

Wonders With Dust

Description

Wonders With Dust

An Explication of a Thanksgiving Hymn

from the Dead Sea Scrolls

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The Message of the New Moon

of the Ninth Month

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The Thanksgiving Hymns are a collection of poetic writings composed by the Teacher of Righteousness – the founding prophet of the Qumran Community. Even though we don't know his name, we do know his message, and we have all felt his influence, even before we knew anything of the man or the scrolls. The echoes of his message have sounded down through the ages through the messages of John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, the Revelator, and so on. The reason for this is, quite simply, that these people accepted the Teacher of Righteousness as a true prophet and his message as from the Elohim of Israel. But all this, you already know if you have been studying the message for some time. If this is new to you, or if you need a refresher, we have studies on YouTube introducing the Teacher of Righteousness and commenting upon some of his writings.

Today, we will consider one hymn among the Thanksgiving Hymns. Unfortunately, I can't simply say something like, "We are studying Hymn #25." The reason is that different translations label the hymns with different numbers. This is partly due to the fact that the scrolls are fragmentary and partly due to the fact that the ancient scribes who copied our manuscripts used formatting techniques different enough from our own that it isn't always easy to tell when one hymn ends and another begins. Below is a list of different Dead Sea Scroll translations and the number of the Hymn we will be considering as found in each.

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| The Dead Sea Scrolls in English (Vermes) | #17 |
| The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English (Vermes) | #21 |
| The Qumran Psalter (Charlesworth) | #25 |
| The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation (Wise, et al.) | #27 |

Other translations don't assign numbers to the hymns and instead use column and line, usually (though not always) understanding this hymn to be located at 1QS Col. 19:6-17 (or thereabouts). For sake of ease, we will herein refer to this hymn as *Wonders With Dust* since this phrase occurs near the beginning of the hymn and

ancient writings were often referred to using phrases from their beginnings. I have also assigned verse numbers so that the content is broken up more naturally than in the column and line method.

Wonders With Dust: A Thanksgiving Hymn¹

¹ I thank you Eli,

for you have done wonders with dust

and in a vessel of clay you have made strength.

Thank you! Thank you!

² And I, what am I that you have caused me to understand the basis, the secret, the counsel² of your truth?

³ You have caused me to have insight into your wondrous deeds

and you have placed into my mouth thanksgivings

and upon my tongue a psalm

and (you have placed)³ the utterance of my lips in the foundation of exultation.

⁴ I will sing in your loving kindness

and in your strength I will contemplate, I will proclaim,⁴ all the day.

⁵ Daily I bless your name

and I will recount your glory among the children of men

and in your great goodness my whole being delights.

⁶ And I, I know that truth is in your mouth

and in your hand is righteousness

and in your thought is all knowledge

and in your power is all strength – and all glory with it.

⁷ In your anger are all the judgments of affliction,

but in your goodness is great forgiveness

and your compassion is for all the children of your delight

for you caused them to know the basis, the secret, the counsel of your truth

and into the mystery of your wonder you caused them to have insight.

⁸ For the sake of your glory you purify a man from transgression

that he may sanctify himself to you from all impure abominations and unfaithful offense

to unite with the children of your truth in membership with your holy ones –

⁹ to be, as a dying worm, raised from the dust to the basis, the secret, the counsel of your truth

and from the breath of iniquity to your understanding

¹⁰ to stand in rank before you with the everlasting host and the breathers of knowledge

and to be renewed together with all that is

and to exist with those who know in the community of exultation.

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Now, let us go through this piece by piece. Keep in mind that these words were originally feathered in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE and they originally applied to people and circumstances at that time. Yet, we have learned that the grand mission of the Teacher of Righteousness did not come to ultimate fruition in his day and that it thus became a type for future attempts at carrying out that same basic mission. Our mission today is one such attempt and I plead with you to take to heart this message, that it be the final one.

<sup>1</sup> I thank you Eli,

for you have done wonders with dust

and in a vessel of clay you have made strength.

Thank you! Thank you!

Eli means “my El” or “my mighty one” (commonly mistranslated “God”). The Teacher of Righteousness here thanks El for what he (El) had done. The Righteous Teacher was himself that vessel of clay, he was but dust, but he had become so much more than that thanks to his El. Now, in him strength and wonder were manifest. This undeserved blessing was almost too much to fathom and the Teacher was ever mindful (and astonished) at the disparity between his unworthiness and the greatness of the blessing. What was the blessing? The next verse tells us:

<sup>2</sup> And I, what am I that you have caused me to understand the basis, the secret, the counsel of your truth?

I hope these words are already full of meaning in light of what you have learned in this message. What is the basis of truth? What is its foundation? Yes, it is a secret to most, but has been revealed to us through El’s counsel that we may take our place in the midst of the council of truth. Have you caught those nuances? If not, search them out lest the message escape you. Yes, these things have been revealed to us through this message, even more clearly than they were revealed to the Qumran community or anyone in former generations.

<sup>3</sup> You have caused me to have insight into your wondrous deeds

and you have placed into my mouth thanksgivings

and upon my tongue a psalm

and (you have placed) the utterance of my lips in the foundation

of exultation.

<sup>4</sup> I will sing in your loving kindness

and in your strength I will contemplate, I will proclaim, all the  
day.

Then and now the foundation of truth provides insight into the deeds of El. How should this not place thanksgivings (hodayot – thanksgiving hymns) into our mouths? And what is the foundation of exultation? It is the foundation of truth. Remember and learn *Truth Now Is All*.

<sup>5</sup> Daily I bless your name

and I will recount your glory among the children of men

and in your great goodness my whole being delights.

The Teacher wholly delighted in his El every day and also declared the truth. We ought to do the same. It truly is simple. Forget about getting bogged down by the cares of this world. Arise to the new dawn that awaits you!

<sup>6</sup> And I, I know that truth is in your mouth

and in your hand is righteousness

and in your thought is all knowledge

and in your power is all strength – and all glory with it.

It is so good to know that the words of our Heavenly Family are not true because they are Their words; they are Their words because they are true. Their deeds are not righteous because they are Their deeds, but they are Their deeds because they are righteous. Their thoughts are not knowledge because they are Their thoughts; they are Their thoughts because they are knowledge. And even Their power is not strong and glorious due to being Their power; no, the strength holds its own weight and bears its own glory and our Heavenly Family has the power to use it for righteousness by a knowledge of the truth. They don't have Their own power and authority by virtue of being Them; They have it by virtue of what is in Their mouths, hands, and thoughts.

<sup>7</sup> In your anger are all the judgments of affliction,

but in your goodness is great forgiveness

and your compassion is for all the children of your delight

for you caused them to know the basis, the secret, the counsel of

your truth

and into the mystery of your wonder you caused them to have

insight.

El is full of compassion and loving kindness. His judgments against the wicked are not a source of joy and delight for him. He is frankly upset, even tormented, over the need to deal judgments of affliction. His delight is in those who are willing to learn the ways of truth. All such willing ones have the benefit of great forgiveness in the goodness and compassion of El. Make the mystery of his wonder no longer a mystery for you, but walk in the path of light.

<sup>8</sup> For the sake of your glory you purify a man from transgression

that he may sanctify himself to you from all impure abominations

and unfaithful offense

to unite with the children of your truth in membership with your

holy ones –

El is not interested in glorifying himself, but he purifies people for the sake of the glory that attends the strength which comes with truth, knowledge, and righteousness.

Notice that our purification is to be from transgression that we may sanctify ourselves to El. It is not that El sanctifies us to himself; we sanctify ourselves to El – it is our choice, our opportunity, our responsibility. Yes, “to El” and “from all impure abominations and unfaithful offense...” Sanctification places is in close relation to some things (truth, righteousness, etc.) and in distant relation to other things (impure abominations and unfaithful offense). To be sanctified is to be made holy; to be within a sin-free purity zone. Thus, we can unite with those who have been born again of the seed – the word of truth.

The last part of vs. 8 tell us what we accomplish by sanctifying ourselves. We sanctify ourselves in order to “unite with the children of truth, etc.” The last two verses of the hymn continue this “in order to” pattern. So again, we should sanctify ourselves to El and from sin in order ...

<sup>9</sup> to be, as a dying worm, raised from the dust to the basis, the

secret, the counsel of your truth

and from the breath of iniquity to your understanding

Yes, just as the Righteous Teacher was a man of the dust, a mere worm, so were those who were potential candidates to join the community of truth, and so are we so long as we are dying for want of righteousness. We need to sanctify ourselves to El in order to be raised from the dust and established on the foundation of truth. Are you tired of breathing iniquity? See Psalm 5 to see how bad that breath really is. By abandoning iniquity, you can be raised up to genuine understanding, even El’s understanding. Again, we should sanctify ourselves to El in order ...

<sup>10</sup> to stand in rank before you [El] with the everlasting host and

the breathers of knowledge

and to be renewed together with all that is

and to exist with those who know in the community of exultation.

With all the dearth of knowledge that this world has to offer, and all the dearth of knowledge within yourself, would you not like to stand with the breathers of knowledge and to be renewed and to exist with them in a community of exultation, built on the foundation of truth? To be before El, the Teacher of the Teacher of Righteousness – it will be beautiful indeed!

I ask you to read the hymn and this study again, and to contemplate what it meant to the Teacher of Righteousness and to the people in his day, and contemplate what it means for us today. I’m not referring to thinking prophetically in terms of type and antitype, comparing the circumstances of yesterday with those of today; think of the actual people and what it meant to them as individuals, and then think of what it means for you, as an individual, today.

1The translation is my own.

2The phrases “the basis, the secret, the counsel” is one word in Hebrew (here and throughout the hymn). The word carries all of these meanings plus “foundation” and “council.” Given that the Teacher of Righteousness was a poet, he doubtless chose his words carefully. And, since there are other words which convey each individual meaning, he could have easily used them if he only wanted one meaning. Thus, it is most probable that the multiple meanings were intended. I have included three of the meanings for sake of breadth, but avoided more so as to not be wearisome.

3The words in parentheses have been added for clarity; their meaning is implied by the preceding context.

4In Hebrew, “I will contemplate, I will proclaim” is one word which means both to contemplate and to proclaim.