New Directions in the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls

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Abstract: This article discusses the impact of the Dead Sea Scrolls and findings from them.

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Frank Moore Cross

In 1947 the first manuscripts were found in the cliffs of the Jordan Rift, the scrolls from Cave 1 near the ruins of Qumrân on the Dead Sea. In 1962 the latest discovery of documents from the Rift came to light, the Samaria legal papyri of the fourth century B.C.E., from the Wâdī ed-Dâliyeh. In the interval, manuscripts and papyri were found in ten additional caves in the vicinity of Qumrân; in the great caves to the south of Qumrân: the Wâdi-Murabba'ât, the Nahal Se'elim, and the Nahal Hever; and in the ruins of Khirbet Mird. Most recently of all, manuscripts have been dug up from the ruins of the diamond-shaped fortress of Masada.

In another generation *each* of these finds would have been called sensational. Now thirty-five years of discovery and research are past. I think it is fair to say that another thirty-five years will pass before the first exploratory investigation of these "treasures of darkness" will be completed. Almost each year a large new volume of unpublished material comes into print, and this will be so for many years to come. Personally I am in the process of completing three volumes of unpublished manuscripts and papyri. So the study of the manuscripts from the Dead Sea is very much in progress.

The impact of these years of discovery and study will be enormous: (1) upon our understanding of the history of the biblical text, (2) upon our understanding of the development of biblical religion, and (3) upon our understanding of the emergence of the Jewish and Christian strains of faith which claim the Bible as their heritage.

HISTORY OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Remnants of nearly two hundred biblical manuscripts have been found in the Jordan Rift. They fall into two groups. The major corpus, some 170 manuscripts, stem from the Qumrân community and date

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between 250 B.C.E. and 68 C.E. They show no influence that we can detect of the Rabbinic Recension and canon, which is the direct ancestor of our traditional Hebrew Bible, the basis of all English translations. A second group derives from the Jewish rebels of Masada and other Zealots of the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome (132–35 C.E.); this group furnishes only exemplars of the Rabbinic Recension. Thanks to the evidence of the two groups of manuscripts and other new data, we can now specify the date of the fixation of the text and with it the promulgation of the Rabbinic Recension. These events took place in the era of Hillel, at the beginning of the common era. There is also hard evidence that the fixing of the Pharisaic canon—the received Hebrew canon—was part of the same program, perhaps even the work of Hillel himself. The fixation of the text and the fixation of the canon were in fact two aspects of a single endeavor. From the manuscripts of Qumrân in particular we have learned that in the case of a biblical work more than one textual tradition or textual family, each with its special variants, existed in the various Jewish communities. The rabbis were forced to choose between them. Equally important, there were in the case of certain biblical works different editions extant, some strikingly different in length and content. Notable are the editions of Jeremiah, one long, one short; two editions of the Psalter, one Persian, one Hellenistic; two editions of the Chronicler's work, one including Ezra, one including both Ezra and Nehemiah. In the case of Daniel, there was a whole Daniel literature of which the canonical Daniel is a single part. The rabbis selected preferred texts and selected editions of included books, excluded short or long editions of works selected, excluded wholly other works with claims of sacred status. The activities of the rabbis were directed against books or traditions which contained rival doctrines of cult and calendar, alternate legal dicta and theological doctrines, and especially against the speculative systems and mythological excesses of certain apocalyptic schools and Gnostic sects. The selection of canonical books was based on certain principles. Interestingly enough, books attributed to prophets or patriarchs *before* Moses were excluded: the Enoch literature and works written in the name of Abraham and other patriarchs. The legitimate succession of prophets was traced from Moses to figures of the Persian period. Late works were excluded, with the exception of Daniel, which presumably the rabbis attributed to the Persian period, though they truncated it.

This program of establishing an authoritative text and canon probably is recalled in the saying of Sukkah 20a:

> When the Torah was forgotten in Israel, Ezra came from Babylon and established it; and when it was once again forgotten, Hillel the Babylonian came up and established it.

I should say that there is no evidence whatever of the influence of the Pharisaic text and canon on the "biblical" library of Qumrân. At Qumrân non-Rabbinic text-types and editions survive alongside textual traditions and editions adopted by the rabbis. Hence at Qumrân we have a glimpse at a more fluid stage of biblical tradition which existed before the standardization of the Pharisaic Bible and are provided with vast new resources which permit us to penetrate to older stages in the history of the Hebrew Bible and enable us to write the early history of the developing biblical text.

Out of these riches, let me illustrate with a passage from a manuscript of Samuel from Cave 4 Qumrân (unpublished). In the book of Samuel, in the account of the rise of Saul to kingship, the author focuses on an episode in which Saul wins a victory over Nahash, king of the Ammonites. The story is told laconically in the eleventh chapter of 1 Samuel. The traditional text reads:

> Nahash, the Ammonite went up and laid siege to Jabesh-Gilead. All of the men of Jabesh-Gilead said to Nahash, "Make a covenant with us and we shall become your subjects." Nahash the Ammonite replied to them, "On this condition I shall make a covenant with you, that all your right eyes be gouged out, that I may bring ignominy on all Israel." The elders at Jabesh said to him: "Give us seven days to send messengers throughout the territory of Israel. If no one rescues us, we shall surrender to you."

The historian then describes the upshot. Saul rallied the militia of Israel, crossed the Jordan, and met Nahash and the Ammonites in battle. He was overwhelmingly victorious, delivered Jabesh-Gilead, demonstrated thereby his leadership, and then was confirmed as Israel's first king.

A bit of ancient history. There are obscurities in the account. Why did Nahash suddenly attack Jabesh-Gilead, an Israelite city allied with the house of Saul which lay far north of the boundary claimed by the Ammonites? We are not told. Why did Nahash require mutilation of the able men of a city prepared to become his slaves? Nahash by his behavior brought defeat on his own head, and more serious for Ammon's future proved to be the catalyst which united Israel and initiated forces which would lead under Saul's successor David to the rise of the Israelite empire to which Ammon became subject. The episode deserves scrutiny.

A manuscript of Samuel of the first century B.C.E. from Cave 4 Qumrân contains a long addition introducing chapter 11 of 1 Samuel. Let me translate it:

> [Na]hash, king of the Ammonites sorely oppressed the children of Gad and the children of Reuben, and he gouged out a[ll] their right eyes and struck ter[ror and dread] in Israel. There was not left one among the sons of Israel bey[ond] [Jordan who]se right eye was no[t put o]ut by Naha[sh king] of the children of [A]mmon, save 7000 men who [fled from] the children of Ammon and entered [J]abesh-Gilead. About a month later, Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-[Gilead.] All the men of Jabesh said . . . [The text continues as in our Bible.]

Close examination of the extra paragraph makes evident that it once belonged to the original text of Samuel. I shall not go into detailed evidence here, but it seems clear that the paragraph was lost owing to a scribal lapse—a scribe's eye jumped from one paragraph break to another, both beginning with Nahash as subject. Now that we have the paragraph we can also recognize that Josephus had it in his Bible and quoted part of it in his *Antiquities*.

All in all, the text preserved in 4QSam^{a} makes excellent narrative and historical sense as part of the book of Samuel. Nahash, leading a resurgent Ammonite nation, reconquered land long claimed and fought over with the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and punished his old enemies and sometime subjects with a systematic policy of mutilation. Mutilation we know was the standard treatment meted out to rebels, or to enemies of long standing, or to violators of treaty. Those Israelite warriors who survived defeat at the hands of Nahash's forces, some seven thousand in number, fled and found haven to the north of the traditional border (at the River Jabbok) in the Gileadite city of Jabesh. A month or so after their escape, Nahash determined to subjugate Jabesh-Gilead for sheltering his escaped "subjects." This was his motivation or excuse for striking far north of his claimed boundaries, and so he marched to the city and besieged it. When asked for terms for a treaty by the men of Jabesh, he insisted on the same harsh punishment that he had inflicted on Gad and Reuben, the gouging out of the right eye of every able-bodied man. But he thereby sealed his own fate. Saul of Benjamin, enraged by news of the affair and "seized by the spirit," rallied elements of the western tribes, crossed the Jordan, and "slaughtered the Ammonites until the heat of the day." His great victory brought or extended recognition of his kingship throughout Israel.

To add a paragraph to the text of the Bible is in itself not an event likely to shake the foundations of the church or synagogue. We are

happy it is not an eleventh commandment. It is, however, one small illustration of biblical discoveries to come.

HISTORY OF BIBLICAL RELIGION

Under this heading one could discourse on the history of Hebrew psalmody. We now have a large corpus of Hellenistic hymns with which we can compare the older canonical Psalter. We could speak about the development of slave law in Persian Palestine on the basis of the Samaria papyri, or lecture on new constructions of the history of the Restoration after the Exile based in large part on data from new documents. And so on. I have chosen to comment on our emerging view of the apocalyptic movement and its place in the history of biblical religion.

The term *apocalyptic* usually conjures up in our mind the book of Daniel, a late, full-blown exemplar of the apocalyptic literature. Some will remember the apocalypse in the book of Isaiah—chapters 24–27—whose date has been debated by several generations of biblical scholars. From Qumrân has come an immense literature including apocalypses and works colored by apocalyptic eschatology.

These apocalyptists saw world history in the grip of warring forces, God and Satan, the spirits of truth and error, light and darkness. The struggle of God with man, and of man with sin, evil, and death became objectified into a cosmic struggle. Dualistic themes of archaic myth were transformed into historical myths. The world, captive to evil powers and principalities which have been given authority in the era of divine wrath, can be freed only by the divine might. But the apocalyptist saw the day of God's salvation and judgment dawning. The old age had moved to its allotted end, and the age of consummation was at hand, the age of the vindication of the elect and the redemption of the world. For the apocalyptist, events of his day signaled the approach of the end. The final war, Armageddon, had begun. The Messiah was about to appear "bringing the sword." The Satanic forces, now brought to bay, had broken out in a final, defiant convulsion, manifest in the persecutions, temptations, and tribulations of the faithful. In short, the apocalyptist lived in a world in which the sovereignty of God was the sole hope of salvation, and in the earnestness of his faith and the vividness of his hope he was certain that God was about to act.

Apocalypticism has been regarded as a late, short-lived phenomenon in Judaism. This notion is dissolving in the light of massive new data and careful research. The earliest Enoch literature, for example,

dated to the Roman or at earliest the Hellenistic period a generation ago, must now be pushed back into the late Persian period. We actually have manuscripts from about 200 B.C.E. Studies of early biblical apocalyptic, notably the Isaianic Apocalypse, now attribute it to the sixth century. Indeed, the first strains of apocalyptic dualism and eschatology arise with the decline of prophecy in the sixth and fifth centuries. We are now forced to recognize that "proto-apocalyptic" and "apocalyptic" works reflect a movement of more than half a millennium in duration.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, apocalypticism played little or no role in scholars' descriptions of the history of Israelite religion. The *Zeitgeist* stemmed from an evil conjunction of Luther and Hegel. In idealistic models of biblical religion then in vogue, apocalypticism had no place. It was treated as an idiosyncratic and impertinent product of a few Jewish seers, a fringe phenomenon. One may compare the treatment of Jewish mysticism by historians before the present century.

For Christian scholars of this point of view, the history of biblical religion moved according to a dialectic which opposed the free, ethical, and historical spirit of biblical prophecy to law and the legal spirit which marked post-Exilic Judaism. According to this view, survival of the free and gracious spirit of prophecy was to be found of course *only* in New Testament Christianity. Hence Christian scholars were inclined to bypass apocalyptic in an attempt to trace direct continuities between prophecy and primitive Christianity. Jewish scholars, it must be said, shared the prevailing distaste for apocalyptic, viewing it as sectarian—even if a bit had slipped into the Hebrew canon. Indeed, influenced by the anti-apocalyptic and anti-Gnostic reaction of Rabbinic Judaism, they read Tannaitic Judaism back into the Hellenistic, if not into the Persian era. As late as 1929, George Foote Moore was able to contend:

> Inasmuch as these writings [the apocalypses] have never been recognized by Judaism, it is a fallacy of method for the historian to make them a primary source for the eschatology of Judaism, much more, to contaminate its theology with them.

Thus all joined hands in a conspiracy of silence on the subject of apocalypticism.

In the last generation, apocalypticism was rediscovered, so to speak, in its special import for the study of Christian origins. The rich resources from Qumrân confirm and reinforce these new insights. Indeed, the study of Christian origins has been transformed by new

data from the literature of the library of Qumrân, and the pace of these lines of research will increase as new manuscripts are published.

The movements of John the Baptist and of Jesus of Nazareth must be redefined as apocalyptic rather than prophetic in their essential character. Gershom Scholem shocked our generation by his demonstration of the survivals of apocalyptic mysticism in the era of Rabbi Akiba, and in the coming generation I venture to say these insights into the importance of apocalypticism for both primitive Christianity and early Judaism will be confirmed and extended.

The apocalyptic communities of the last centuries before the common era were a major force in the complex matrix in which both Christianity and Tannaitic Judaism came to birth. We are now beginning to recognize the enormous distance through which Judaism evolved, from the origins of the Pharisees in the multi-hued religious milieu of the Hellenistic era down to the oral codification of the Mishnah. This should not be surprising if we remember that in a smaller number of years the Christian community had moved from its Jewish sectarian origins in Jerusalem to Nicene orthodoxy in Constantine's Byzantium.

It is my perception that in the years ahead the apocalyptic movement will be recognized as a major phase in the evolution of biblical religion flourishing between the death of prophecy in its institutionalized form in the sixth century B.C.E. and the rise of Rabbinic Judaism, Gentile Christianity, and Gnosticism in the first and second centuries C.E. In this interval of more than five hundred years, Jewish apocalypticism was a mainstream of religious life as well as speculation. Nonapocalyptic strains existed alongside, but the apocalyptic movement became in fact one of the ancestors of both Pharisaic Judaism and Jewish Christianity as well as the Gnostic syncretism which infected both in the first centuries of the common era.

I venture to say that the descriptions of the Jewish parties of the Hellenistic and Roman period found in our histories and handbooks will become complex and nuanced replacing the simple, neat images of the past. The Saducees whom we have pictured as religious conservatives and worldly bureaucrats now prove to have spawned a radical apocalyptic wing at Qumrân. The Pharisees also appear to have been variegated within their communes (habūrōt), accepting in their canon such apocalyptic works as 2 Zechariah and Daniel, rejecting others: Enoch and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. By and large they appear as dominated by moderates. Their radical elements broke off to join the Zealot movement; their conservative members were overcome by the school of Hillel.

Let me illustrate my general remarks with concrete detail. The radical legalism and apocalypticism of the Essene community at Qumrân has come to be better understood thanks to the publication several years ago of the great Temple Scroll from Cave 11 Qumrân. Its English edition is now in press.

We have known from earlier published documents that the Essene sect in its everyday life anticipated the new age. They were priests before the altar of God, in effect, warriors in the last holy war, fighting alongside the holy angels. This meant in legal terms that they eschewed all uncleanness—concretely many refrained from sexual intercourse—and for the duration of the last times were celibate.

In the Temple Scroll it is made clear that these priestly and military laws of uncleanness were to be applied to the temple, and *mirable dictu* to the holy city as a whole. Effectively this meant that women could not live in Jerusalem. Men living in Jerusalem led by priests could not desecrate the city, so that acts which render one unclean had to be performed outside the holy city. In such circumstances priestly continence or celibacy was imposed or recommended. Latrines were to be 3000 cubits (nearly a mile) outside the city, and not to be used on the Sabbath. The lame, blind, or diseased with unclean ailments were excluded not merely from the temple but also from the city.

Little wonder these Essenes were persecuted and forced to live in the desert. In any case, this radical combination of eschatology and priestly laws of defilement was rejected by the Pharisees. In the New Testament there are two opposing streams. In a polemical parable Jesus invited the blind and lame, the poor and unclean into the banquet of the Messiah. On the other hand, in Pauline Christianity there is a strong tendency toward apocalyptic celibacy as constituting the highest life.

A generation ago, the counsel of celibacy in Christianity was attributed to the influence of its Greek environment. The celibacy of the Jewish sect of Essenes appeared to be a contradiction of everything Jewish. Now the picture is at once clarified and complicated. For despite their strategic celibacy, the Essenes regarded God's greatest blessing to be "Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth."

An illustration of a different sort:

From Cave 4 Qumrân comes an Aramaic apocalypse belonging to the Daniel literature or, if one prefers, Pseudo-Daniel. It is to be published by J. T. Milik. A key section which has been quoted publicly concerns evidently the Messiah to come. It reads as follows:

> [The holy one of the g]reat [God] he will be called, and by his name he shall be surnamed.
> Son of God [*barēh di 'ēl*] he shall be called
> And Son of the Most High [*bar 'elyōn*]
> he shall be surnamed.

In the Gospel of Luke 1:32 are the words:

> He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David and his father.

Luke 1:35 adds the title "Son of God."

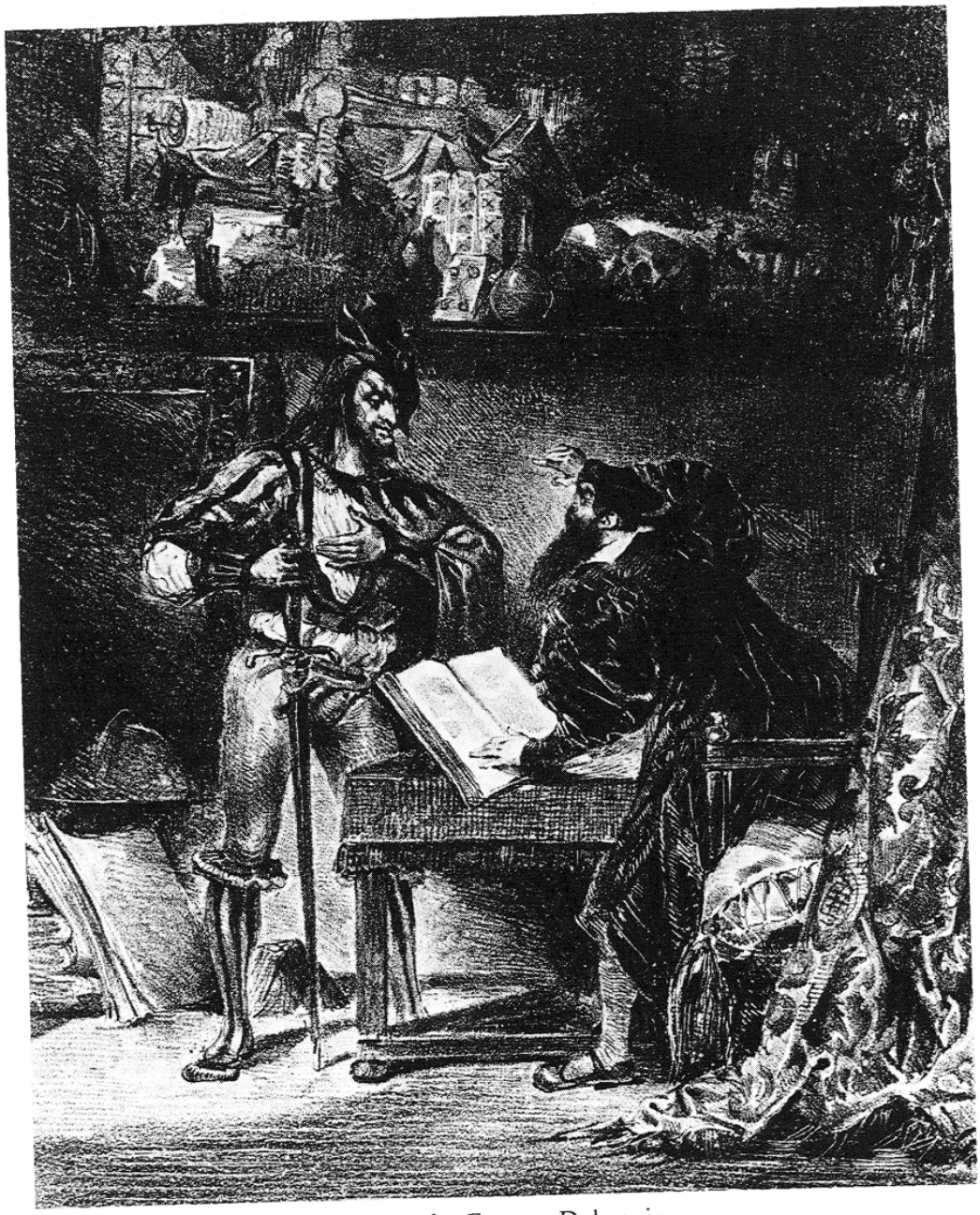
These titles of the Davidic Messiah in Luke have given rise to controversy. Most scholars have said they are drawn by Luke or by Luke's Christian source directly from the Hebrew Bible. In 2 Sam. 7:14, Ps. 89:26–27, Isa. 9:6–7, and Ps. 2:7, the Davidic king is called "son" of the deity, that is, the adopted "Son of God." Other scholars have argued that these titles must be quoted from a Jewish hymn—their Semitic flavor is strong.

The day has been carried, however, by the argument that nowhere in pre-Christian Jewish literature is the Messiah-to-come called "Son of the Most High" or "Son of God." Thus the connecting of the old royal language of the Bible and the Messiah is evidently Christian and obviously late. So much for arguments from silence and scholarly consensus.

Luke or his source has, in fact, quoted almost verbatim a pre-Christian Jewish apocalypse belonging to the Daniel cycle. What later Christian writers did with the title "Son of God" is another story.

So much for illustrations.

The discoveries of the Jordan Rift, above all at Qumrân, have properly created a new phase in the study of the history of late biblical religion and of Jewish sectarianism. The assimilation of these data will be slow. Older scholars will prefer to ignore the materials: the ferment they produce is too strong for their stomachs. I have heard Yigael Yadin read diatribes against his colleagues accusing them of ignoring the Temple Scroll he published. Of course it is uncomfortable to be told: here is a new scroll—go rewrite all your books. Or here is a new Jewish library of the third to first centuries; examine all your old presuppositions, retool, and start afresh. New directions in research will rest largely on a young generation of scholars. I envy those who will live to read the new syntheses the future will bring into being.



The Wager by Eugene Delacroix