THE APOSTROPHE TO ZION—A PHILOLOGICAL AND STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

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Although the so-called “Apostrophe to Zion” has been known for over 35 years, it has attracted surprisingly little attention from scholars, in contrast to other poetic works such as the Hodayot. In 1965, J.A. Sanders published the official edition of the poem, accompanied by a concise commentary in which he identified the poem’s biblical sources and discussed briefly some of the more problematic lines.1 1966 saw Starcky’s publication of apocryphal psalm material from Qumran cave 4, which included a fragmentary parallel copy of this work in 4QPsfs.2 A year later, Sanders took the opportunity of the publication of a popular edition of the 11QPsalms manuscript to collate this material and to correct other minor errors.3 The official edition of 4QPsfs was published in 2000.4

One reason for this benign scholarly neglect might be the subject matter, which is fairly uncontentious: the poem contains praises to the city of Jerusalem (always referred to as “Zion”), a genre already familiar from the bible and other post-biblical sources,5 and does not appear to contain any allusions to sectarian struggle or striking

5 This genre has been dealt with comprehensively in D. Flusser, “Jerusalem in the Literature of the Second Temple,” Ve’im Bigvarot, Fourscore Years: A Tribute to Rubin and Hannah Mass on their Eightieth Birthdays (eds. A. Eben-Shushan, et al., Jerusalem: Yedidim, 1974), 263–94. The connections with the biblical sources were already noted by Sanders, DJD 4.85.
theological positions. In recent years, two studies have dealt specifically with aspects of this text. Schiffman has published a translation accompanied by brief comments in a collection of early prayers, while Eshel and Strugnell considered the poem’s acrostic structure in the light of other acrostic poems from the period.

The acrostic structure and frequent parallelism lend the work a simplistic appearance, which at first blush might seem to require less incisive study than the often-frustrating poetry of the Hodayot. However, in this article, I shall attempt to demonstrate that the poem is the sophisticated work of a skilful poet, who has borrowed from biblical language while adapting it to his own needs and created, effectively, a new style psalm modelled on the biblical style. The discussion here is primarily philological and structural: I aim to show how the author reemploys biblical language advisedly to support his thesis, and that the overall structure similarly advances this goal.

**Edition**

As mentioned above, the poem survives in two manuscripts: 11QPsa and 4QPs’. 11QPsa, apparently dating from the first half of the first century CE, is written in a clear book hand, and contains a copy of DSD 14,2_f4_178-198II

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8 It differs entirely from the Hodayot, which have been described as chaotic. For attempts at defining the poetic structure of the Hodayot, see B. Kittel, *The Hymns of Qumran* (SBLDS 50; Chico, CA: Scholars, 1980). B. Thiering, “The Poetic forms of the Hodayot,” *JSS* 8 (1963), 189–209, appears to be one of the first to take the Hodayot’s poetic forms seriously, though she somewhat exaggerated the unity of its chiastic structures, and did not relate it to issues of authorship. A comprehensive study of the poetic texts from the Second Temple period is a major desideratum.