Chapter Eighteen

Sapiental Revelation at Qumran

Chapters 12–13 surveyed a wide range of texts found within the Qumran library that bear witness to a newly emerging model of revelation. These texts identify the receipt of divine wisdom as a revelatory experience. This treatment began by discussing the various biblical models for the acquisition of divine wisdom. In particular, I noted the pervasiveness of the belief that God bestows knowledge upon certain individuals. With rare exceptions, however, this experience was not aligned with the biblical prophetic traditions. By the late Second Temple Period, several texts identify these sapiental traditions with prophetic phenomena. The entire experience is conceptualized using language and imagery normally applied to prophetic encounters. Several texts preserved among the Dead Sea Scrolls attest to this new mode of revelation, which I designated as sapiental revelation.

In chapters 12–13, the prophetic revelatory framework for sapiental revelation was established by exploring the application of its processes to ancient biblical prophetic and inspired figures (Moses, David, Isaiah, Enoch, and Daniel). In chapter fifteen, I examined evidence for the active reality of sapiental revelation in wider segments of Second Temple Judaism outside of the Qumran community. Thus, Ben Sira’s prophetic self-awareness was identified as an example of an individual conceiving of his receipt of divine wisdom as analogous to prophetic revelation. Similarly, the social group standing behind the composition of 1Q/4QInstruction envisioned the divine conveyance of knowledge as a revelatory process.

In this chapter, I turn to the evidence of sapiental revelation within the Qumran community. In doing so, I draw upon the models of sapiental revelation outlined in chapters 12–13. This analysis centers around three prominent sectarian documents: the Hodayot, the Damascus Document, and the Rule of the Community. The bulk of this examination focuses on the evidence provided by the Hodayot. Several passages in the Hodayot, as well as a few in the Damascus Document and the Rule of the Community, indicate that the Qumran community envisioned for itself an active role for sapiental revelation. These texts
testify to the sectarian belief in the continued occurrence of revelation through the receipt of divine wisdom. Moreover, some of these texts preserve evidence of specific individuals who were the beneficiaries of this sapiential revelation.

The Hodayot

Authorship and Sitz im Leben

Any treatment of the role of the Hodayot in reconstructing sectarian thought and practice must begin with the question of authorship and Sitz im Leben. With the initial publication of the Hodayot, many scholars argued that the entire collection came from the hand of one author, who was identified as the Teacher of Righteousness. This initial assertion was subsequently rethought by many scholars who argued for far more complexity in the composition of the text.

Much recent scholarship on the Hodayot has followed the approach articulated by Gert Jeremias. Jeremias agreed with those scholars who denied literary unity and singular authorship. At the same time, Jeremias found that certain generic and literary features point to the existence of two independent literary units within the Hodayot. The hymns contained in 1QH 10–17 (Sukenik 2–9) were identified as a lit-

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1 For a much fuller discussion of these issues, see Douglas, “Power,” 1:1–76.
2 Eliezer L. Sukenik, Oṣar ha-Megillot ha-Genuzot: Sé-be-Yede ha-Universitah ha-Torit (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, the Hebrew University, 1954), 34 (idem, Megillot Genuzot, 33); Milik, Ten Years, 40; Carmignac, LTO, 1:129–145. Further bibliography from early Qumran scholarship can be found in Mansoor, Hymns, 45, n. 1; Jeremias, Lehrer, 168–169, n. 6.
3 See Licht, Megillat ha-Hodayot, 22–27; Hans Bardtke, “Considérations sur les Cantiques de Qumrân,” RB 63 (1956): 220–233 (esp. 232–233); (unified authorship, though not the Teacher of Righteousness [perhaps the Mebagger or the Maskil]); Dupont-Sommer, “Hymnes,” 10–12 (no unified authorship, though the voice of the Teacher can be detected at some points; cf. Delcor, Hymnes, 20–23; Émile Puech, “Hodayot,” EDSS 1:366–367). Basing himself primarily on the analogy of the form-critical study of biblical Psalms, Holm-Nielsen argued that the individual hymnic units in the Hodayot are the product of numerous different authors, who composed these hymns in various different Sitz im Leben (Hodayot, 316–331). These authors came from within the Qumran community. At the same time, the experiences reflected in the hymns are not those of the individual authors. Rather, the recurring first person speech (’I’) in the hymns reflects the larger sectarian community. Accordingly, the hymns are representative of the larger experiences and theological ethos of the wider Qumran community.