

The Odes Shall Not Be Silent

Description

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An Explication of Odes 26 and 12

from the Odes “of Solomon” (so-called)

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The Message of the New Moon

of the Eighth Month

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Most of you who have been studying this message are doubtless familiar with the Odes of Solomon. If you are not familiar with them, or if you need a refresher, I recommend going back over our past studies.¹ Also, for convenience, here is a short list of some of the basic points you need to know before getting into this study:

- 1) The “Odes of Solomon” are a collection of 42 short pieces of poetry, 41 of which are preserved.
- 2) They do not claim to have been written by Solomon, nor were they written by him.
- 3) They were written in the 1st century C.E. by a follower of Jesus.
- 4) The Odes were written over a period of years ranging from pre-70 to post-70.
- 5) The Odes were strongly influenced by Qumran “sectarian” literature, such as *The Thanksgiving Hymns* and *The Community Rule*, and have close affinities with the Johannine literature.
- 6) The author of the Odes (sometimes called “the Odist”) claimed to be a recipient and conveyer of Divine Inspiration, and thus a “prophet” and “messenger” of God.
- 7) The name and gender of the Odist remain unknown.

- 8) The Odist understood her/himself to be given the mission of establishing God's kingdom on earth.
- 9) The Odist's primary means of conveying her/his message, at least in this collection, was through music.
- 10) While the Odes were written for their own day and have primary application to their own setting, they contain many lessons, teachings, and patterns of circumstance which are applicable today, especially in relation to the Branch movement and message in its present phase.

I certainly don't know of any writing more beautiful than the Odes, and part of their beauty is the truth they convey; truth which our Heavenly Family has blessed us with many times. This time, we get a double blessing by considering two Odes in light of one another. First, here is Ode 26:²

ODE 26

- ¹ I poured out praise to the Lord,
because I am his own.
- ² And I will recite his holy ode,
because my heart is with him.
- ³ For his harp is in my hand,
and the odes of his rest shall not be silent.
- ⁴ I will call unto him with all my heart,
I will praise and exalt him with all my members.
- ⁵ For from the East and unto the West
is his praise;
- ⁶ Also from the South and unto the North
is his thanksgiving.
- ⁷ Even from the peak of the summits and unto their end
is his perfection.
- ⁸ Who can write the odes of the Lord,
or who can read them?
- ⁹ Or who can train himself for life,

so that he himself may be saved?

¹⁰ Or who can press upon the Most High,

so that he would recite from his mouth?

¹¹ Who can interpret the wonders of the Lord?

Though he who interprets should perish,

yet that which was interpreted will remain.

¹² For it suffices to perceive and be satisfied,

for the Odists stand in serenity;

¹³ Like a river which has an increasingly gushing spring,

and flows to the relief of them that seek it.

Hallelujah

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Let's now explore this Ode piece by piece:

<sup>1</sup> I poured out praise to the Lord,

because I am his own.

<sup>2</sup> And I will recite his holy ode,

because my heart is with him. – Ode 26:1-2

Here we have a typical Semitic parallelism with the structure A-B-A-B. In other words, the first line of each of these verses parallel one another and mean roughly the same thing and the same is true concerning the last line of each verse. The Odist pours out praise to the Lord, and the praise is the ode itself. The reason and motive for reciting the ode is that the Odist belongs to the Lord – the Odist's heart is with him. It is striking that the Odist does not say, "I will praise God by reciting this Ode because God is the Creator and I was made for the purpose of worshipping at His feet." There is no sense of obligation in the Odist's words. Yes, the Odist has a deep sense of owing all praise and glory to God (vs. 4), but it is clearly heartfelt. The Odist considers him/herself to belong to the Lord because the Lord has won over his/her heart.

<sup>3</sup> For his harp is in my hand,

and the odes of his rest shall not be silent.

<sup>4</sup> I will call unto him with all my heart,

I will praise and exalt him with all my members. – Ode 26:3-4

As the ode is “his holy ode” (vs. 2) and “the ode of his rest,” so the harp is “his harp.” Why didn’t the Odist say, “I will recite my holy ode ... for my harp is in my hand ...”? The reason is that the odes are not simply the creative output of the Odist; they came by the inspiration of the Spirit of Truth. As the Odist said elsewhere:

<sup>1</sup> As the [wind] moves through the harp

and the strings speak,

<sup>2</sup> So the Spirit of the Lord speaks through my members,

and I speak through his love. – Ode 6:1-2

<sup>1</sup> The Lord has directed my mouth by his Word,

and has opened my heart by his Light. – Ode 10:1

<sup>5</sup> I shall open my mouth,

and his Spirit will speak through me

the praise of the Lord and his beauty. – Ode 16:5

The Odist felt honored to be a vessel of truth and, recognizing his/her own inability to self-produce truth, the natural response was a whole-hearted gratitude to the Lord and a praise that requires engagement of the whole being. To quench the fire of inspiration would be death. When Inspiration strikes, to speak is life “and the odes of his rest shall not be silent.”

<sup>5</sup> For from the East and unto the West

is his praise;

<sup>6</sup> Also from the South and unto the North

is his thanksgiving.

<sup>7</sup> Even from the peak of the summits and unto their end

is his perfection. – Ode 26:5-7

Here again we have Semitic parallelism. The first line of each of these three verses convey the same general idea and the same is true of the last line of each verse. “His praise” is “his thanksgiving” which is “his perfection.” And what is it? It is the “holy ode” – the inspired message. And where is the message? From whence does it come? Anywhere and everywhere! It is described as extending from point to point on the compass and from the tops of the mountains unto their ends. The point is that no matter where you are, you can find God’s message since he has appointed Odists to proclaim his message everywhere.

A more specific meaning is found in the fact that in part-A of each verse, the message is described as going “from” one place to another. Saying that the Odists’ messages go from the east and toward the west is a way of comparing them to the sunrise (see Ode 15:1-2). The increasing brightness of the sunrise represents the increasing clarity and abundance of the truths of the messages over time (Prov. 4:18). The messages coming “from the south” indicates a couple of things. First, Yahweh was understood by the Israelites as having come from the south when calling Moses as his prophet (Dt. 33:2). This is probably the background to a passage in 1 Enoch which says, “The South they call South because the Great One sojourns there...” (1 En. 77:1). So, to come from the “south” indicates coming from Yahweh. An even closer parallel to this is found in two passages in Ezekiel wherein Yahweh warns that his judgment messages shall extent “from south to north” (Ez. 20:47; 21:4). Judah was in the south and those members of the Israelite tribes who were not scattered by the

Assyrians still resided in the north, although now mixed with displaced gentiles who were there due to Assyrian relocation strategies. Judah was where people were most up-to-date with present truth, and the further north you went, the less familiar with present truth people were. Thus, the messages are first sent to those with the most light (those in “the south”) and then extend to those with less light (those in “the north”). Lastly, for the messages to come “from the peaks of the summits” indicates that they come from Wisdom, who is often depicted as giving her message from high places (Prov. 8:2; 9:3; c.f. Ode 33:3).

To summarize the Ode thus far: The Odist recites odes as praise to God for his/her heart has been won over to the Lord. The odes are the Lord’s since he has inspired them by his Spirit. Odists have been appointed to spread the message that it may be everywhere. These messages increase in clarity and in the abundance of their truths, they are sent by Yahweh first to those with the most light and then to those with less, and they come from Wisdom as part of Her mountaintop plea. These messages are the praise of God – the thanksgiving – the perfection.

To continue:

<sup>8</sup> Who can write the odes of the Lord,

or who can read them?

<sup>9</sup> Or who can train himself for life,

so that he himself may be saved?

<sup>10</sup> Or who can press upon the Most High,

so that he would recite from his mouth?

<sup>11</sup> Who can interpret the wonders of the Lord?

Though he who interprets should perish,

yet that which was interpreted will remain. – Ode 26:8-11

These verses are also in the form of Semitic parallelism, but the parallels are certainly looser as compared to previous instances in this Ode. And the parallels here progressively get looser from verses 8-11 until they cease to be parallels altogether in 11b. We’ll take each verse one at a time:

Verse 8: Who can write the odes of the Lord? The answer is, “No one ... of himself.” This is the answer to all the rhetorical questions here. This first question touches on the theme we explained already, that the Odes are not something the Odist can manufacture; it takes Divine Inspiration. Who can read them? Again, “No one ... of himself.” In other words, just as it takes the guidance of the Spirit for the Odes to be produced, it takes the guidance of the Spirit for the Odes to be proclaimed and understood.

Verse 9: The answer to the question here is again, “No one ... of himself.” Yet, the rough parallelism with the previous verse indicates that one can train himself for life and be saved by means of the Odes. The Odes give instruction on the principles by which we are to live and they also provide inspiration, thus empowering us to live and be saved.

Verse 10: No one can force a message from God. If you want God to tell you what to do regarding some specific thing, and if God ain't talkin', you can't force an answer. And if a prophet, or Odist, wants a revelation from God, they can't force that either. Our Heavenly Family reveals Their messages in Their appointed time according to what we need and what we are ready to receive as manifested by how we have dealt with the light They have already given us.

Verse 11: Who can interpret the wonders of the Lord? Again, "No one ... of himself." Yet, there are those who can rightly interpret the wonders of the Lord, but only by the inspiration of the Spirit of Truth. The Odists are the interpreters (vs. 12). An Odist may live or an Odist may die, as many have, but the message – the truth – stands forever. While this may superficially appear to be an ode about Odists, it is really an ode about odes and the Divine Hand that inspires them and utilizes them in accomplishing salvation.

<sup>12</sup> For it suffices to perceive and be satisfied,

for the Odists stand in serenity;

<sup>13</sup> Like a river which has an increasingly gushing spring,

and flows to the relief of them that seek it.

Hallelujah – Ode 26:12-13

While you can't force God and you can't figure out and interpret all the complexities of life, you can verify that the Odes are true. This, you can perceive; and with it, you can be satisfied. By now, you must have at least sipped from the increasingly gushing Odist River.

"Blessed are they who have drunk from it, and have rested by it." – Ode 30:7

In order to fully grasp the lessons of Ode 26, we need to combine it with another Ode.

### ODE 12<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> He has filled me with words of truth,

that I may proclaim it.

<sup>2</sup> And like the flowing of waters, truth flows from my mouth,

and my lips declare his fruits.

<sup>3</sup> And he has caused his knowledge to abound in me,

because the mouth of the Lord is the true word,

and the door of his light.

<sup>4</sup> And the Most High has given it to his generations:

the interpreters of his beauty,

and the narrators of his glory,

and the confessors of his thought,

and the preachers of his mind,

and the teachers of his works.

<sup>5</sup> For the swiftness of the word is indescribable,

and like its expression so also is its swiftness and acuteness,

for limitless is its path.

<sup>6</sup> It never falls but remains standing,

and one cannot know its descent or its way.

<sup>7</sup> For as its work is, so is its expectation,

for it is the light and dawning of thought.

<sup>8</sup> And by it the generations spoke to one another,

and those that were silent acquired speech.

<sup>9</sup> And from it came love and harmony,

and they spoke one to another that which they had.

<sup>10</sup> And they were stimulated by the word,

and knew him who made them,

because they were in harmony.

<sup>11</sup> For the mouth of the Most High spoke to them,

and his exposition was swift through it.

<sup>12</sup> For the dwelling place of the word is man,

and his truth is love.

<sup>13</sup> Blessed are they who by means of it have perceived everything,

and have known the Lord in his truth.

Hallelujah

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Once again, we will go through this Ode piece by piece.

¹ He has filled me with words of truth,

that I may proclaim it.

² And like the flowing of waters, truth flows from my mouth,
and my lips declare his fruits. – Ode 12:1-2

Yes, we have another Semitic parallelism. The Odist has been filled with words of truth and truth flows from the Odist's mouth like the flowing of water. As a reminder, the Odist is using imagery which came from a previous "odist," a.k.a. the Teacher of Righteousness.

"But you, my EI, have placed in my mouth as it were rain for all those who thirst and a fountain of living water which shall not fail." – 1QHa (*Thanksgiving Hymns*) 16.16

I quote this as a reminder of the fact that the "Odes of Solomon" are firmly fixed in a line of truth extending from the Teacher of Righteousness to the Odist, with John the Baptist and Jesus (and potentially others) bridging the gap. To put this another way, we know this sort of teaching came from the Teacher of Righteousness, and we have strong evidence that John the Baptist was a follower of the teachings of the Teacher of Righteousness, and we know that Jesus was a disciple of John the Baptist; thus, the Odes, being so tightly knit to this tradition, exists in the same atmosphere as Jesus himself. These connections tell us something about Jesus and something about the Odes. But again, this is just a reminder. Our former studies go into all of that more.

Back to Ode 12: The Odist starts off the Ode by identifying him/herself as a receptacle of truth. And the B-parts of these first two verses identify the purposes of EI in giving the Odist all this truth; it is to proclaim the truth. This truth is referred to as EI's "fruits."

³ And he has caused his knowledge to abound in me,
because the mouth of the Lord is the true word,
and the door of his light. – Ode 12:3

In Ode 26, the Odist pointed out that no one can force the Lord to open his mouth. But here, the Odist says that the Lord has opened his mouth, and that it is the door of his light – his truth. So, the words of truth with which the Odist has been filled are the words of the Lord. Notice that this is all about truth! Truth is the supreme thing!

⁴ And the Most High has given it to his generations:
the interpreters of his beauty,
and the narrators of his glory,
and the confessors of his thought,
and the preachers of his mind,
and the teachers of his works. – Ode 12:4

The "generations" of someone are their children. This sort of language is used in Genesis a number of times.

This is the book of the generations of Adam ... – Gen. 5:1

Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah ... – Gen. 10:1

These are the generations of Shem ... – Gen. 11:10

In every instance, these phrases are followed by a list of the descendants of these individuals. So, the generations of the Most High in the passage are his children (by adoption). They are the interpreters of his beauty, etc. They are the Odists (Ode 26:11-12). And the thing which the Most High has given them is his light – the word of his mouth – the truth.

⁵ For the swiftness of the word is indescribable,

and like its expression so also is its swiftness and acuteness,

for limitless is its path. – Ode 12:5

The word of truth is indescribably swift. Its revelation may be delayed due to the hardness of people's hearts, but when it comes, it comes speedily. These new moon messages are the perfect example of this, and it sounds like the Odist shared in this sort of experience. I often am clueless as to what the message will be until a day, or more often only hours, and sometimes mere minutes, before the message must be given. I can't control when it comes, or how it comes, or what it is, but when it comes it comes and it is what it is. The word of truth is limitless in its expression as well as in its swiftness and its acuteness, or exactness. In other words, just as the revelation of truth is incredibly swift, the truth is also incredibly acute, or sharp, or exact. Whatever degree of precision is needed, our Heavenly Family can provide it. Likewise, there is an infinite number of ways in which the truth may be expressed.

As a side note, people often have ridiculous notions of "limitlessness." Whenever it is used in relation to God, people seem to think that context should be entirely discarded. If God is said to have "limitless power," it is assumed that any power that can be conceived of is a power which God must have. You may even think that that is the "obvious interpretation" of the phrase, but that is only due to the indoctrination we have received by living in this culture which is permeated with Platonized Christian theology. If it is said that you have "unlimited minutes" of talk-time on your phone plan, you don't take that to mean that you can talk on the phone for a million minutes a day simply because you can conceive of the notion. You understand that your "limitless" phone plan is within the context of the confines of reality. Let's keep this in mind when it comes to God ... and everything else.

Now, back to the Ode:

⁶ It never falls but remains standing,

and one cannot know its descent or its way. – Ode 12:6

Yes, the word of truth stands firm. This is what materialism gives us. With dogma and religious faith as the basis for belief, there is no foundation and the structure of belief eventually crumbles (as we have seen). But the word of truth, materialism, demands that our beliefs be rooted in material reality. This foundation is truly unshakable! And how was this foundation laid? Again,

¹ As the [wind] moves through the harp

and the strings speak,

² So the Spirit of the Lord speaks through my members,

and I speak through his love. – Ode 6:1-2

Strange as it may seem, this immovable foundation was laid through the mysterious process of Divine Inspiration. The Spirit of the Lord, filling Odists with knowledge of truth, and Odists pouring forth words of truth as living water from a fountain.

The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.... – John 3:8

So it is with the word of truth.

⁷ For as its work is, so is its expectation,

for it is the light and dawning of thought. – Ode 12:7

The works of the words of truth are unpredictable. What to expect from the next revelation of truth is likewise unpredictable. Why? Because “it is the light and dawning of thought.” In other words, the revelation of the word of truth brings to light, and dawns upon us, thoughts concerning which we have never before conceived. Let us never forget our ignorance of truth before having it revealed to us. Too often, those who learn of the revelation of truth find it so sensible that they can’t imagine ever having thought of things in another way. They thus take the truth for granted, forgetting from Whom they learned it. Would they ever have come to the truth on their own? Certainly not! Think of the trajectory you were on before learning this message. Were you not, in many regards, going the opposite direction of what you have now learned to be truth? And even after professing acceptance of the message, how often have you resisted the progressing light? You may have accepted some elements readily, but others were hard to take. After all of the surprise and shock at the new revelations and after all of the kicking and whining and tenacious gripping of toes to the muddy path of our former direction, do any dare stand and walk as if their steps were always thus; as if they always knew the truth? Such conceit is as a rebellious student who, after learning from their teacher, disdainfully casts them away with ingratitude. It is as an unruly child who, after learning everything from his parents, forgets the ones from whom he learned and by whom he came. Such students and such children will learn no more. Let us, then, be ever mindful of, and grateful for, our Heavenly Family and Their full creditability for teaching us the truth. If we do this, we will have the privilege of learning much more.

⁸ And by it the generations spoke to one another,

and those that were silent acquired speech.

⁹ And from it came love and harmony,

and they spoke one to another that which they had.

¹⁰ And they were stimulated by the word,

and knew him who made them,

because they were in harmony. – Ode 12:8-10

Remember, the “generations” are the Odists. So, by “it,” by the word of truth, the Odists spoke to one another. The Odist who wrote the “Odes of Solomon” was spoken to by previous “Odists” such as the Teacher of Righteousness and, in turn, the Odist of the Odes speaks to the Odist of today. Those that were silent are those who were silenced by the grave. Yet, “though he who interprets should perish, ... that which was interpreted will remain.” (Ode 26:11). Thus, by the words of truth which they wrote, they speak to future interpreters. By speaking that which they had (the words of truth), love and harmony was, and is, brought about. How incredible it is that, today, our Heavenly Family has given us a message by the Prophesying Spirit and, after learning these teachings, we are made aware of past messages through past messengers such as the Teacher of Righteousness and the Odist. Reading their messages is undeniably stimulating for we see that what the Spirit has taught us today, She taught them so long ago. It is truly remarkable. The most shocking experience I had of this phenomenon was reading the Thanksgiving Hymns for the first time. Our Heavenly Family had already taught us the truth of morality, both in regard to its basis and the solution to immorality. They had already taught us about the nature of truth, the work of the Holy Spirit, the import of free will, the divine council, Their plan of how to establish the kingdom, etc. and all these things were already being taught in the message. Then, in reading the Thanksgiving Hymns (and a little later, Barki Nafshi), I at first just read it in agreement, not thinking anything of it. Then, it hit me (and Teresa and Norman – we were reading it together) like a lightning bolt that these scrolls had been hidden away in caves for nearly 2000 years and that they could have said anything! These scrolls could have contained cooking recipes, or battle plans, or teachings similar to that of the later rabbis, but instead, they contained the message of the Teacher of Righteousness – a message which is the same as what the Prophesying Spirit gave to us. This harmony in the truth, across the generations, from Odist to Odist, is indeed a means for us to know our Heavenly Family – both that They are, and Who They are.

¹¹ For the mouth of the Most High spoke to them,

and his exposition was swift through it [the word of truth].

¹² For the dwelling place of the word is man,

and his truth is love. – Ode 12:11-12

The exposition of truth in each generation is made more swift by means of the truth as recorded by past messengers. It is a good thing we don't have to learn the entire message from scratch each generation. Think of how much more quickly we can acquire the truth by having the writings of Ellen White, and Victor Houteff, and the Branch messengers, and, of course, all the messengers of past ages. Praise our Heavenly Family for sending the word of truth to dwell among us! What love!

¹³ Blessed are they who by means of it have perceived everything,

and have known the Lord in his truth.

Hallelujah – Ode 12:13

Have you, by means of the word of truth, perceived everything? The word of truth, the message, indeed gives us the ability to perceive everything. Without it, we perceived only shadows, and even the shadows that matched reality, we didn't perceive in truth. Indeed, the message our Heavenly Family has given us provides the lens of reality, the lens of materialism, by which we can perceive and recognize all truth! And by this, we can know our Heavenly Family in Their truth.

Finally, I invite you to reread Ode 12. The Odist wrote this Ode to have a double meaning. On one hand, it is about the truth and the word of truth (the message) – the revelation of truth itself. This is the meaning we have considered. On the other hand, the Odist understood the Word to be Jesus. I recommend rereading the Ode in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* translation or, if you don't have it, you can read it again back on pages 6 and 7 and simply replace the neuter pronouns with masculine pronouns. You will be reminded of the fact that not only is the truth everything we have described, but Jesus, Branch, our Brother is all those things too. He, as our Teacher of Truth, was given to us by the Most High. He is swift, and acute, and his expression is limitless. He never falls, he is beyond prediction, and he is the dawn of our truthful thought. By Him the Odists speak to each other across generations, by Him we have love and harmony, and He made his dwelling place with man. And finally, by Him we have recognized everything and known the Lord in his truth.

HalleluYah!

1 See our YouTube playlist: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLw8ykUZG-bwcEtGHMXL3yoTDnpqf3oTcl>

2 The translation is taken from *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 2, pp. 758-769.

3 The translation is based on *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (OTP), Vol. 2, pp. 758-769, with some changes following the footnotes found therein. All other deviations from the OTP translation are based on Michael Lattke's Hermeneia translation; most notable is the change from masculine pronouns to neuter pronouns in reference to "the word" and "truth."