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Review of “ Angels Among Us: The Use of Old Testament Passages As Inspiration for Temple Themes In The Dead Sea Scrolls.”

David J. Larsen received his PhD in Divinity - Biblical Studies under James Davila at St Mary's College in Saint Andrews, Scotland. Before that he received a masters degree in theology under Andrei A. Orlov in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is well suited to study ancient text and understand their cultural context as he also completed course work in Sociology, Anthropology, Greek, and Bible Archeology. He is an expert on ancient texts that compose books of the old testament and other bodies of David J. Larsen points out in his research on the inspiration for temple themes of the Dead Sea Scrolls was part of the literary and performance history of the culture that composed these texts. The Old Testament then has books that are sometimes interpreted as the word of God, but at the time the people would have recognized them as a human voice speaking form of literature called Self Glorification Hymns. In his essay “ Angels Among Us: The Use of Old Testament Passages As Inspiration for Temple Themes In The Dead Sea Scrolls.” Larsen cites James Davila whom he studied under for his PhD. He is also studied linguist, with reading understandings of Hellenistic Greek, Ancient Hebrew, French, German and is fluent in English and Portuguese in addition to being an advanced Spanish speaker.

Today, such passages that Larsen describes in “ Angels Among Us: The Use of Old Testament Passages As Inspiration for Temple Themes In The Dead Sea Scrolls.” This is a departure in interpreting these are laws or prayers. Few people understand that many Psalms in the bible, and other such books, including Temple Themes in the Dead Sea Scrolls come to as a written

record of the oral tradition that it records. (Larsen, pg 92, 2013). These words were not merely read in ceremonies as they are in religious gatherings of today. Rather, they were acted out to likely an enthusiastic, sometimes cheering and shouting audience. Larsen explains, “ an individual, often the speaker of the hymn/psalm or a leader of the community/congregation, speaks as if he has been taken up into heaven to stand in the divine council of God.” (Larsen, pg 92, 2013). Participants of this ceremony would be invited to join the speaker and put on heavenly robes in imitation of how that person perceived heavenly beings to act.

There were themes of the Old Testament that influenced of the Qumran authors in their rendering of temple scenes. Larsen says that the Qumran authors were “ dependent” not just on Genesis, but also psalms and passages of Samuel. He sites the example of the “ raising-from-the-dust motif, which was employed to signify the election of a new ruler of the common people. He quotes the passage of God and King Baasha of Israel: “ I exalted you out of the dust and made you a leader over my people Israel” (Larsen, pg 3 , 2013). Larsen’s essay explains the symbolism behind actions in the Bible. This offers new insight into passages of the Old Testament not just by their inspiration for The Dead Sea Scrolls, but into the traditions of the Bible that served as inspiration. They offer insight into the context of the culture and the time period that the culture took place in.

The Old Testament is filled with instances of God dwelling in a holy sanctuary, a “ temple.” It appears in Psalm 24. Larsen cites Isaiah’s vision of God on his throne in the temple and angels singing God his glory. This is is perhaps why Larsen chose to name his article “ Angels Among Us” the

spiritual leaders in the old testament were “ Angels” in the sense that angel means messenger.

A third instance of Larsen’s work shedding light on the context of the Old Testament via The Dead Sea Scrolls how angels, messengers of God praise god with Angels. This relates to the teaching motif that Larsen also discusses in his journal essay. Angels walk in the way of God’s heart. These messengers were related by to in the Old Testament as constantly praising God, which is their mission. This is also the role of religious leader in the temple, to stand before the people offering praises to God. Larsen notes the parallel of the Old Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls when he writes “ In the apocryphal book of Sirach, Chapter 50, the shout is specifically mentioned as part of the ritual (Larsen, pg 101, 2013).

This text served as the foundation for a more fleshed out version of the liturgy that occurred when Simon ben Onias, who was the high priest, repaired a temple from a ruined foundation. The original text says that “ The sons of Aaron shouted; they sounded a mighty fanfare as a reminder before the Most High.”

Larsen concludes by noting that the examples he serves are not the only ones that exist. Larsen knows much of the context, both linguistic, culture, and time period that surrounds and the stories in the Bible. Understanding their influence, gives one deeper understanding into them.

Bibliography

Larsen, David J. “ Angels Among Us: The Use of Old Testament Passages As Inspiration for Temple Themes In The Dead Sea Scrolls.” *Studies In The Bible*

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