Orphans in the Dead Sea Scrolls

This study investigates the literary references to orphans in writings amongst the Qumran texts that were written in Hebrew and can be associated with the sectarian Qumran movement. The study focuses on passages where forms of the word 'יתום' are used. These include the Damascus Document (CD 6:16–17), Hodayot (1QH* 13:22) and Barkhi Nafshi (4Q434 1 i 2). The investigation concludes that the references to orphans in these passages do not have the same rhetorical functions. In CD 6, the wordings of authoritative scriptures are adapted to portray orphans and widows as the victims of wrongdoing. In 1QH* and 4Q434, however, orphans are mentioned in hymns that praise the Lord’s positive treatment of needy people.

Introduction

Orphans are often mentioned in the literature of the ancient Near East, including the writings of the Hebrew Bible. These fatherless and/or parentless children did not own landed property or inherit ancestral real estate and, therefore, could not make a living off the land. The loss of their fathers meant that orphans were left without an economic base on which to subsist and without the support of a familial network (cf. Simkins 2014:28). They served as ‘personifications of a misfortunate state because they had no family to protect them’ (King & Stager 2001:53). The protection of vulnerable members of society such as orphans and widows is a common theme in the literary writings of the ancient Near East. It is presented as the will of the gods, the virtue of kings and the duty of people to provide for these children (Fensham 1962:129, 137).

In the writings of the Hebrew Bible, the literary references to orphans ('יתום') appear in a variety of genres (e.g., legal material, prophetic passages, poetic texts and wisdom literature) and reflect the contexts of different historical eras, including the Second Temple period. At this time, the wordings of the Hebrew Bible writings changed during the processes of textual development and transmission. Orphans also feature in some non-biblical compositions of the period. For the study of early Judaism, this raises two sets of questions that merit closer examination. The first set

1. In his discussion of terminology, Sigismund (2009:86) shows that the English word ‘orphan’ usually refers to a child who has lost both parents, but it can also be used for a fatherless or motherless child. In some passages of the Hebrew Bible, the word specifically means a fatherless child (cf. HALOT, 451; BDB, 450; Ringgren 1990:479). Cf. also the Hebrew and Greek texts of Sir 4:10, ἴδια τοις παιδίσκοις ὑμῶν ἵππον καὶ προστάσει ποταμοῦ ἔστω (Mt 19:16–22). However, in the Talmud (Meg. 14b, 16a), the word is used in a more specific sense, as referring to a child who has neither father nor mother (Renkema 1995:119–122; Sigismund 2009:86, 87 n. 14). Therefore, the English word ‘orphan’ can be used as a translation equivalent for 'יתום'. With regard to rabbinic literature, the words 'יתום' and 'יתומת' can denote a fatherless boy and girl or a child who lacks both parents (cf. Jastrow 2005:603; Levi 1879:277–278; Sigismund 2009:87 n. 15). This usage of the word in the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic literature is important for understanding its semantic potential in early Jewish writings: ‘While no one today would deny a child’s loss or absence is a matter of serious concern, the Hebrew text was attested to be referred to fatherlessness than motherlessness. Therefore, being an orphan was in almost all cases tantamount to being fatherless. This held true for the intertestamental and rabbinic eras as well, and thus certainly for the time of Jesus and the early Palestinian Christians’ (Sigismund 2009:87).

2. A few well-known examples from ancient Near Eastern texts should suffice to illustrate this point. A hymn to Nanhos says the of the Samaritan goddess that she knows the orphan and the widow (nu-uki mu-um-zi nu-mu-um-su mu-un-su) and that she is the orphan’s mother (nu-si-ka ama-a-ni) (cf. Heimpel 1981:82). Furthermore, the hymn states that Nanhos’s herald, the god Hendursaḫa, judges the law-suit of the orphan: di-nu-si-ka i ni-in-ki-de (cf. Heimpel 1981:94). According to the prologue of the laws of Ur-Namma (e.g., Nippur tablet iv, 162–165, Sippur tablet ii, 30–33), the king of Ur did not deliver the orphan to the rich or the widow to the mighty (nu-si-ki-ka mu-in-zi u-tu-la-tu na-an-zi) (cf. Kramer & Falkenstein 1954:43–44, 51; Roth 1997:16; Yıldız 1981:89). See also similar claims made by the rulers of Lagash, Urimningina (e.g., Uki 4, 13, 25–25) and Gudea (e.g., Cylinder B, vii, 6–7). In the prologue to his collection of laws, Hammurabi refers to himself as ‘the king of justice’ (LUGAL MU.SI.GI 1.17, v, 7–8; Parker 1997:58). In the Kirta epic, the king’s older son, Yaštasp, tries to oust his father and claim the throne for himself. He accuses Kirta of neglecting his royal duties: ‘You don’t feed the orphan who faces you, nor the widow who stands at your back’ (1 pkt i lithium, yam. b’d kskl almit (XTU 1.17, v, 7–8; Parker 1997:58). In the Kirta epic, the king’s older son, Yaštasp, tries to oust his father and claim the throne for himself. He accuses Kirta of neglecting his royal duties: ‘You don’t feed the orphan who faces you, nor the widow who stands at your back’. In the Kirta epic, the king’s older son, Yaštasp, tries to oust his father and claim the throne for himself. He accuses Kirta of neglecting his royal duties: ‘You don’t feed the orphan who faces you, nor the widow who stands at your back’.

comprises questions, such as do the different wordings of the Hebrew Bible writings’ textual representatives affect the content of the passages in which orphans are mentioned? If so, were these differences in wording and content deliberately introduced or are they simply scribal errors? This question is relevant to the study of the reception of the Hebrew Bible writings, the text-critical investigation of their manuscripts’ transmission and the creation of variant readings, as well as the analyses of these writings as potential sources of knowledge about the historical contexts in which they were copied and translated. The second set of questions pertains to the literary references to orphans in early Jewish compositions (apart from those in the Hebrew Bible): How are orphans portrayed in this literature? Do these texts quote, allude to or adapt the wordings of passages from authoritative scriptures that refer to orphans? How are orphans characterised and in what rhetorical contexts are they mentioned? What information do the literary references provide about the status and perception of orphans within the various Jewish communities of the Second Temple period? In view of the complicated issues related to the dating, composition and development of early Jewish writings; the various languages of their composition, transmission and extant textual representatives; their genres and other literary features; as well as the differences in ideological perspectives they represent, simple answers to these sets of questions are not forthcoming. A first step in tackling these questions would be to analyse the passages where references to orphans are found in the textual representatives of early Jewish writings. Given the fact that dates and contexts of these writings’ composition and textual development; the methods of scribal transmission (copying and translation); their literary types, tropes and topos and particular theological perspectives contribute to the communication of their contents, such analyses should take the historical, literary and religious dimensions of the passages into consideration.

This study focuses on a subset of the second group of questions regarding orphans in early Jewish literature. It singles out for investigation the literary references to orphans in the writings that are written in Hebrew and closely associated with the sectarian Qumran movement.5 There are only a handful of manuscripts of such writings that preserve an intact example of יתומים or יתומי: 1 QH col. XIII l. 22; 1Q69 frg. 7; 4Q34 frg. 1 col. I l. 2 and 4Q487 frg. 47. יתומי also appears in the Damascus Document. The relevant passage has, unfortunately, not survived on any of the 4Q manuscripts.

but it is found in CD ms A 6:17. The word יתומים appears on two individual fragments of 1Q69 and 4Q487, respectively (cf. Baillet 1982:10; Milik 1955:148). Seeing as these texts are therefore too fragmentary for analysis, this study will only examine the passages in 1QH, 4Q34 and CD. The goal of the study is to analyse the wordings of passages in these writings where orphans are mentioned in order to determine how they feature in the three writings as rhetorical acts.6 The results of the analyses are presented as interpretative comments on the portrayal of orphans in CD 6:17 (within its larger literary context), followed by a brief comparison with the passages in the Hodayot and Barkhī Naftah that refer to orphans.

Orphans in the Damascus Document

The Damascus Document mentions orphans at least once in a passage (CD 6:11–7:6) from the Admonitions part, which deals with the desired conduct of the people ‘who have entered into the new covenant in the land of Damascus’ (CD 6:19). The text of the passage in question reads as follows:

(6:11) And all who have been brought into the covenant, (6:12) not to come to the sanctuary in order to kindle his altar in vain, should be closers of (6:13) the door, of whom God said: ‘O that there was someone amongst you who would

4. Authoritative scriptures’ here refer to the various compositions that were considered binding for beliefs and conduct by groups in the Second Temple period. For a discussion of terminological issues in connection with such writings, see Ulrich (2002:21–35). See also Lim (2010:303–322) and VanderKam (2002:91–109) on topics and particular theological perspectives.

5. For the purposes of this study, I follow Jokiranta’s use of the designation ‘Qumran movement’. ‘The Qumran movement’ stands for those groups that are responsible for preserving, composing, transmitting, and interpreting the Qumran corpus and other traditions not preserved to us. The designation is not meant to convey the idea that the groups were restricted to the settlement at Qumran, but it is assumed that this location played some important role in the wider movement. ‘Movement’ allows the idea of development and continuity over time; it is not restricted to a certain moment’ (2013:50 n. 140; cf. also 2008:85 n. 1). This movement can justifiably be referred to as ‘sectarian’. Collins (2010:7) defines ‘sect’ in the following terms: ‘A sect is first of all a voluntary association, and as such presupposes a deliberate choice and a high level of intentionality on the part of its members. More specifically, it is a voluntary association that is in tension to a greater or lesser degree with the wider society of which it is a part’.

6. Rhetoric, the persuasive and/or eloquent use of language in speaking or writing, involves a symbolic act (i.e., the wording of the speech or writing), an acting person or people, an audience to whom the act is addressed, a setting in which the act takes place and a rhetorical purpose (cf. Lawrence 2006:142). Seeing as it is not possible to treat all of these dimensions of rhetoric within the limited space of a short study such as this, the analysis only focuses on the wordings of 1QH, 4Q34 and CD where יתומים appears and discusses a number of historical, literary and religious aspects of these wordings.

7. Some editions have the reading בברית vacat in the text of CD 14:14. Cf., for example, Baumgarten and Schwartz (1995:56) and Loehs (1964:96). According to such a reconstruction of the broken text, CD 14:14 also refers to orphans. However, Abegg (2014:104) reconstructs the word in question as בברית vacat. The edition of García Martínez and Tigchelaar (1997:574) has vacat. I prefer the rendering of Abegg, based on the photograph of the manuscript in Brash (1992:36). This reading finds support from the wording of the parallel text in 4Q266 frg. 10 col. I line 7: הביה vacat. For the text of Barkhi Nafshi, see Baumgarten (1996:72) and Baumgarten et al. (2006:62). Accordingly, this study’s discussion of orphans in CD will be limited to the occurrence of יתומים in CD 6:17.

8. The Hebrew text is quoted from the edition prepared by Abegg (2014:90, 92).
close my doors so that you cannot kindle my altar (6:14) in vain. Conversely, they should take care to act in accordance with the interpretation of the Torah for the era of wickedness and to keep apart (6:15) from the sons of the pit and to abstain from the impure wealth of wickedness in connection with vow and dedication (6:16) and the wealth of the sanctuary – for by robbing the needy of his people, widows become their booty (6:17) and they murder orphans – and to distinguish between the impure and the pure and to make known the distinction between (6:18) the holy and the profane and to keep the Sabbath day in accordance with its interpretation and the festivals (6:19) and the day of the fast, in accordance with the commandments' of those who entered the new covenant in the land of Damascus, (6:20) to offer the holy things in accordance with their interpretations, to love, each one, his brother (6:21) as himself and to take the hand of the needy and poor and sojourner and to seek, each one, the peace of (7:1) his brother and not to act unfaithfully, each one, against his blood relation, to abstain from fornication (7:2) in accordance with the precept, to rebuke, each one, his brother in accordance with the commandment and not to keep a grudge (7:3) from day to day, and to separate from all the impurities in accordance with their precept and not to defile, (7:4) each one, his holy spirit in accordance with what God has apportioned to them. All who walk (7:5) in these things in holy perfection according to his every teaching, the covenant of God stand firm for them (7:6) that they live for a thousand generations.

In view of the contractual nature of treaties and covenants in ancient Near Eastern literature, it comes as no surprise that obligations regarding desired behaviour accompany the mention of שֶׁפָּרָה in this passage from the Damascus Document. At the centre of these obligations are the yiqtol verbs, as the Masoretic text (as represented by Codex Leningradensis) and ויסגר当我 (CD 6:12) and ויסגר ויסגר (CD 6:14), and their complements. In the context of the passage, these two verbs express obligatory modality, that is, what the subjects of the verbs should do, according to the speaker.

With regard to ייסגר, its subjects should be ‘closers of the door’ (םשורי רוחל). This idea is connected to words that are attributed to God (יהיה) and formulated as direct speech: וְיִסְגְּרוּ דָלְתֵיהוּ וִיארְעוּ מַזְבָּחָיו חָנָם (‘Who is there amongst you who will close my doors so that you cannot kindle my altar in vain’). These words, put in the mouth of God, allude to the text of Mal 1:10.

The (consonantal) wording of the relevant part of the verse in the Masoretic text (as represented by Codex Leningradensis) is: שֶׁפָּרָה וַיִּסְגְּרוּ דָלְתֵיהוּ וִיארְעוּ מַזְבָּחָיו חָנָם (cf. Gelston 2010:147).

The differences between this wording and its counterpart in CD 6:13–14 are restricted to the first colon. The focus particle מ is missing from the Damascus Document passage; the verb ייסגר in the latter has a vowel indicator but lacks the conjunction of its opposite number in the MT, and the object of the verb in the Damascus Document version, דלתי, has a first-person singular suffix that the dual form in the MT (םשורי) does not have.12 Campbell (1995:144) refers to these clauses in CD 6:13–14 as a ‘quotation’ from Malachi. If this is an accurate description of the words that the Damascus Document has in common with Malachi, they were borrowed from a manuscript with wording at 1:10 that has not been preserved in the extant Hebrew textual representations.13 Of the ancient translations of Mal 1:10a, the Peshitta text agrees with the wording of CD 6:13 (as opposed to the MT) in two respects.14 There is no translation equivalent for מ in this Syriac translation and מ at all in CD 6:13, has a first-person singular suffix. The versions of Symmachus, Theodotion and the Vulgate also do not represent מ in their wordings,15 while the reading מ at 1:10 in Targum Jonathan and (숭לשתותן) תור לו in manuscripts representing a subgroup of the Lucianic version agree with מ at the Peshitta text in that they include first-person singular pronouns.16 It is possible that the Hebrew Vorlage of some ancient translations contained a reading such as ייסגר, although the inclusion of a first-person singular pronoun could also have been the initiative of the translators. The reason for the lack of translation equivalents for מ in the texts of the Peshitta, Symmachus, Theodotion and Vulgate is difficult to assess.17 This feature in the Syriac, Greek and Latin versions might very well be the result of stylistic considerations, as Gelston suggests.18 Until further studies bring the ancient translations’ Vorlage and choices of renderings into sharper focus with cogent arguments, the precise relationships between the wordings of the translations of Mal 1:10 and CD 6:13 will remain unclear.19 It would therefore be premature

---

9. The word מ at CD 6:19 might be interpreted as a feminine plural form of ייסגר, where aleph is written instead of waw. On this interpretation, the waw would have assimilated to the ū vowel of the feminine plural ending. Cf. Qimron (1986:33) and Reymond (2014:132–134). Murphy O'Connor (1971:215), however, argues in favour of Rabin's view that the root in question is קס in the sense of 'to arrive at a conclusion, to hold a legal opinion'.

10. With regard to the different covenants mentioned in the literary works from Qumran, see, for example, Schiiffmann (2010:235–255).

11. Only the final part of this speech is preserved in 4Q266 frg. 3 col. II line 19: ייסגר דלתו ויסגר דלתו. Cf. Baumgarten (1996:41) and Baumgarten et al. (2006:24).

12. In the commentary on the critical apparatus of his BHQ edition, Gelston (2010:148*) cites the reading of CD 6:13 as ייסגר מ (for his citations of CD, Gelston uses the second, revised edition of C. Rabin’s, The Zadokite Documents (Gelston 2010:6*)). This is also the reading in Baumgartner and Schwartz (1995:22) and Loewe (1964:78). For the reading ייסגר מ, see Abegg (2014:90) and Garcia Martinez and Tcherkalian (1997:558). The way and you often have similar shapes in this column of the manuscript. Nevertheless, judging from the photograph in Broshi (1992:20), the form of the final letter of ייסגר can be distinguished, at least, from the shapes of the undisputed waw in the words ייסגר, ייסגר, which follow ייסגר. I therefore prefer to read the letter as a yod.

13. Unfortunately, Mal 1:10 has not survived in one of the Twelve Minor Prophets scrolls from Cave 4. Regarding the main Masoretic manuscripts, the wordings of Codex Aleppo and Codex Cairensis agree with Codex Leningradensis at Mal 1:10.

14. ייסגר מ (‘Who is there amongst you who will close my doors?’). The Syriac text is quoted from the edition prepared by Gelston (1980:95).

15. The texts of Symmachus and Theodotion read as follows in the Syro-hexaplar: ייסגר מ (‘Who is there amongst you who closes the doors?’). Cf. Field (1875:1031). The Greek version of this wording is given as τῷ μὲν ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ πρόσχεδιν (Ziegler 1967:330). The Latin rendering of Mal 1:10a in the Vulgate is quis est in rebis qui claudat ostii (‘Who is there amongst you who will shut the doors?’). Cf. Weber (2007:1429).


17. This is also Gelston’s judgement regarding the Peshitta (1980:116).

18. Gelston (2010:148*). If the opening clauses of the verse in the Vorlage of the ancient translations were similar to those in the MT [לוכד א👖 מласחי be ייסגר מ], the translators might have experienced difficulties with the wording thereof. The omission of equivalents for מ and the rendering of ייסגר מ with relative clauses might have been the translators’ attempts to facilitate the understanding of the text.

19. The Greek wording of Malachi 1:10 in the LXX is quite unique when compared with the other textual representatives: ייסגר מ and ויסגר מ.
to characterise the words which CD 6:13 shares with Mal 1:10 as a ‘quotation’, if by ‘quotation’ is meant a verbatim citation from the wording of a known textual representative. Nevertheless, the text of CD 6:13–14 undoubtedly alludes to the passage from Malachi. This means that the wording of the Damascus Document deliberately, albeit implicitly, calls to mind the Malachi passage and the meaning of the latter affects the content of the former.

In Malachi 1:6–14, YHWH cplusplus;bá’ot accuses the priests of dishonouring him and despising his name by defiling his altar through the sacrifice of blind, lame, sick or blemished animals. Since the deity is not pleased with these inferior and unacceptable offerings, he utters the wish (v. 10) that someone would close the doors to the temple courtyard so that the priests can no longer bring sacrifices in vain.21 If YHWH cplusplus;bá’ot does not accept the sacrifices, they are useless and the text can be taken to suggest that no sacrifice is more desirable than the ones that are brought by priests who execute the sacrifice of blind, lame, sick or blemished animals. The allusion to Mal 1:10 in CD 6:13–14 recalls these words of YHWH cplusplus;bá’ot and his negative evaluation of the priests’ offerings. In the Damascus Document, this prophetic passage is applied to the circumstances of the members of the new covenant. The purpose of establishing the covenant relationship was not for them to come to the sanctuary in order to participate in making unacceptable offerings on God’s altar (cf. the purpose infinitive construct clauses in CD 6:12). The latter does not have an equivalent in the Malachi passage, the text of CD 6:12–14 obliges the members of the new covenant to fulfil God’s wish for people who will not perpetuate the pollution of his altar in a time when the sacrificial cult in the sanctuary is performed in a manner that is unacceptable to the deity.22 The defilement of the sanctuary is an important theme that reappears, together with concepts such as purity and impurity, holy and profane, in the clauses that follow in CD 6:14–7:6. It is in connection with the defilement of the sanctuary through wealth that the text of the Damascus Document mentions orphans.

After the allusion to Mal 1:10, the text of CD 6:14 continues by presenting the second obligation in the passage as the opposite of kindling God’s altar in vain. In contrast to making useless sacrifices, the members of the new covenant should take care to perform certain prescribed duties.23 The duties are indicated by a number of infinitives construct that function as the complements of the yiqtol verb, ויהי. The subjects of this verb should carefully adhere to the exact interpretation (yıqtol) of the Torah during the ‘era of wickedness’ (דרש),24 the observance of festivals (מועדים) and the day of the fast (יִבְשָׁם),25 the Sabbath day (יָדַע),26 as well as the offerings of ‘holy things’ (קדש).27 Each person should carefully preserve good interpersonal relationships by loving his brother as himself, seeking the peace of his brother and not acting unfaithfully towards a blood relation, rebuking his brother without keeping a grudge, and supporting (lit. ‘taking the hand of’) the vulnerable members of society, namely people in need (עַל), the poor (עַל) and the sojourner (עַל). This last obligation is noteworthy in view of the clauses that mention the negative treatment of the widows and orphans in CD 6:16–17. These clauses form part of a group of prescriptions that oblige the members of the new covenant to make a distinction between what is pure and impure and what is holy and profane, to separate themselves from all impurities, according to their precept, and not to defile the holy spirits which God has apportioned for them.28 They should also abstain from fornication,29 in accordance with the precept, keep apart from ‘the sons of the pit’ and refrain from ‘impure wealth of wickedness’ (מעל). The obligation to steer clear of the ‘impure wealth of wickedness’ is motivated by a subordinate clause that refers to the unfortunate fates of widows and orphans (CD 6:16–17):

By robbing the needy of his people, widows become their booby and they murder orphans.

(footnote continues...)
These clauses present a combination of words from Isa 10:2 and Ps 94:6. The text adapts the wording of Isa 10:2 by dropping the word הָמוֹנָה, the *women reigned* of a construct phrase and the direct object of the initial verb of the clause, and replacing it with an object marker. It also changes the number of the suffix of יִשָּׁר from a first-person singular to a third-person masculine singular, and substitutes the *yiqtol* verb וַיַּעֲלֶה for Ps 94:6. Although the introduction of another verb from a different passage means that CD 6:16–17 does not exhibit the same semantic parallelism as the bicolon in Isa 10:2, the text of the *Damascus Document* retains the idea, communicated by the imagery in both the Isaiah and Psalm passages, that the subsistence of widows and orphans is placed in jeopardy by the unscrupulous deeds of unjust people. The ‘sons of the pit’ mentioned in CD 6:15 assume this role in the *Damascus Document*, seeing as they are the only candidates for the subjects of the verb וַיַּעֲלֶה and the referents of the third-person masculine plural suffix of *לֵילֵי*.

The threat they pose to the subsistence of the widows and orphans is described by the infinitive construct יִדּוּ (‘to tear away, seize, rob’). This verb elaborates on the manner in which the wealth is acquired through wickedness (and thereby becomes impure). If widows and orphans trusted the temple treasury to safeguard their money, as the legendary tale in 2 Macc 3 indicates, the wording of CD 6:16–17 could be taken to suggest that the ‘sons of the pit’ misappropriated the monetary deposits of the needy people. This exploitation puts the widows and the orphans at risk and contradicts the temple treasury to safeguard their money, as the legendary tale in 2 Macc 3 indicates, the wording of CD 6:16–17 could be taken to suggest that the ‘sons of the pit’ misappropriated the monetary deposits of the needy people. This exploitation puts the widows and the orphans at risk and contradicts the command in the Torah not to mistreat these needy members of society (cf., e.g., Exod 22:22–23). The ‘sons of the pit’ are therefore implicitly accused of transgressing the Torah. By obtaining wealth through the violation of the Torah, the money is contaminated by moral impurity. This ‘impure wealth of wickedness’ is associated with vows, dedications and the temple treasury of the temple sanctuary (see GKC, 352 and Joüon and Muraoka 2005:438). The relevant passage in 1QH is found in col. XIII ll. 22–23.

Blessed are you, O Lord, because you have not abandoned an orphan and you have not despised a poor person; because your strength is without end and your glory without measure.

These clauses are the opening cola of a Teacher Hymn that continues until col. XV l. 8 (Stegemann & Schuller 2009:169), and another set of bicola that are each introduced with the conjunct **ו**. These conjuncts present the reasons why the speaker considers **יִדּוּ** praiseworthy. Both sets of bicola exhibit syntactic and semantic parallelism. In the first bicolon, the verbal phrase בְּרֵכַךְ אֲדֻנֵי corresponds with בְּרֵכַךְ אַל אֶעַזֵּבָה, אַל אֶנָּשֵׁם, and the direct objects of the two *qatal* verbs, also correspond with one another. The second bicolon comprises...
two parallel nominal clauses with the nouns יתומים and ענוים as the two subjects and the prepositional phrases על כל פלחים ועל כל גדבר as the predicates. These bicola describe the Lord’s praiseworthy deeds and character by highlighting the deity’s acceptance of people in need (exemplified by an orphan and a poor person), on the one hand, and his vast power and immeasurable glory, on the other hand.

With regard to 4Q434, appears in the second line of the first column of this manuscript’s first fragment (Weinfeld & Seely 1999a:270):

ברך节水 הארשון על כל פלחים ועל כל גדבר שלם לאידעתי פשע א変え
ונתן שם אצלו קדש עזיו על שלום נבוכים שלום עיר ואתן לא
שעמה

Bless my soul the Lord because of all his marvellous deeds forever. Blessed is his name, because he saved the life of the poor and the needy, he did not despise and he did not forget the distress of the helpless. He opened his eyes to the helpless and the cry of the orphans he heard and he extended his ear to their cry for help.

The first clause in line 1, ברך节水 הארשון על כל פלחים ועל כל גדבר, appears to be a general introduction to the hymn. The phrase ברך节水 הארשון is known from Psalms 103:1, 22 and 104:1, 35 and indicates that an individual speaker praises the Lord. The speaker identifies all the Lord’s marvellous deeds as the cause for the praise.39 These deeds are probably the ones enumerated in the next sections of the hymn. The qatal and wayyiqtol verbal forms in these sections point to actions performed by the Lord in the past. Nevertheless, the temporal adjunct ידוע appears in the first clause implies that these deeds are worthy of praise into the furthest imaginable future. The following clause repeats the blessing and like the second colon of Psalm 103:1, the Lord’s name is the object of the verb יברך节水. The conjunction יש then introduces the reasons why the name of the Lord is praiseworthy. These reasons are listed in short stanzas that specify what the Lord has done and what the Lord has not done.40 In the first stanza (ll. 1–3), the objects of these actions are called poor (ך), needy (ך), helpless (ך) and orphans (ך). In the following stanzas (ll. 3–4, 4–6), the objects of the Lord’s deeds are the needy (ך). All the third-person masculine plural suffixes attached to verbs, nouns and prepositions in lines 3–6 refer to the poor.

The stanza in which יברך节水 appears consists of six clauses. The first one is a monocolon: the Lord saved the life of the poor (ך). The next two clauses form a bicolon and exhibit a chiastic structure:

41. The term stanza is used here to refer to a unit of a poem that is made up of a combination of one or more strophes. A strophe is understood as ‘a verse-unit made up of one or more cola, and is a general term for monocolon, bicolon, tricolon and so forth’ (Watson 1994:333).

42. With regard to the final word of the tricolon, בברך节水, the scribe originally wrote סברך节水. This word was then transformed into סברך节水 by deleting the shin with a cancellation dot, reshaping the vow into a zayin and adding a qoph with the ‘Aleph and the vow’ (cf. Tov 2004:229). Some scholars refer to these changes as corrections. In other words, they assume that the scribe who copied the manuscript erroneously wrote סברך节水 and then corrected it to read סברך节水. (cf. the comments of Weinfeld & Seely 1999a:271 and Raymond 2014:31). However, another possibility is that a copyist wanted to add variety to the cola. Instead of merely repeating the same word in two consecutive clauses, he changed the original reading, סברך节水, into a synonym, בברך节水.

43. Lines 1–6 of the first column on fragment 1 of 4Q434 can be interpreted as a unit of content on the basis of the space in the manuscript after the last word in l. 6 that extends until the end of the column. Such a space marks a major division in content (cf. an ‘open section’ or זעם רוחון in the Masoretic tradition) (Tov 2004:145–146). The large indentation at the beginning of l. 12 of the same manuscript indicates another big division in the column.

According to these cola, the Lord did not reject the needy and helpless by despising the former and forgetting the distress of the latter. The remainder of the clauses in this stanza constitute a tricolon. The first and third of these cola follow the same word order:

propositional phrase direct object verbal form

These cola also match in terms of content. The Lord employs his visual and auditory senses to pay attention to the helpless and orphans. The middle clause of the tricolon, introduces the topic of the orphans and is semantically parallel to the third colon: The Lord has heard the fatherless/parentless children’s cry for help.42 The tricolon stresses that the Lord is favourably disposed towards the helpless and orphans and that he responds positively to the plight of this pair.

In the following stanza, ll. 3–4, the speaker continues the song of praise by elaborating on how the Lord has endeavoured to enable the needy to know his will: ‘In the abundance of his compassion, he has been gracious to the needy (ך), and he has opened their eyes to see his ways (ך). The word order of the clause (the placement of the direct object, יברך节水, at the front of the verb, שועתם), indicates a change of topic from the Lord’s open eyes to the orphans’ call for help.
in these texts to use שותים (or its equivalents in other languages) rhetorically as a self-designation in positive contexts.44

In contrast to this use of שותים in 4Q343, the orphan and poor person in 1QH col. XIII 1.22 seem to function simply as exemplars of needy people whom the text claims the deity accepts. Nevertheless, there are some striking similarities between the literary contexts of 1QH and 4Q343, where שותים occurs. In both texts, שותים appears near the beginning of a hymn in which an individual (a first-person singular speaker) addresses the Lord (in the second-person) and blesses the deity. The speakers in these hymns identify the Lord’s treatment of orphans as one of the reasons why the deity is praiseworthy. They mention orphans together with other people in need (but, interestingly, not widows). Furthermore, the formulations of the clauses in which שותים are used in 1QH and 4Q343 do not seem to be dependent on passages from authoritative scriptures. Unlike the Damascus Document, the hymns of 1QH XIII 22–25V 8 and 4Q343 do not present the orphans as victims of wrongdoing; rather, they communicate the Lord’s commitment to and favourable disposition towards such vulnerable members of society.

Conclusion

The study has taken historical, literary and religious elements of the workings in three Hebrew texts associated with the Qumran movement into consideration in its examination of their references to orphans. Although the study does not present exhaustive treatments of the rhetorical acts, it shows that orphans do not feature in exactly the same way in the Damascus Document, Hadayot and Barkhi Nafshi. There are some similarities between the hymns of 1QH and 4Q343 in this regard but also a noteworthy difference. In contrast to the deity’s positive treatment of orphans lauded in these songs of praise, the Damascus Document adapts passages from authoritative scriptures and utilises their references to the wrongdoing against orphans and widows to accuse the ‘sons of the pit’ of disobeying the Torah, contaminating the temple treasury with moral impurity and thereby defiling the sanctuary.

These findings contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which orphans are portrayed in writings that are closely associated with the Qumran movement. These writings are important, but they are, of course, not the only sources that yield information regarding fatherless and/or parentless children in the Second Temple period. The literary references to orphans in the textual representatives of Hebrew Bible writings that were transmitted during this time and those in other early Jewish literature deserve closer investigation. The results of such investigations can be complemented and refined by data on the status of children provided by other sources such as archaeological and epigraphic evidence, as well as by studies on the material culture of early Jewish communities.45

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

References


Balla, I., 2011, Ben Sira on family, gender, and sexuality, De Gruyter, Berlin (Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies vol. 8).


Brocki, W., 1984, ‘The Qumran movement, the study of Keck (1966:54–78) shows that the sectarian inferences refer to themselves with designations such as ‘the poor’ or ‘the needy’ in their writings. A well-known example is the phrase הושענא מקים, ‘the congregation of the poor ones’ in 4QGpH frgs. 1–10 col. II 11 (cf. Horgan 2014:462). See the discussion of this designation in Jokiranta (2008:98–101, 2013:138–142). One of the debated issues in the study of the Barkhi Nafshi texts is their provenance (Pajunen 2012:357). Weinfeld and Seely (1999a:258), for example, are of the opinion that the hymns in the Barkhi Nafshi manuscripts are sectarian compositions, while Brooke (2000:79) argues that these texts probably did not have a sectarian origin. The provenance of the texts is important for the interpretation of their workings, but this issue cannot be definitively decided within the limited scope of this study. Nevertheless, even if the Qumran movement did not compose these hymns, they were still probably read by members of the sect. It stands to reason that such readers could have appropriated the designations in the first stanza of 4Q343 (‘poor’, ‘needy’, ‘helpless’ and ‘orphans’) to themselves.

44 Concerning the Qumran movement, the study of Keck (1966:54–78) shows that the sectarian inferences refer to themselves with designations such as ‘the poor’ or ‘the needy’ in their writings. A well-known example is the phrase הושענא מקים, ‘the congregation of the poor ones’ in 4QGpH frgs. 1–10 col. II 11 (cf. Horgan 2014:462). See the discussion of this designation in Jokiranta (2008:98–101, 2013:138–142). One of the debated issues in the study of the Barkhi Nafshi texts is their provenance (Pajunen 2012:357). Weinfeld and Seely (1999a:258), for example, are of the opinion that the hymns in the Barkhi Nafshi manuscripts are sectarian compositions, while Brooke (2000:79) argues that these texts probably did not have a sectarian origin. The provenance of the texts is important for the interpretation of their workings, but this issue cannot be definitively decided within the limited scope of this study. Nevertheless, even if the Qumran movement did not compose these hymns, they were still probably read by members of the sect. It stands to reason that such readers could have appropriated the designations in the first stanza of 4Q343 (‘poor’, ‘needy’, ‘helpless’ and ‘orphans’) to themselves.

45 Such studies on orphanhood in Jewish communities of the Second Temple period need to analyse not only the perspectives on orphans and the situation of these children as evidenced by the available sources but also treat topics such as the concept of childhood in antiquity, children’s roles in families and the economy, societal welfare mechanisms for people in need, possibilities of adoption or guardianship, abandonment, slavery and violence against children, the differences in the situation of boys and girls, the circumstances of children in Jewish communities located in different geographical areas, and so on. On the social and economic situation of children in Second Temple Judea, see Adams (2014:58–60). Regarding methodological issues in the study of childhood in antiquity, see, for example, Steinberg (2009:251–269) and Lux and Kunz-Lübbe (2006:11–17).

http://www.hts.org.za Open Access