

The Qumran Psalter: The Thanksgiving Hymns among the Dead Sea Scrolls



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In 68 CE, devout Jews left more than one thousand handwritten documents in caves northwest of the Dead Sea. The cave that most defined the beliefs and hopes of these Jews is Cave I. In it were placed many manuscripts, including two copies of the Qumran Psalter or Thanksgiving Hymns. In 1947, Bedouin shepherds found Cave I and retrieved scrolls, including a copy of the Qumran Psalter. It proves Jews created new psalms to complement the Davidic Psalter (the "Psalms" usually attributed to David). We learn for the first time how Jews prior to Hillel and Jesus imagined the universe, articulated unworthiness, and despite suffering were devoted to God's covenant. One author imagines that though his ear was inattentive to God's words he felt a message penetrate his being so that his stone heart palpitated. Throughout and especially in the Self-Glorification Hymn, the authors express transcendence, and a oneness with angels through God's continuing acts of compassion and acceptance. Though confessing unworthiness, the authors thank the Lord for forgiving those who turn from transgression; this theme is the keynote of the symphonic poetry. Jews, Christians, and all interested in spirituality will find insight and comfort studying these psalms and poems.

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