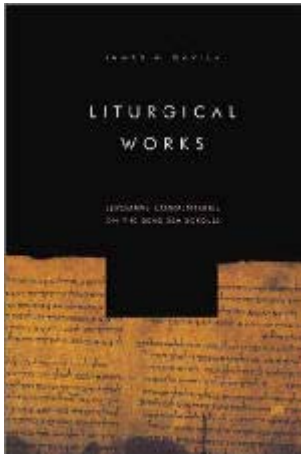


RBL 04/03/2002



Davila, James R.

Liturgical Works

Eerdmans Commentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls 6

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 200. Pp. xi + 338, Paperback, \$25.00, ISBN 0802843808.

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James R. Davila's *Liturgical Works* is the first volume of the Eerdmans Commentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls series to be published. This volume, which provides an introduction, annotated translation, and a line-by-line commentary for the liturgical documents found at Qumran, is an important contribution to the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Liturgical Works provides a commentary on those documents that "show evidence of composition for use in the ritual life of ancient Judaism, whether pertaining to the cycle of festivals and holy days, to daily prayer in various situations, to ceremonial purification, or to rites of passage such as marriage" (2). The documents included are *Festival Prayers* (1Q34 + 1Q34bis, 4Q507, 4Q508, 4Q509 + 4Q505), *4QBerakhot* (4Q286-290, 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, 4Q414). Of course, the boundaries between liturgical works and other compositions are not sharp. As Davila acknowledges, some of the contributions assigned to other volumes may have been included in this volume, such as 4Q510-511 and 11Q11, which contain exorcism rituals.

Davila provides helpful introductions to each document. First, the contents of the document are introduced, followed by a discussion of the manuscript evidence, including the paleographical dating of the script. This is followed by a discussion of the document's

structure and genre. Davila expands this section of the introductions to the *Berakhot* and to the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* to include a discussion of prosody. Especially appropriate for liturgical compositions, each introduction discusses the “life situation” in which the work may have been used. In this section, Davila discusses the document’s provenience and possible relationship to the Qumran community. A final section on “literary context” highlights some of the biblical influences on the document as well as similar compositions. So, for example, in discussing the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, Davila briefly compares and contrasts it with two other compositions found at Qumran (*Songs of the Sage* [4Q510-511]) and the *Berakhot* [4Q286-290, 280?]), Revelation, the Christian gnostic corpus, and the Hekalot literature. Each introduction also contains a selected bibliography.

Davila’s translations of the documents are readable but not idiomatic. When there are multiple manuscript witnesses to a passage, Davila provides a composite text. Other extensive reconstructions, however, are avoided. Untranslated letters are indicated by dots (.), a convention that he does not mention in the list of “Special Abbreviations, Symbols, and Primary Sources.”

The nonspecialist will appreciate Davila’s introduction to the volume. In this chapter he introduces some of the important concepts and terms used in the study of religion to discuss liturgical works, such as “cult” and “purity” as well as the form of ancient Near Eastern covenants. He then provides a brief sketch of Israel’s ritual cycle as it is reflected in the biblical texts, reviewing the major festivals, holy days, and other sacred times. This section is followed by a discussion of the liturgical traditions reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Here he addresses the use of the 364-day calendar, the Qumran community’s covenant-renewal ceremony, as well as the Festival of Firstfruits of New Wine and the Festival of Firstfruits of Oil, attested in the *Temple Scroll* (11Q19). The chapter concludes with a brief review of the major sources for reconstructing later Jewish literature, including the rabbinic literature, the Piyutim, and the Hekalot literature.

One of the real values of this volume is the inclusion, within the commentaries, of abundant references to parallels in other literature. References to passages in the Hebrew Bible help readers discern ways that the Qumran documents interpret and adapt earlier traditions. References to other Dead Sea Scrolls help explain the significance of important terms and practices, while those to later Jewish, Christian, and gnostic texts help the reader explore ways that liturgical practices continued to develop. The reader is aided by indexes of Scripture references, of Dead Sea Scrolls, and of other ancient writings (an index of modern authors is also included). Of course, Davila’s references are not exhaustive; other parallels may be adduced. For example, several fragments of the *Purification Liturgies* (4Q512 frags. 24-25, 27, and 28) may deal with the priest’s examination of the hair of individuals suffering from skin disease, and Davila rightly refers the reader to Lev 13 and 14. I would add references to the *Damascus Document* (4Q266 [4QD^a] frg. 6 col. 1; 4Q269 [4QD^d] frg. 7; 4Q272 [4QD^e] frg. 1 cols. 1-2; and

4Q273 [4QD^h] frg. 4 col. 2), which also deals with instructions concerning skin disease. Another important parallel that I would add is to a passage in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, Song V;

For from the God of knowledge came into being all [eternally existing things] (Davila, 114; 4Q402 4 line 12 + Mas1k i:3)

כִּי־אֵל מֵאֱלֹהֵי דַעַת נִהְיוּ כֹּל הוּי עַד וּמִדַּעַתוּ

This passage is strikingly similar to 1QS 3:15b;

From the God of knowledge (came into being) all that is and (all) that shall be

מֵאֵל הַדַּעוֹת כֹּל הוּיָה וְנִהְיִיָה

Besides the affinity in thought, the parallel phrasing, including the presence of the unusual Niphal of הִיָּה, points toward the existence of a genetic relationship between the two documents. In fact, given the contexts of the two passages, I would suggest that the *Rule of the Community* influenced the *Sabbath Songs* rather than the other way around. This, in turn, would lend support to the conclusion that the *Sabbath Songs* are a Qumran sectarian composition. My suggestion of these references, however, are not intended to fault Davila's work. Rather, they are offered as an indication of the continued work that needs to be done on these documents, work that will be greatly aided by Davila's contribution.

The Eerdmans Commentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls series is projected to comprise sixteen volumes. Martin B. Abegg Jr. and Peter W. Flint serve as the general editors for the series, and the contributors are among the leading scholars in the field. The series intends to cover "every translatable manuscript found at Qumran"; presumably this means every nonbiblical manuscript. If Davila's contribution is any indication, specialists in Qumran studies as well as other scholars and students will find this series a valuable companion to reading the Dead Sea Scrolls.