

War Scroll XII and its Allusions to Psalm 2

The War Scroll from among the Dead Sea Scrolls uses numerous biblical texts in different ways, quoting them explicitly in some instances, but mostly alluding to them and incorporating them into its own compositions. A significant part of this Old Testament material is from the Book of Psalms.

Several allusions to Psalm 24 have been detected in col. XII of the War Scroll. This fact can have an impact on our understanding of Psalm 24, since the scholarly debate hasn't agreed on its specific historical background yet and its alleged function in the liturgy is still questioned. Studying these allusions, one has to avoid the danger of transferring the meaning of a more recent document (War Scroll) and its use of material from Ps 24 to the older document itself. At the same time, use of the older material shows how it was understood in successive periods plus the possible meanings to which the older document (Ps 24) was opening itself.

Most likely the hymn XII, 7–16 was intended for a moment during the actual combat and it combines liturgical features with a military context, thus conveying the idea of holy war. Here the two titles from Ps 24 are being used: “King of glory” and “War Hero”. The explicit presence of God as a strong hero in the army is a guarantee of success and victory, now envisioned for the future. The second instance is a reworking of Ps 24:7.9 “Lift up your heads, O gates; rise up, you ancient portals, that the king of glory may enter” into “Open your gates continuously so that the wealth of the nations can be brought to you” (XII, 13–14). There is continuity as far as the military context is concerned, but the emphasis is shifted to the profit of people now.