding them through the heavenly temple, and depicting a vision of the glorious throne of God.

Carol Newsom, one of the foremost authorities on the Songs, suggests that “the recitation of these Sabbath songs was a major vehicle for the experience of communion with the angels”¹⁸ and “is intended as a communal experience of the human worshipping community” that gives the participants “a sense of being in the heavenly sanctuary and in the presence of angelic priests and worshippers.”¹⁹ Davila argues that “these songs were meant for liturgical use” and refers to them as part of “a weekly cultic drama.”²⁰ Crispin Fletcher-Louis sees the Songs as

15. Mackie, “Heavenly Sanctuary Mysticism,” 98.

16. My thanks to John W. Welch for bringing this to my attention.

17. Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 199–200.

18. Carol Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition*, Harvard Semitic Studies, vol. 27 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 17–18.

19. Newsom, *Songs*, 17.

20. James R. Davila, “Exploring the Mystical Background of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 443.

a “conductor’s score” for not merely a descriptive heavenly tour but a more concrete ritualized heavenly ascent. What we see in these texts should be considered the ritual ascension of the human community to heaven, where they experience a vision of God’s throne and are temporarily transformed into an angelified or deified state.²¹ Scott Mackie and Philip Alexander specifically refer to the Songs as implying a “communal heavenly ascent.” I will not go into an in-depth description of the content of the Songs but quote here from Alexander’s analysis:

The communal chanting of these numinous hymns on successive Sabbaths was apparently deemed sufficient to carry the earthly worshippers up to the courts of the celestial Temple, through the nave and into the sanctuary, and to set them before the throne of God. . . . *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* implies a communal ascent: if one makes the ascent then one does so in a group. . . . *The Self-Glorification Hymn* (another similar text from the Dead Sea Scrolls), however, seems to imply that some individuals within the community, like Enoch and Levi and other great spiritual heroes of the past, had made the ascent on their own. Such individual ascent was probably the exception, rather than the rule.²²

Alexander goes on to suggest that the leader of this liturgy, much like Enoch, would likely have already made the ascent himself and would thus be qualified to lead his congregation into the celestial realm. We can see the parallel here between Enoch and Melchizedek of the Joseph Smith revelations, Jesus in Hebrews, and the leader of the Sabbath Songs: in each the leader gains access to the heavenly temple through his faithfulness and is then able to lead his followers in that same path of ascent. Another common element is that of the priesthood, and specifically the priesthood of Melchizedek. The name Melchizedek is arguably found two or three times in the Songs, where he is likely depicted, as Davila argues, “as continuing his priestly duties in the heavenly temple after his apotheosis.”²³

21. Crispin Fletcher-Louis, “Heavenly Ascent and Incarnational Presence? A Revisionist Reading of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice,” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1998 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 367–99.

22. Philip Alexander, “Qumran and the Genealogy of Western Mysticism,” in *New Perspectives on Old Texts: Proceedings of the Tenth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 9–11 January, 2005*, ed. Esther Chazon, Betsy Halpern-Amaru, and Ruth A. Clemens (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 226–27.

23. Davila, “Heavenly Ascents,” 464.

I have found a related pattern of themes in my own research on other Qumran texts, including a collection of poetic compositions or songs known as the Hodayot, or “Thanksgiving Psalms,” and the scroll labeled 4Q381, a collection of noncanonical psalms. I will briefly outline the pattern that I have been able to piece together, drawing on an array of different texts within these collections. When these themes are brought together, the following picture begins to emerge:

- a. An individual, often the leader of the group or community, recounts how he has been taken up into heaven to stand in the divine council;
- b. He is taught the heavenly “mysteries,” often by God himself;
- c. He is appointed to be a teacher and is called to teach the mysteries to others;
- d. Those who follow his teachings are then permitted to participate in a heavenly ascent or vision.

I will cite here examples from the pertinent Qumran texts to demonstrate each of these points. Regarding the first, we find in numerous places of 1QHodayot^a the speaker thanking God for delivering him from suffering and for having “raised” him “to the eternal height,” or heavenly realm.

I thank you, Lord, that you have redeemed my life from the pit, and that from Sheol-Abaddon you have lifted me up to an eternal height, so that I walk about on a limitless plain. I know that there is hope for one whom you have formed from the dust for an eternal council . . . that he might take his place with the host of the holy ones and enter into community with the congregation of the children of heaven (1QHa XI, 20–23).²⁴

The second point, regarding the idea that the individual is, while in the heavenly realm, taught the “mysteries” of heaven, can be seen in column XII of 1QHodayot^a. In this passage, the speaker proclaims to God, “You have illumined my face for your covenant. . . . I seek you, and as sure as dawn, you appear to me” (lines 6–7).²⁵ He later goes on to say, “For you have made me understand your wonderful mysteries” (lines 28–29).²⁶ In another place, he exclaims, “I thank [you, O Lord], that you have

24. Based on the translation by Carol Newsom in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XL: 1QHodayot^a*, ed. Hartmut Stegemann and Eileen Schuller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), 155.

25. Translation by Newsom in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XL*, 165.

26. Translation by Newsom in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XL*, 166.

instructed me in your truth, and made known to me your wondrous mysteries.”²⁷

We can glimpse the motif of the individual being called to teach the mysteries in 1QHodayot^a XII, 28–29. There, the speaker states that after God had taught him the “wondrous mysteries” and “shown” himself to him, God then “illuminated the faces of many” through him. In column X, line 15, the text reads: “But you have made me a banner for the elect of righteousness and an expert interpreter [or mediator of knowledge] of wonderful mysteries.”²⁸ Samuel Thomas notes that we see in these texts that “the protagonist is called upon to translate or interpret his own experience to those under his tutelage.”²⁹

1QHodayot^a XII is an example of the fourth motif mentioned, in which the teacher’s disciples are permitted to ascend to heaven to have a similar experience to that of the teacher. In line 25 of column XII, the speaker makes reference to a group of people who follow him and tells the Lord that these have “gathered together for your covenant” and that he has “examined” them. He goes on to declare that “those who walk in the way of your heart listen to me; they are drawing themselves up before you in the council of the holy ones.”³⁰

The presence of these themes in a variety of documents leads us to speculate that the concept of communal ascent to heaven was widespread at Qumran. The fact that the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice were also found at Masada indicates that this phenomenon was not limited to a group of sectarians living at Qumran. As a number of scholars have argued,³¹ I believe that some of these texts, or similar ones, originated with, or were used by, the priesthood at the Jerusalem Temple. Generally speaking, the stories and texts that I have analyzed in this article are about the temple and about the priesthood. The temple, the holy mountain, or

27. Translation of 1QHodayot^a XV:29–30 by Newsom in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XL*, 214.

28. Translation by Newsom in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XL*, 142.

29. Samuel I. Thomas, *The “Mysteries” of Qumran: Mystery, Secrecy, and Esotericism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 209.

30. Based on the translation by Newsom in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XL*, 166.

31. See, for example, Philip S. Alexander, *The Mystical Texts: Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and Related Manuscripts*, JSPSupp 61, Companion to the Qumran Scrolls 7 (London: Continuum, 2006), 129; Israel Knohl, “Between Voice and Silence: The Relationship between Prayer and Temple Cult,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115, no. 1 (1996): 17–30.

the holy city, is the place for ascension into heaven, whether it be literal or ritual. When there was corruption in the earthly temple, people—such as the Qumran community and the early Christians—were striving for the heavenly temple located in the heavenly city. They were trying to ascend to that heavenly community, to attain the paradisiacal home, as Enoch did, and enjoy the glory of living in the presence of God. In Hebrews, all of the patriarchs were seeking to reach that city, and Jesus made it possible for all Christians to make it there. For the Qumran community, their religious practices gave them the experience of being there, praising God among the angels. For Joseph Smith, Enoch and his people set the pattern for others to follow.

I close by returning to Joseph Smith's revelation regarding Melchizedek: "His people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, separating it from the earth, having reserved it unto the latter days, or the end of the world; And hath said, and sworn with an oath, that the heavens and the earth should come together" (Gen. 14:34–35, JST).

David J. Larsen is an adjunct professor for the Department of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University and an editorial fellow at BYU Studies. He received his PhD in Divinity/Biblical Studies from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, his MA in Biblical Theology from Marquette University, and a BA in Near Eastern Studies from BYU. He currently lives in Springville, Utah, with his wife and their four (soon to be five) children.