

PRELIMINARY REFLECTIONS ON *THE TEMPLE SCROLL*

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The Hebrew edition of *Megillath Hammiqdāsh* (*The Temple Scroll*), published and edited by Prof. Yigael Yadin,¹ has just appeared. An English edition will follow. The *Scroll* consists of 67 columns of preserved text, ranging in length from 9 to 21 lines each. There are, of course, many *lacunae*. Several fragments from what now may be classified as other copies of the *Scroll* had been retrieved independently, but could not be identified before the present copy, acquired by Prof. Yadin, had been read.

As discussed by Yadin, the *Scroll* includes four types of literary materials:

1. Passages cited from the Hebrew Bible, principally the Pentateuch, and taken from separate books and/or originally unconnected sources. In the *Scroll*, these passages are juxtaposed and re-arranged according to a topical sequence, so as to comprise a code for the conduct of the Jerusalem temple, and activities related to it. These passages are cited virtually verbatim, except for some transparent, later replacements of the original biblical terms and usages.

2. Pseudepigraphic passages, previously unknown, which are written in biblical style, and presented as though part of the Pentateuch, and of Deuteronomy, in particular (Compare the so-called, non-canonical psalms from Qumran).

3. Harmonized passages, often reflecting syntactic interpenetration, and the rephrasing of biblical verses, so that originally unconnected phrases and clauses are joined, and intermeshed. (Compare similar harmonizations in Ezekiel, chapters 40-48, and in Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles).

4. *Halākhôth*, a certain number of seemingly original laws, alongside amplifications and qualifications of known laws. These statements are usually interpolated in biblical citations, or appended to them. They reveal contemporary exegesis of Mosaic law; or, as is more often the

¹ Yigael Yadin, *Megillath Hammiqdāsh*, (Hebrew), Jerusalem, 1977, 3 vols., with a supplement to vol. 3 containing additional fragmentary plates. Vol. I = Introduction. Vol. II = Text and commentary, Vol. III = Plates and corresponding printed text.

case, provide new details concerning the implementation of such laws.

The approximate dating of the *Scroll* is made possible by paleographic, orthographic, and linguistic data. Its provenance will remain uncertain, however, until much more study is accomplished. Taken as a whole, the *Scroll* represents either a pre-*Pēsber* stage of literary writing, or an outlook toward Scripture which differed basically from that which produced the *Pēsber*, and *midrāsh*, as a *genre*. Biblical and pseudepigraphic passages are almost never commented upon. It is the juxtaposition of sources and their harmonization which reveals the intent of the law, along with the new material presented. The *Scroll* is a pseudepigraphic version of Deuteronomy, a partial restatement of the Torah, together with material from other biblical books, and later writings. All of this material centers on matters relevant to the Temple—its physical plant, personnel, cult, festivals, and purity regulations. Its point of reference is *‘ir hammiqdāsh* “Temple City,” probably an older name for Rabbinic *har habbayîth* “the temple mount,” as was long ago understood by Louis Ginzberg.

There is much reason for doubt as to whether the *Scroll* represents sectarian literature, as we know it. It seems surely to have originated with an official body which, at one time or another, was actually in charge of the Jerusalem temple. The usual sectarian animus is missing, and the strictness in matters of purity, admittedly present, and typical of many sectarian documents, was greatly over-emphasized in the advance notices issued by Prof. Yadin. Yadin lists only thirteen terms and usages distinctive to the *Scroll* and the “sectarian” *megillôth*, and most of these are not really so distinctive, in and of themselves, as to prove overall literary affinity. In contrast, almost 40 terms and usages link the diction of the *Scroll* to Mishnaic Hebrew, quite specifically.

Yadin’s contention that the putative calendar upon which the dates of the *Scroll’s* festivals are based is that of “the Sect”, even if verifiable, does not dispel doubt as to the provenance of the *Scroll*. As is true of such features as orthography and language, calendrical patterns may have been more common than has been assumed. The provenance of the *Scroll* remains, therefore, an open question.

The *Scroll* represents both the final stages of a literary process, and the basis for an incipient literary process. Although Yadin stresses the points of difference between the *Scroll* and Ezekiel, chapters 40-48, it would be more fruitful, methodologically, to investigate the many points of similarity, in both content and structure, including such salient features as the plan of the temple, sacrificial rites, etc. Yadin acknowl-

edges these similarities, but tends to underestimate their importance, because he accepts the "visionary" character of Ezekiel, chapters 40-48, while insisting on the realism of the Scroll. This dichotomy is more imagined than actual, and is of little importance, methodologically.

The author (or authors) of the *Scroll* felt free to write themselves a Torah; as we would say, to use scissors and paste! Within a rubric of pseudepigraphic historiography we have a substantial corpus of what may be termed *nomography*. The *Scroll's* author(s) took other liberties, as well. They substituted the 1st person, making God *Ego*, where the biblical original had the 3rd person; so that, for example, "to the Lord" becomes "to Me."

Despite certain points of divergence, and indications of legal development, the *Scroll* is not an alternate *Torah*, or opposition document. In actuality, it carries the biblical source-redactional process a few steps further in the formulation of biblical law than previously attested, and achieves a greater degree of detail and comprehensiveness than we have seen in any other primarily legal document of the pre-Tannaitic period. In this regard, a valuable contribution to the literary appreciation of the *Scroll* has already been made, quite independently, by Morton Smith, in an earlier article, cited several times by Yadin, but not utilized fully.²

The key to establishing the relatedness of the *Scroll* to the Mishnah, and Tannaitic literature, generally, lies primarily in analyzing the pattern of juxtapositions and harmonizations, rather than in the relatively few *balākhōth*. It will be vital to determine whether the actual juxtapositions and harmonizations, spelled out in the *Scroll*, correlate with the results of Tannaitic hermeneutic. The creators of the Mishnah did not re-arrange the Torah! They established analogies and thematic connections by crossreference, and hermeneutic *middōth*. They did not add their own words to Torah verses, and try to pass them off as original! They derived meanings and law through eisegesis, and explicative commentary. Do the Tannaitic results correspond, perhaps, with what is juxtaposed and harmonized in the *Scroll*? If so, we have in the *Scroll* a new legal link, in substance, between Bible and Mishnah.

This question will be the subject of a special study. For the moment, I was pleased to respond to Jacob Neusner's invitation to outline some of the pivotal questions regarding both the biblical background of the

² M. Smith, "Pseudepigraphy in the Israelite Literary Tradition," *Pseudepigrapha I*, ed. K. von Fritz, Vandoeuvres-Geneva, 1971, (*Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique*, Fondation Hardt), vol. 18, pp. 191-227.

Scroll, and its relation to Mishnah, and Rabbinic literature, in general. His pervasive insights into the character of Mishnaic literature, *qua* literature, and his exposure of the literary composition of large parts of the Mishnah, will be of great assistance in establishing the precise provenance of the *Scroll*. At this point, it was important to clarify the fact that the *Scroll* represents an entirely different sort of literary composition, and reflects a radically different mentality from that which produced the Mishnah; or, for that matter, the contemporary *Pēsher*.