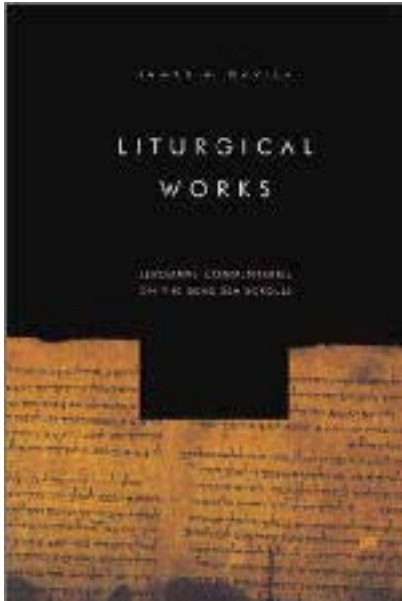


RBL 08/2003



Davila, James R.

Liturgical Works

Eerdmans Commentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls 6

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. Pp. xi + 338. Paper.
\$25.00. ISBN 0802843808.

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This timely and well-executed book is the first of sixteen scheduled volumes to be published in the Eerdmans Commentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls series. This series, edited by Martin G. Abegg and Peter W. Flint, intends to provide “expert translations, critical notes, and line-by-line commentary for every translatable manuscript found at Qumran” for specialists, students, and nonspecialists alike. Davila’s volume on Qumran’s liturgical texts is an excellent beginning for a very promising project.

Liturgical Works is a detailed study of a collection of the independent liturgical texts found in the Qumran caves. The texts covered in this volume were chosen because they “show evidence of composition for use in the ritual life of ancient Judaism” (2). It should be noted that Davila is careful to avoid the assumption that these texts represent the ritual life of the Qumran community in particular. Determination of use at Qumran is made within each chapter. Davila acknowledges that other texts that could have been included in this volume, such as the exorcism texts (4Q510–11 and 11Q11), were for other reasons assigned to appear in the forthcoming volume on hymns and prayers. In addition, texts that contain liturgies, such as the *Rule of the Community* and the *War Scroll*, were

excluded from the present collection, although frequent reference is made to parallels and connections with these texts.

Davila begins the volume with twelve pages of general introduction to some of the basic issues involved in the study of ancient Jewish liturgy. He gives an overview of the Qumran library and its liturgical texts, followed by definitions of key terms essential to understanding the discussion of Qumran liturgical texts: cult, covenant, and purity. The rest of the introduction describes and compares the ritual cycles found in the Bible, in the texts from Qumran, and in later Jewish liturgy. These clear and even-handed discussions provide students and nonspecialists with a useful framework within which to place the commentaries to follow. A general bibliography concludes the introduction.

The liturgical texts are presented in numerical order following the reference number of the first extant manuscript. The texts covered include: *Festival Prayers* (1Q34 + 1Q34bis, 4Q507, 4Q508, 4Q509 + 4Q505), *4QBerakhot* (4Q286–90, 4Q280?), *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (4Q400–407, 11Q17, Mas1K), *Times for Praising God* (4Q409), *Grace after Meals* (4Q434a), *A Lamentation* (4Q501), *A Wedding Ceremony?* (4Q502), *Daily Prayers* (4Q503), *The Words of the Luminaries* (4Q504, 4Q506), and *Purification Liturgies* (4Q512, 4Q514).

Each chapter begins with an introduction to the text with sections dealing with the text's contents, the state of the manuscripts, and the structure, genre, and prosody of the text. Davila also presents a discussion of the text's life situation. This section includes theories relating to the likelihood of Qumran authorship as well as possible contexts for the use of the liturgy within Qumran or in other Jewish communities. In a section entitled literary context, Davila highlights possible connections with biblical, Qumranic, Christian, and ancient Jewish literature when relevant. He also includes a bibliography for each text.

The main section of each chapter includes a column-by-column translation followed by textual notes and a line-by-line commentary. Since many of these texts are quite fragmentary, Davila has taken the time to evaluate recent proposals for reconstructing the order of fragments and presents each text in its original sequence whenever possible. For example, the chapter on 4Q503 (*Daily Prayers*) follows Daniel Falk's recommendation that fragments 1–3 should be read as relating to the fourteenth and fifteenth days, rather than the fourth and fifth. On the other hand, fragments whose location is uncertain are translated in numerical order at the end of the reconstructed text.

Davila's translations are quite clear and readable. They include notation of top and bottom margins, line numbers, corrections, and lacunae. Davila translates reconstructed lines only when they are quite certain based on parallel texts or formulae within a text. A proposal for the reconstruction of a column of 4Q512 is included as an appendix. His main additions to the translations are the headings he has added in italics that indicate the setting of the prayer (*Prayer for the morning of the fourteenth day of the month*, or *A Prayer for the Day of Atonement*) or a prominent theme in the prayer (*A Curse on Belial and "the spirits of his lot"* or *Invocations of various groups of angels*). These headings, although sometimes quite arbitrary, help the reader recognize the structure of the text. It should, however, be made clear that these headings are not part of the original manuscripts.

Davila's textual notes address questions of reconstructions of partially preserved words or phrases, as well as notes on the translation of specific words or expressions. Since no transcriptions of the Hebrew texts are present in this volume, these notes are most useful when used in conjunction with copies of the texts or photographs of the fragments.

The great strength of this volume is found in the commentary section, where Davila provides extensive references to texts from biblical, rabbinic, Christian, and Hekhalot literature that may have linguistic or conceptual parallels with the text under discussion. He also makes reference to other Qumran texts that address similar themes or use similar language. He seldom provides more than a brief comment on their connection. One exception can be found in a detailed excursus on the Melchizedek tradition, which concludes his comments on the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*. Scholars and students alike will enjoy tracking down these references and determining for themselves how strong the relationships between the texts are and what implications these connections might have. The volume concludes with an extensive index of modern authors, Scripture references, Dead Sea Scrolls, and other ancient writings mentioned throughout the commentary. Davila has provided quite a service for anyone interested in further study of the literary contexts of these texts.

Davila's *Liturgical Works* is a useful resource of the basic linguistic issues surrounding these texts and will serve well as a steppingstone for further studies that can synthesize the results to further our understanding of the use of this liturgy at Qumran.