

Victory in Defeat:
The Image of the Priesthood in the Dead Sea Scrolls

by

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DEDICATION

For Rachel

Ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης ἐπληθύνθη διανόημα αὐτῆς καὶ ἡ βουλή αὐτῆς ἀπὸ ἀβύσσου
μεγάλης, καθὼς ὡς διώρυξ ἀπὸ ποταμοῦ καὶ ὡς ὑδραγωγὸς ἐξῆλθον εἰς παράδεισον.
εἶπα ποτιῶ μου τὸν κήπον καὶ μεθύσω μου τὴν πρασίαν καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγένετό μοι ἡ διώρυξ
εἰς ποταμὸν καὶ ὁ ποταμὸς μου ἐγένετο εἰς θάλασσαν.

For her thoughts are deeper than the sea, her counsel deeper than the great abyss. As
for me, I was like a stream from a river, like a conduit channeling into a garden. I said
to myself, “I will water my plants and drench my flower-bed.” And suddenly my
stream became a river, and my river a sea.

(Sir 24:29-31)

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ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with pervasive literary representations of priesthood in the Dead Sea Scrolls and what they indicate about the Qumran community. Two images are treated, otherworldly priesthood (part one) and end-time priesthood (part two). It is found that these images are connected to two respective types of eschatology, “liturgical” and “messianic.” According to the former, the Qumranites envisioned themselves as communing with angelic priests in prayer. In liturgical time, community members became exalted priests in the truest temple, the *imago templi* between heaven and earth, and thus circumvented the corrupt Jerusalem temple.

However, from the numerous sectarian documents espousing “messianic eschatology,” it is clear that the community could not fully circumvent the Jerusalem temple. The Qumranites still thirsted for empowerment. They eagerly awaited the eschaton—the day of military victory over the forces of evil, a triumphant return to a restored Jerusalem, and a purified cult subject to an eschatological priest who would conduct the temple in line with sectarian legal rulings.

Both liturgical and messianic eschatology may be seen as compensatory responses to the community’s alienation from Jerusalem, but there is a fundamental distinction to be made between the two. The former is an innovative expression of confidence inasmuch as it argues that the community no longer needed the Jerusalem temple. But the latter, bound to the traditional notion that Jerusalem is the only true dwelling place of God, is an expression of frustration and powerlessness. The

expectation of a priestly messiah reflects the hope that the Qumranites would soon gain power over their opponents in Jerusalem.

The coexistence of these two types of eschatology at Qumran reveals a tension, which pulled the community between innovation and tradition, power and powerlessness throughout its turbulent existence. On the one hand, the Qumranites were confident of their superiority vis-à-vis the temple establishment. On the other, they were infuriated by their second class status, of which they were constantly reminded by the harsh everyday reality of life in the desert. Such an understanding of Qumranite priestly imagination adds complexity to the commonly encountered vague description of the community as “priestly.”

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
<i>AJSR</i>	<i>Association for Jewish Studies Review</i>
AnBib	Analecta biblica
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haas. Berlin, 1972-
<i>APOT</i>	<i>The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English</i> . Edited by R. H. Charles. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1913
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Series
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CCWJCW	Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World, 200 B.C. to A.D. 200

CIS	Copenhagen International Seminar
<i>CIS</i>	<i>Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum</i>
CJAS	Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity
CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CSCO	Corpus scriptorium christianorum orientalium. Edited by I. B. Chabot et al. Paris, 1903-
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
<i>DSD</i>	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
<i>DSSSE</i>	<i>Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition</i> . Edited by F.G. Martínez and E.J.C. Tigchelaar. New York, 1997-1998
EDSS	<i>Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls</i> . Edited by Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000
<i>EncJud</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i> . 16 vols. Jerusalem, 1972.
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> . Edited by E. Kautzsch. Translated by A. E. Cowley. 2d ed. Oxford, 1910
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
ISACR	Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion
JAL	Jewish Apocryphal Literature Series
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBLMS	Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>

Joüion-Muraoka	<i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i> . Paul Joüion. Translated and revised by T. Muraoka. 2 vols. Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblio, 1993.
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism: Supplement Series
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOT / ASOR	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament / American Schools of Oriental Research
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NTL	New Testament Library
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTP	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by James H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. ABRL. New York: Doubleday, 1983-1985
<i>OTS</i>	<i>Old Testament Studies</i>
<i>PAAJR</i>	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
PTSDSSP	Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea Scrolls Project
PVTG	Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece

QC	<i>Qumran Chronicle</i>
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RechBibl	Recherches bibliques
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RHPR	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses</i>
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLEJL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and Its Literature
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSP	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SCS	Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series
SE	<i>Studia evangelica I, II, III</i> (=TU 73 [1959], 87 [1964], 88 [1964], etc.)
SFSHJ	South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism
SHCANE	Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East
SHR	Studies in the Histories of Religions (supplement to <i>Numen</i>)
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJOT	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SSU	Studia Semitica Upsaliensia
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigraphica
ThWAT	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> . Edited by G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Stuttgart, 1970-
TRu	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>

TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	World Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

Chapter 1

Introduction

Since the early days of Dead Sea Scrolls research the priestly character of the Qumran community has been taken for granted and affirmed repeatedly. The ease of this assumption has been afforded by the ubiquitous and prominent references in the Scrolls to priests and priestly concerns.¹ In the non-biblical corpus alone, the term כהן/כהונה appears over 250 times in works of various genres.² The purported founder and early leader of the community, the Teacher of Righteousness, is identified

¹ The connection between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran site has not been taken for granted by all. See, for example, K.H. Rengstorf, *Hirbet Qumrân and the Problem of the Library of the Dead Sea Caves* (Leiden: Brill, 1963); N. Golb, *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls? The Search for the Secret of Qumran* (New York: Scribner, 1995). However, a long standing scholarly consensus recognizes that the library at Qumran indeed belonged to the Qumran community. For a summary of the evidence for linking the Qumran community directly with the Scrolls, see A.S. van der Woude, "Fifty Years of Qumran Research," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment* (ed. J.C. VanderKam and P.W. Flint; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1998-1999), 1:2-6. For an expanded argument and a brilliant critique of Golb's hypothesis, see F. García Martínez and A.S. van der Woude, "A 'Groningen' Hypothesis of Qumran Origins and Early History," *RevQ* 56 (1990): 521-41. See also D. Dimant, "The Qumran Manuscripts: Contents and Significance," in *Time to Prepare a Way in the Wilderness: Papers on the Qumran Scrolls by Fellows of the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1989-1990* (ed. D. Dimant and L.H. Schiffman; STDJ 16; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 23-58, esp. pp. 35-36. The archaeological links between the caves and the site were noted by R. de Vaux, *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 99-106.

² M. Abegg Jr., J. Bowley and E. Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Concordance: Volume One: The Non-Biblical Texts from Qumran* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 1:340-42.

explicitly as a priest.³ His formidable arch-adversary is the “Wicked Priest,” הכוהן הרשע.⁴ In key texts concerned with the administration of the community, supreme authority is granted to sacerdotalists, בני אהרון and בני צדוק.⁵ Other texts pertaining to the end of days express the expectation of the arrival of a priestly messiah superior even to the powerful Davidic scion.⁶ Moreover, a steadfast concern for temple and purity permeates the entire collection. It is therefore no surprise that Scrolls scholars have long seen priesthood as a key to understanding the community’s origins, identity, governance, and worldview.⁷ This perspective is reflected in several hundreds of Qumran studies published over the past six decades, whether dedicated narrowly to priestly matters or to altogether separate topics of interest.

With reference to the study of priesthood at Qumran, the overwhelming trend has been to press the Scrolls for evidence of historical realities.⁸ In particular, scholars have focused on issues such as the role of Zadokite priests in the early life of the community and the identities of the Teacher of Righteousness and the Wicked Priest in hopes of locating the precise historical matrix that gave rise to the Qumran

³ See 4QpPs^a (4Q171) 1-10 III, 15-16. Cf. 1QpHab 2:2 and 7:4-5, which describe the Teacher and an anonymous priest in nearly identical terms. See further below, pp. 276-78.

⁴ See 1QpHab 8:8; 9:9; 11:4 and 4QpPs^a 1-10 IV, 7-10.

⁵ See esp. 1QS 5:2, 9; 9:7; 1QSa 1:2, 24; 2:3.

⁶ For the variety of expectations of eschatological priesthood in the Scrolls, see chapter 5.

⁷ For a useful survey of the state of scholarship on priesthood at Qumran, see R. Kugler, “Priesthood at Qumran,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty*, 2:93-116; idem, “Priests,” *EDSS* 2:688-93.

⁸ Kugler, “Priesthood at Qumran,” 114, n. 69.

community. In order to put the present study, which departs from this trend, in context, it will be worthwhile to briefly consider the history of scholarship pertaining to priesthood and Qumran community origins.

I. The State of Research: Priesthood and Qumran Origins

A. The Essene Hypothesis

The question of Qumran origins has puzzled scholars since the discovery of the Scrolls, leading to diverse and often strange hypotheses.⁹ Nonetheless, within the first decade of research, the work of Geza Vermes, Józef Tadeusz Milik, and Frank Moore Cross generated a consensus on the issue, which identified the community with the Essenes.¹⁰ A key element of the “Essene hypothesis” was the assertion that questions of priestly ideology motivated the schism responsible for the establishment of

⁹ Scholars have proposed that the Scrolls belonged to just about every known Jewish or Christian group of the late Second Temple period or to no single community at all. For a representative sample of opinions and bibliographic references, see J. VanderKam, “Identity and History of the Community,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty*, 2:507-23.

¹⁰ See G. Vermes, *Les manuscrits du désert de Juda* (Paris: Desclée, 1954); J.T. Milik, *Dix ans de découvertes dans le désert de Juda* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1957); F.M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran* (3d ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). The first edition of Cross’ book appeared in 1958 as *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies* (Garden City: Doubleday). It is generally held that, Eliezer Sukenik was the first to link the Scrolls to the Essenes. See E.L. Sukenik *Megillot Genuzot: Seqirah Rishonah* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1948), 16. The Essene hypothesis is primarily supported by two foundations of evidence, Pliny’s geographical location of the Essenes and the many correspondences between the practices of the Essenes as described by Philo and Josephus and the description of the community’s practices found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. For a recent review and evaluation of the Essene hypothesis, see I. Hutchesson, “The Essene Hypothesis After Fifty Years: An Assessment,” *QC* 9 (2000): 17-34.

Qumran. The broad strokes of the theory may be summarized as follows: The origins of the Qumran community can be traced back to the historical events surrounding the Jewish conflict with Hellenism that escalated in 175 B.C.E. In response to the hellenizing policies of the high priests Jason and Menelaus and the edict of Antiochus IV forbidding the practice of Judaism, the Hasmonean family arose as the leader of a conservative Jewish rebel force. The Hasmoneans soon drew the support of a pious Jewish group known as the Hasidim, “an exceedingly forceful group of Israel, each one offering himself willingly in defense of the law” (1 Mac 2:42).¹¹ However, the Hasidim’s motives for fighting the Seleucids and their supporters differed from those of the Hasmoneans. As soon as Menelaus was executed and Alcimus was promoted to the high priesthood, the Hasidim were pacified.¹² They parted ways with the Hasmoneans, who continued the fight for political independence. After winning increasing levels of independence from the Seleucids, the Hasmoneans, who were not of Zadokite lineage, usurped the high priesthood from the Zadokites, the traditional and rightful holders of the office. Of course this Hasmonean endeavor was opposed by Zadokite priests and their supporters, particularly the Hasidim. At this time, a leader closely associated with the Hasidim, most probably a Zadokite priest of high lineage, known by his followers as the “Teacher of Righteousness,” quarreled with the

¹¹ Translation from S. Tedesche, *The First Book of Maccabees* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 85.

¹² According to 1 Mac 7:14, Alcimus’ Aaronic descent was apparently enough to convince the Hasidim of his suitability for the office of high priest, “For they said, ‘A priest of the line of Aaron has come with the army, and he will not harm us.’”

Hasmonean high priest, or “Wicked Priest.” As a result of this dispute, he fled to the settlement at Qumran with his followers, many of whom were Zadokite priests themselves. This group became known as the “Essenes.” The Qumran community served as the center for the Essenes who not only inhabited that location but were spread all over the country in satellite communities.

This theory, with various modifications, was perpetuated by several preeminent scholars, thus solidifying the consensus, which has held a prominent position in Qumran scholarship until present times. However, this reconstruction of Qumran prehistory, as well as the methodological approach underlying it, have often come under fire. Adherents to this hypothesis, or closely related variations, have been criticized for employing what may be described as a “scissors and paste” method.¹³ This approach harmonizes the internal testimony of several scrolls that seem to offer cryptic historical data, most notably the pesharim and the Damascus Document, and fits it into the grids of historical knowledge provided by previously known sources of Second Temple period history, as well as the classical sources on the Essenes. This combination is anchored absolutely in time by archaeological and paleographical data as well as a few unmistakable references to known historical personages found within

¹³ For this term, see R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 257-61.

the Scrolls.¹⁴ The end result is a creative and seductively coherent vision of Qumran origins.

This approach has received a fair measure of criticism from numerous vantage points. It will suffice to mention just a few prominent objections here. Philip Davies points out that at the foundations of this method is the uncritical acceptance of and trust in cryptic midrash-like texts at face value as accurate historical sources.¹⁵ Historical conclusions based on literary works so forcefully controlled by the stereotypical motifs and stock phrases of scriptural sources are, in the words of George Brooke, “at best somewhat forced, at worst merely arbitrary.”¹⁶

In addition, Davies objects to the assumption that the historical origins of these texts can be correctly determined by the “external data of archaeology and other literary sources,” which were often conveniently interpreted in harmony with the prevailing hypothesis with little justification.¹⁷ In a similar vein, Charlotte Hempel

¹⁴ See, for example, the apparent references to Salome Alexandra in 4Q322 and 4Q324b, Aemilius Scaurus in 4Q324a, and Antiochus and Demetrius in 4QpNah.

¹⁵ See P. Davies, “The Prehistory of the Qumran Community” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research* (ed. D. Dimant and U. Rappaport; STDJ 10; Leiden: Brill; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, the Hebrew University, Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1992), 116-17. See also P. Callaway (“Methodology, the Scrolls, and Origins,” in *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site: Present Realities and Future Prospects*, [ed. M. Wise, et al.; Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences 722; New York: The New York Academy of Sciences, 1994], 318), who dismisses the pesharim as “theological mumbo-jumbo,” untrustworthy for historical purposes. See also the study of G. Brooke in the same volume, “The Pesharim and the Origins of the Dead Sea Scrolls” (pp. 339-70).

¹⁶ Brooke, “The Pesharim and the Origins,” 348.

¹⁷ Davies (“The Prehistory,” 116) bitingly refers to this “awful mixture” as “Albrightianism.” He notes that this method, which he terms the “first scene” in the