

**JOHN BEN-DANIEL**

**THE ESSENES OF MOUNT  
ARBEL AND JERUSALEM**

Origins, History, and Influence



**THE ENIGMA  
PRESS**

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# **THE ESSENES OF MOUNT ARBEL AND JERUSALEM**

Dedicated to the late Rev. Prof. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, OP  
—among the first to write a history of the Essenes

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John BEN-DANIEL

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## PREFACE

This book is the result of asking a simple question: “how did the apostle John, a supposedly illiterate fisherman from the Sea of Galilee, manage to write the Book of Revelation, a masterpiece of apocalyptic literature otherwise called the Apocalypse of John?” Most Johannine scholars seem content to dismiss the assertion altogether, opting instead to credit an unknown Asian mystic, a total incognito, whose name or pseudonym was also John. No trace of this person exists, except as a hypothesis in the minds of Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria (c. 250 CE) and Eusebius the Church historian (c. 325 CE), who both—for no compelling reason—denied apostolic authorship in their own day.<sup>1</sup> Up until that day, the tradition of the Early Church, based on reliable witnesses from the same province, and within living memory, was nearly unanimous in identifying the apostle John as the author.<sup>2</sup> The issue is not a trivial one, since this revelation is a prophecy, and the credentials of the prophet have always been crucial to acceptance.

At this point, we came across several scholarly works highlighting a resemblance between the Book of Revelation and the first book of Enoch (*1Enoch*), especially to its central section called the Parables of Enoch (*1Enoch* 37-71).<sup>3</sup> The resemblance is profound and essential, too great to ignore. At the same time, specialists reached a consensus on the date of the Parables (c. 1 BCE),<sup>4</sup> and two leading scholars went on to propose Magdala, on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, as the home of

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<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, *Church History (Historia Ecclesiae)*, III, 39.4-7; VII, 25. For my comprehensive refutation of the arguments negating apostolic authorship, please see: [www.newtorah.org/pdf/Author%20of%20Revelation%20Apostle%20or%20Incognito%202023.pdf](http://www.newtorah.org/pdf/Author%20of%20Revelation%20Apostle%20or%20Incognito%202023.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> The tradition has come down to us from various sources, transmitted (c. 325 CE) by Eusebius, in *Church History*: III, 18.1; III, 20.11; III, 23.1-6; IV, 18.8; V, 8.4-7; VI, 25.9-10.

<sup>3</sup> Charles, *Book of Enoch*, 1912, xcv-cii; Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 1993, 38-91; Aune, ‘The Apocalypse of John and Palestinian Jewish Apocalyptic’, *Pseudepigrapha and Christian Origins*, 2008, 169-192; Charlesworth, ‘The Parables of Enoch and the Apocalypse of John’, *Pseudepigrapha and Christian Origins*, 2008, 227-42; Stuckenbruck and Mathews, ‘The Apocalypse of John, 1 Enoch, and the Question of Influence’, *Die Johannesapokalypse*, 2012, 191-234; Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2* (2012), 69, 70, 83; and Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1* (2001), 85.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Charlesworth ‘Can we Discern the Composition Date in the Parables of Enoch’ and Sacchi ‘The 2005 Camaldoli Seminar on the Parables of Enoch: Summary and Prospects for Future Research’, both in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, 2007; 450-68 and 499-512 respectively.



its author.<sup>5</sup> Another scholar gave evidence for an ancient tradition of supernatural revelation in Galilean territory.<sup>6</sup> Mount Hermon was a significant point of reference for the author of the Book of Watchers (*IEn* 6:6), to which the Book of Parables was written as a sequel, so Mount Hermon would have been important to the author of the Parables as well (*IEn* 39:1-2; 64:1-2).

With these ideas in mind, we visited the Arbel National Park, two kilometres west of Magdala, in Autumn 2019, and were amazed by the remains of an ancient cave-village located there. Dissatisfied with current explanations to account for it, we spent the next three years researching this field, and the seven chapters in this book are the result. We believe these chapters are just the start of a new area of investigation focusing on the thousands of Essenes who thrived in communities other than the one at Qumran, from 100 BCE to 100 CE and beyond.

For those who are wondering whether we found the answer to our original question, the answer is affirmative. The fifth essay in this collection, ‘The Rise and Fall of the Parables of Enoch: John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth and John of Patmos’, contains further confirmation, if any is needed, for the ancient tradition ascribing the Book of Revelation to the apostle John. The assembled evidence matches and reinforces this Early Church tradition and goes a long way to explain how and why the Book of Revelation came to be written by the apostle John.

Since the research has been a joint venture from the start, this is the place to thank my wife Gloria for all her help and encouragement. I also wish to thank the many scholars who have contributed comments and advice on aspects of the investigation, especially Profs. Richard Bauckham, James Charlesworth, Joan Taylor, John J. Collins, Motti Aviam, Uzi Leibner, Rainer Riesner, Fr. Jean-Baptiste Humbert and Fr. Joan Maria Vernet. After gratefully implementing their suggestions, any remaining errors and shortcomings are lamentably mine. Abundant thanks are due to the library staff at the Ecole Biblique, the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum and at the Hebrew University, Mt. Scopus. Last, but not least, thanks to the publisher, Dr. Zdzisław Kaperka, for his patient and professional collaboration.

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<sup>5</sup> Aviam, ‘The Book of Enoch and the Galilean Archaeology and Landscape’ and Charlesworth, ‘Did Jesus Know the traditions in the *Parables of Enoch*’, both in *Parables of Enoch: Paradigm Shift*, 2013; 159-69 and 184-191 respectively.

<sup>6</sup> Nickelsburg, ‘Enoch, Levi, and Peter: Recipients of Revelation in Upper Galilee’, *JBL*, 100/4 (1981); 575-600.

## INTRODUCTION

This book is a collection of seven separate studies on the Essenes. Although they can be read in any order, it is more meaningful to read them in the order they appear, for the findings described in the earlier studies are widened and developed in later chapters.

The first chapter is the ‘rock’ on which the others are built. ‘The Arbel Cave Village: Remains of an Essene Commune’ describes our research into the collection of one hundred or more caves, carved into the cliffs of Mt. Arbel, together with connecting passages, cisterns and *miqva’ot*. They were carved close to each other, in rows, on several levels, and adjacent to a great cave, 60 metres long, whose entrance had once been protected by a huge wall composed of Hasmonean-era ashlar. From coin and ceramic finds, archaeologists estimate that work on this cave-village commenced around 100 BCE, shortly after the establishment of the nearby settlement of Arbel, c. 120 BCE.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of their investigations, archaeologists and speleologists conclude that this cave-village was constructed as a refuge for the residents of Arbel in times of trouble and, on this basis, they call the caves “cliff shelters.” This is now the dominant narrative in scholarly works, guidebooks, and in the information handed out by the Arbel National Park Authority. However, most of the caves in this cave-village are accessible from the ground and, in times of trouble, would have offered little or no protection against invading armies. Furthermore, a recent archaeological survey shows evidence of intense and continuous habitation from 100 BCE, also in the calm periods between times of trouble.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the immense investment of labour expended in carving an entire village into the cliff could not have been justified solely for the sake of providing a temporary refuge in times of trouble. In sum, the archaeological evidence outlined above does not provide an adequate explanation for the existence of the cave-village. Without further archaeological investigation, we must turn to other sources of information: historical accounts and our own observations in the field.

The principal historical source is Flavius Josephus, who mentions Arbel (i.e., Arbela) in two contexts, firstly as the site of Herod’s military camp in the Civil War, during his campaign in Eastern Galilee (*JW*

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Leibner, *Settlement and History in Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Galilee*, 2009; 238-39, 262-64, esp n. 129. Also: Ilan, ‘Reviving a 2,000-Year-Old Landmark’, *Eretz Magazine*, 1988/1989; 68.

<sup>2</sup> Leibner, *Settlement and History* 146, 240.

1.304-316, 326; *Ant* 14.431-433, 450),<sup>3</sup> and secondly as a place Josephus personally visited and fortified prior to the first Jewish Revolt in 66 CE (*JW* 2.573; *Life* 188). Re-reading the account of Herod's military campaign in Eastern Galilee (*JW* 1.304-307), we identified a regrettable misunderstanding. Herod and his army did not go to Arbel to fight the rebellious residents of Arbel, as the historians would have us believe, but to rescue them from the cave-dwelling brigands "who were infesting a wide area" and making their life impossible. Herod and his army were clearly concerned about the residents of Arbel and came to protect them from the brigands and their pro-Hasmonean allies. This particular insight focusses our investigation on the Essenes, who were unique among the Jews for being greatly favoured by Herod (*Ant* 15.372). In this light, several other 'footprints' of Essene presence can be discerned in Arbel, generating a 'reasonable suspicion' that they were the original builders and occupants of the nearby Arbel cave village.<sup>4</sup>

After critically assessing the four current theories that attempt to explain the existence of the cave-village, we present a theory based on a third source of evidence—our own personal observations. A number of typical features allow us to infer this was indeed an Essene settlement: the close-knit communal organization of the caves, the numerous cisterns and *mikva'ot* in the absence of a synagogue, the harsh and ascetic setting and, above all, the conversion of the huge natural cave, at the northern end of the cave-village, into a communal dining room/ storeroom/ kitchen complex, consistent with what is known of the cultic meals and culinary regulations of the Essene movement (*JW* 2.129-133, 147; *Damascus Document* 11:7-9).

Responses to these conclusions have so far been divided: some accept this "Arbel-Essene hypothesis" without hesitation, while others question the level of evidence, suspending judgment until the result of further archaeological investigation is available. Our own position is that the positive evidence outlined above, along with our rebuttal of misinterpretations, constitutes 'probable cause' and paves the way for establishing the case 'beyond reasonable doubt', when further information becomes available. This, in turn, allows us to advance the

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<sup>3</sup> The histories of Josephus are abbreviated as follows: *JW* for his *Jewish War*, *Ant* for *Antiquities*, *Life* for his autobiography, *The Life of Josephus Flavius*.

<sup>4</sup> 'Reasonable suspicion' is the legal term for 'reason to believe' (allows the police to stop and frisk) and is the first of three levels of evidence leading to conviction. As we will be referring to the other two in due course, the next level is 'probable cause' (allows for an arrest or search warrant), and the highest level is 'beyond reasonable doubt' (leads to conviction and sentencing).

‘Arbel-Essene hypothesis’ as a replacement for the existing theories, without having to wait for further excavations. In order to confirm this position, we can go one step further and invoke the “totality of evidence” argument, otherwise known as the “Mosaic Theory of Evidence Gathering”.

As this is not a familiar tool in the study of antiquity, further explanation is probably called for. One of the most widely accepted definitions, in legal circles at least, is the following: “The “mosaic theory” describes a basic precept of intelligence gathering: Disparate items of information, though individually of limited or no utility to their possessor, can take on added significance when combined with other items of information. Combining the items illuminates their interrelationships and breeds analytic synergies, so that the resulting mosaic of information is worth more than the sum of its parts”.<sup>5</sup>

Currently, the main application of “mosaic theory” is in the interface between National Security and Judicial prosecution. Although its legality, and validity, in the legal determination of ‘probable cause’ leading to search and arrest, is still being debated, the theory is already widely used in electronic intelligence gathering for the prevention of serious terrorist crimes.

Although the use of this ‘method’ in historical research may not yet be formally recognized, its application is widespread, often labelled differently as “totality of evidence”, or “cumulative evidence”. The characteristics are the same: bits of information from diverse sources, which on their own have little probative value, can be brought together like the pieces of a mosaic, to provide a reliable and detailed picture of the situation, or theory of the case. The success of this ‘method’ can then be recognized by its explanatory power, which is its power to explain previously isolated and seemingly incongruent information.

Those who understand and use the process are impressed by its simplicity: “The theory’s basic premise is valid, if simple: Informational synergy does exist, and adversaries can capitalize on it to our detriment. Indeed, the only way adversaries can capitalize on information disclosure is through mosaic-making. As the Department of Justice noted... the mosaic theory “is principally an exercise of common sense”.<sup>6</sup> We may

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted from Pozen, ‘The Mosaic Theory, National Security, and the Freedom of Information Act’, *Yale Law Journal*, 115/3 (Dec 2005), 630, accessible at <https://www.yalelawjournal.org>.

<sup>6</sup> Pozen, ‘Mosaic Theory’, *Yale Law Journal*, 115/3 (Dec 2005), 678, quoting from a US Department of Justice brief for the Committee on National Security Systems (CNSS).

even be using this method intuitively, in a variety of circumstances, without giving it a name.<sup>7</sup>

So, there is every reason to name the “mosaic theory” as justification for combining historical, archaeological and literary evidence on subjects where evidence is scarce, dispersed in various disciplines, and where it is clearly impossible to prove each bit of information independently of its relation to the whole. The “mosaic theory” justifies the collection and interpretation of a variety findings from different disciplines and imparts a reasonable level of confidence in the result. So, rather than adopting conclusions formed independently in each discipline, the “mosaic theory” allows us to take the most reliable information from each discipline and combine it in such a way that the inferences from one discipline guide our interpretation of the others.

Using this method, we feel justified in advancing the ‘Arbel-Essene hypothesis’ for serious scholarly consideration as a replacement for existing explanations of the Arbel cave village. Without waiting for scholarly endorsement, however, the “mosaic theory” impels us to press on and consider the findings at Mt. Arbel as a piece in the even larger mosaic of Essene origins, history and influence. Calling on evidence from the same disciplines (archaeology, history and religious literature), subsequent chapters build on the Arbel-Essene hypothesis and extend its reach into other areas.

The second chapter, ‘The Essenes and Jerusalem’, re-presents the current archaeological debate over the presence of Essenes in Jerusalem and finds that objections arise due to scanty evidence and justifiable doubts that the self-segregating Qumran Essenes would have tolerated Jerusalem city-life. The most basic items of evidence are then described, and cumulatively make a compelling case for an Essene presence on Mt. Zion. After an examination of relevant sectarian literature (1QS), it is confirmed that the Qumran Essenes had separated from the Temple and city, only to return at the start of the final battle (1QM). The rest of the chapter explains how it was the Essenes from Mt. Arbel who established the Essene community in Jerusalem, after Herod took power in 37 BCE. The chapter ends with a brief outline of their moderate and mainstream character, in comparison with the extreme sectarian views of their rivals at Qumran.

The third chapter reports on a recent ‘salvage’ excavation on the eastern slope of Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, where two large Herodian

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<sup>7</sup> Can we not recognize here the fascinating skill set of Sherlock Holmes, or the diagnostic acumen of the best physicians?

*mikva'ot* were found near a flight of rock-cut steps and the remains of an ancient wall with archway. A reconstruction is proposed and inferences drawn, noting how these findings further strengthen the case for an Essene presence on Mt. Zion in those days.

The fourth chapter, 'The Parables of Enoch (*1Enoch* 37-71): Provenance and Social Setting', examines the 'Parables of Enoch' under these two aspects. Firstly, with the evidence at our disposal, it is shown that the author was an Essene, but of a different character from those at Qumran. After summarizing the evidence for the scholarly consensus on dating, the same evidence is then mined for clues about the location of the author. Together with other geographical features, there is sufficient reason, cumulatively, to propose the author was a member of the Essene community at the Arbel cave village. This proposal is then strengthened by a reconstruction of the social situation in Eastern Galilee at the time of the Civil War and its aftermath, as indicated by references to brigands in that area, in the histories of Josephus. With the results of a recent archaeological survey of Eastern Galilee, we describe a social crisis of sufficient severity to account for the judgmental core of this book and confirm its Arbelite provenance.

This is followed by chapter five, 'The Rise and Fall of the Parables of Enoch: John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth and John of Patmos', which takes up the findings of the first four chapters, to evaluate the influence of the 'Parables of Enoch' as a messianic prophecy in the early first century CE. After recalling the social situation at that time and affirming the 'Parables of Enoch' as a prophecy of imminent messianic salvation and judgment, its trajectory is traced through the first century CE. It is shown to coincide in place, in person and in time with the founders of Christianity—John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth and the apostle John—whose expression of certain unique features of the text indicates a high degree of influence. This is followed by a discussion on the circulation and reception of the 'Parables', concluding with informed speculation on the reason and manner of its sudden disappearance at the end of the first century CE.

The sixth chapter, 'Damascus is Damascus: Revisiting the Birthplace of the Essenes', returns to the origins of the Essene movement in 'the land of Damascus', as stated repeatedly in the *Damascus Document*. After a brief history of the interpretation of this location, which also identifies the reason for the loss of its literal meaning, the arguments for the two prevailing symbolical interpretations of modern scholarship are challenged and dismissed. The literal interpretation for the land of Damascus is repropounded, and backed up by historical, etymological,

literary and geo-religious evidence. Noting that the reason underpinning the symbolical interpretations was erased by the redating of the foundation of Qumran, from about 150 BCE to 100 BCE, the chapter ends with an appeal to return to the literal interpretation of ‘the land of Damascus’.

The seventh and last chapter, ‘The Origins and History of the Essenes: Implications of the Essene Settlement at Mt. Arbel in Galilee’, traces an outline of the prehistory, origins and subsequent history of the Essene ‘new covenant’ community, from the return of the Jews from the Babylonian Exile up to the first Jewish Revolt, considered in 3 sections: 1. The established religious and historical background; 2. Information derived from historical allusions in the sectarian writings in the Dead Sea Scrolls; 3. Postulated chronological reconstruction of Essene history from both of the above sources. Readers who reach the end of this chapter can then look back to the first chapter and reflect on the importance of the Arbel cave village in the assembly of the entire mosaic.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE ARBEL CAVE VILLAGE: REMAINS OF AN ESSENE COMMUNE

#### Introduction

At the northern end of the cliffs of Mt. Arbel, in Lower Galilee, more than one hundred caves have been carved into a 250-metre section of the cliff face. It is the largest concentration of caves in Galilee and is aptly called a ‘cave-village’. At one end of this ‘cave-village’, where the footpath from Wadi Arbel meets the base of the cliff, the visitor can still view the remains of a huge cave, 60 metres long, 10 metres high and up to 12 metres wide, whose entrance was once covered, from end to end, by a fortified wall, of which only a small section survives (Fig 1.1).



Fig 1.1: View of the village of the cave of Arbel: the remains of the great cave span the base of the massive cliff on the left.

Recognizing this great cave as the “cave of Arbela”,<sup>1</sup> for its unique size engenders the name, it follows that this cave-village is the same as the ‘village of the cave of Arbela’ mentioned by Josephus in the list of villages he fortified before the first Jewish Revolt and “stocked with ample

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Arbela’ is the Aramaic form of the Hebrew name ‘Arbel’, and both forms refer to exactly the same place on the map.



supplies of corn and arms for their future security” (*Life* 188).<sup>2</sup> In the parallel account in his *Jewish War*, this village corresponds to “the caves in Lower Galilee in the neighbourhood of the lake of Gennesaret” (*JW* 2.573), which accords with the fact that it is situated only 2 kms west of ancient Magdala and the shores of Lake Gennesaret (the Sea of Galilee). We therefore suggest calling this village by the name that Josephus gave it, which was “the village of the cave of Arbel” or, more briefly, the “Arbel cave village” (כפר מערת ארבל).<sup>3</sup>

This historical site is now a small part of the Arbel National Park and Nature Reserve, cared for by Israel Nature and Parks Authority, and is visited by thousands of Israelis and tourists every year. The main attraction for visitors to this site, however, is not the crumbling ‘cave of Arbela’, but an imposing fortress at the southern end of the village, which was built in the seventeenth century by the Druze overlord Fahr a-Din II, and is called the Qala’at (or Kul’at) Ibn Ma’an fortress. Unfortunately, many of the caves from the cave-village were obliterated by the builders of the Druze fortress, so that only the outlines of the original caves can still be seen in that construction. Taking this into account, an estimate of the total number of habitable caves in the original cave-village stands at around 120. Many of these date from as early as 100 BCE and there is evidence that the site remained continuously and intensively occupied throughout the first century BCE, the first century CE, and beyond (100 BCE–CE 250).

Considering the antiquity of this settlement, and its unusual location and size, it is surprising that, up to this date, we do not have a satisfactory explanation of its origin, and very little information about its residents and their occupation. The aim of this study is to describe the site in the light of what we know, provide some historical background, discuss the various theories that have been advanced, and then conclude with a new theory to explain the findings and observations.

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<sup>2</sup> In the list of villages he fortified, Josephus writes “and the villages of the cave (*singular*) of Arbela (κώμας δὲ Ἀρβήλων σπήλαιον), Beersubae, Selame, Jotapata, Kapharath ...” (*Life* 188). In this chapter, all quotations from the works of Josephus (*Jewish War*, *Antiquities*, and *Life*) are taken from *Josephus in Nine Volumes*, trans. Thackeray, H., et al., Loeb Classical Series. *Jewish War* and *Antiquities* are abbreviated *JW* and *Ant* respectively.

<sup>3</sup> I wish to thank Prof. Joan Taylor for her valuable advice and suggestions. This chapter is based on an article of the same title, published in *Qumran Chronicle*, 30, 1-4, 2022; 43-76.

## Archaeological Description

The first archaeologist to investigate the site in modern times was Dr. Zvi Ilan. He surveyed the caves between 1987-1989, as part of a project to expose and preserve the remains of the nearby town of Arbel, recently identified on the western margins of the plain on top of Mt. Arbel, 2 kms to the southwest of the Arbel cave village (Fig 1.2). Up to that time, some archaeologists thought that Arbel and her caves were to be found on Mt. Nitai, on the other side of Wadi Arbel, so Ilan writes: “It was amid this lack of consensus that we began our exploration of the caves on Mount Arbel in 1987. Since then, we have amassed so much information that we can now say with certainty that we have found the “Arbel cave village”, which was first built in Hasmonean times, and continued to function in the Great Revolt against the Romans, the Byzantine period, and all the way up to the eighteenth century, the time of the Ma’an dynasty, which built the fortress. We learned that about one hundred caves were hewn or adapted on the cliff for residential purposes... The caves were hewn at varying heights and the highest was difficult to reach. In the past the cave dwellers probably climbed up to them via rope ladders”.<sup>4</sup> Although some of the caves were created by natural processes, the majority were laboriously carved into the limestone cliffs, high enough to accommodate a person standing upright.

Later investigators have added detail to Ilan’s first observations. With Valdimir Bosnov of the Israel Cave Research Centre, Dr. Yinon Shviti’el conducted a complete speleological survey of the Arbel caves from 2009-2013. He discerns a difference in construction style between those carved in the early first century BCE and those in the later part of that century: “Based on the pottery finds, the caves were divided into two main periods. Small natural caves with signs of rough, undressed hewing that probably date from the Hellenistic period, and a second group of larger caves, all man-made and cut with straight sides, dated to the early Roman period. A few of the rock-hewn caves contain two or more chambers, some of which are long and narrow. In various cases passages were found between caves on different levels and some had shafts cut in them to move from one to another. Access ladders were probably erected inside chambers that were completely hidden from the outside”.<sup>5</sup>

Within the cave-dwellings at this site (Arbel caves East), 35 plastered cisterns have been found up to this date, fed by carved channels running

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<sup>4</sup> Ilan, ‘Reviving a 2,000-Year-Old Landmark’, *Eretz Magazine*, 1988/89; 66-67.

<sup>5</sup> Shviti’el, *Cliff Shelters and Hiding Complexes in the Galilee*, 2019; 57.

from the cliff-face, or from internal seepage. A total of 5 ritual baths (*mikva'ot*), or stepped pools for ritual purification, have also been discovered so far, and more may be waiting to be found. This is five times the number of ritual baths that have been found at the cave clusters in neighbouring sites.<sup>6</sup> In addition, many of the cave-dwellings have carefully carved fittings, such as wall niches for oil lamps, floor pits for storage jars and carved slits at the entrances to attach ropes for hauling and climbing. Outside the entrance, some caves have a hewn ledge that could have been used as an observation point.

In Prof. Uzi Leibner's archaeological survey of this region of Eastern Galilee (1999-2004),<sup>7</sup> the main pottery finds in the Arbel cave village are from the late Hellenistic, or Hasmonean, period (110–50 BCE), diminishing slightly through the Early Roman period (50 BCE–CE 135), and declining further during the Middle Roman period (135–250 CE). The coins found in or near the caves confirm the chronological range of ceramic fragments, with a preponderance of coins from the late Hellenistic and Hasmonean periods (110–50 BCE).<sup>8</sup>

Leibner also comments on the great cave at the northern end of the cave-village: “The dominance of Hellenistic period pottery together with coins and ashlar of masonry characteristic of the Hasmonean and Early Roman period, create the impression that there was some sort of fortress here—possibly Hasmonean or Herodian. This proposal appears even more

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<sup>6</sup> Totals from the other sites: Arbel caves West: 2 cisterns, 1 *miqveh*; Mt. Nitai caves: 1 cistern, 0 *mikva'ot*; Wadi Amud caves: 25 cisterns, 1 *miqveh*; Akhbara Rock caves: 5 cisterns, 1 *miqveh* (for map, see Fig 4.1 on p. 106).

<sup>7</sup> “The area selected for research is located in the northern part of the Eastern Lower Galilee, between longitude 185-200 and latitude 242-261, an area of some 285 square kilometers. It extends from the Tiberias-Sepphoris route in the south to the foothills of the Upper Galilee in the north, and from the Sea of Galilee basin in the east to the eastern margins of the large Central Galilee valleys in the west”, Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 2009; 1.

<sup>8</sup> In his final report (site 35), Leibner writes: “Numerous building remains, reservoirs, *mikva'ot*, small finds and a considerable amount of pottery scattered in front of and at the foot of the cave openings attest to intensive and permanent settlement in this group of caves during certain periods. In the absence of pottery clearly earlier than the Hellenistic period, the intensive activity here appears to have begun only in that period. The Hellenistic period pottery, the most dominant (31% of the finds), corresponds to the Seleucid and Hasmonean coins found at the site. Over a third of the Hellenistic finds are Long Rim SJ jars typical in Jewish settlement areas from approximately the early first century BCE. Intensive activity is also apparent here during the Early (26%) and Middle (19.6%) Roman period, while a sharp decline in activity is noted during the Late Roman period (5.7%)”, *Settlement and History*, 238-39.

acceptable in view of Josephus' tendency to select previously fortified sites for "fortification"... The most likely place for the "Cave of [the village of] Arbel" which Josephus fortified is here, in the vicinity of Kul'at Ibn Man".<sup>9</sup>

Though being the first to recognize the Hasmonean origin of the Arbel cave village, Zvi Ilan admits that what surprised him the most was the huge fortified cave, which we have named the "cave of Arbel". Although he was unsure of its dating, he suspected it was "part of the preparations for self-defense at the site at the end of the Second Temple period", and looked forward to further investigation: "We hope that excavation of the second fortress will yield finds that will help determine its precise date".<sup>10</sup> Sadly, Zvi Ilan died shortly after writing these words, and was unable to oversee the work. To add to this loss, no further excavation has been performed since that time on the remains of the "cave of Arbel". Until very recently, it served as a shelter for the local cows.

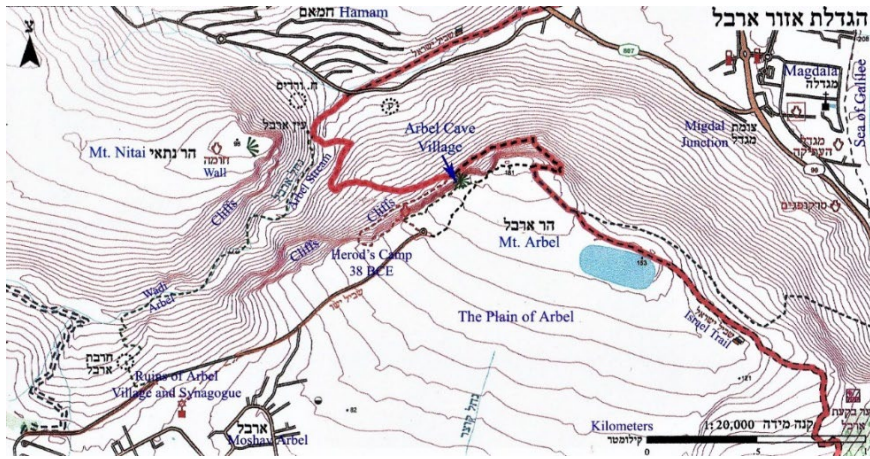


Fig 1.2: Enlarged map of Arbel Area: adapted from the Galilee and Israel Trail Map, no. 2 in the 'Touring and Hiking Map' series of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI), 2018 Edition, reproduced with kind permission from the Society's Israel Trails Commission.

## Historical Context

Apart from archaeological findings that confirm its establishment around 110-100 BCE, little is known about the history of the Arbel cave village, except that it came into existence at about the same time as the

<sup>9</sup> Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 239.

<sup>10</sup> The admission and the quotes are from Ilan, 'Reviving', *Eretz Magazine*, 68.

town of Arbel (c. 120 BCE). The coin and pottery findings from the earliest modified cave-dwellings in the cliffs are so similar to those of the town of Arbel, that it is almost certain that they were hewn and prepared for occupation during the same period as the town was being built.<sup>11</sup> The archaeologist Zvi Ilan summed up the relation between the town of Arbel, which he calls ‘the built settlement’, and the cave-village, called the ‘hewn settlement’, as follows: “The archeological finds indicate that the built and hewn settlements existed simultaneously: the built settlement may have been founded a short time prior to the cave-village, and its inhabitants may have been the hewers of the stone shelters”.<sup>12</sup>

Although there were scattered Jewish settlements in Western Galilee before 120 BCE (e.g., 1Macc 5,14-23), as well as the occasional Hasmonean military expedition to the eastern region (e.g., 1Macc 11,67), it should be stressed that this area of Eastern Galilee was populated by pagan, Greek-speaking people of Syrophoenician origin, who had previously migrated eastwards from the coastal cities of Acre and Tyre. It was not until the conquest of Scythopolis (Beit She’an) in 107 BCE, by the Hasmonean ruler John Hyrcanus, that an ethnic shift can be detected on the ground, due to the migration of Jews into Eastern Galilee from Judaea. The official annexation of Galilee took place under Hyrcanus’ son, Aristobulus (104-103 BCE), and was followed by Golan to the west and Ituraea to the north, under his brother and successor Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE). The end of the second century BCE, and the beginning of the first, saw the borders of Judaea move rapidly northwards to embrace this part of Eastern Galilee.

Nevertheless, the establishment of the town of Arbel (c.120 BCE) and the Arbel cave village (c.110-100 BCE) slightly preceded the formal annexation of the territory in 103 BCE and the mass immigration of Jews from Judaea. At the time of its foundation in about 120 BCE, Eastern Galilee and Mt. Arbel were still pagan territory, with few, if any, Jewish inhabitants. It is therefore unlikely that the author of the First Book of Maccabees is referring to the Galilean town of Arbel when he reports that the Seleucid commander, Bacchides, attacked the Jews of “Mesilot which is in Arbel” in 161-160 BCE (1Macc 9,2; *Ant* 12.420-421).<sup>13</sup> It is also

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<sup>11</sup> For the detailed analysis, see Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 262-64 (esp n. 129).

<sup>12</sup> Ilan, ‘Reviving’, *Eretz Magazine*, 68.

<sup>13</sup> Ilan, ‘Reviving’, *Eretz Magazine*, 64-5, mentions a proposal by Prof. Bezalel Bar Kochva, that Bacchides’ siege was on Mt. Bethel in the northern Judaeian hills. The original Greek text (LXX) states that ‘Mesilot in Arbel’ was “on the road to Gilgal” in the Jordan Valley, but many translations have emended this to “on the road to Galilee”, on the

improbable that Nitai the Arbelite, a sage of the Pharisees mentioned in the Mishnah (m. *Pirke Avot* 1:6-7), was actually born in Arbel half a century before its foundation.<sup>14</sup> What is entirely possible, though rarely discussed, is that Nitai was called the Arbelite, because he was one of the first residents, if not the actual founder, of the town of Arbel, around 120 BCE. We suggest it was no coincidence that, at about that time, the ruler and high priest in Judaea, John Hyrcanus, broke off all contact with the Pharisees and expelled them from the Sanhedrin, the Temple and from Jerusalem, because they had questioned his legitimacy (*Ant* 13.288-296). It is known that Nitai was vice-president of the Sanhedrin at this time (m. *Hagigah* 2:2), and so he and his followers would have headed into exile. Arbel was in an ideal location (c. 120 BCE), being far enough to avoid the ruler's retaliation, but not so far as to lose all contact with Jerusalem.

The annexation of Galilee a few years later, and the establishment of Magdala as an administrative centre (*toparchy*), only 4 kms away, would have spurred these religious exiles to seek an extra layer of defence against Hasmonean persecution, by adapting the nearest and most inaccessible caves for occupation. Motivated by fear, others would have come to join them, so that by the turn of the century (c.100 BCE), this area had become a haven for refugees from Hasmonean persecution. It would be true to say that both the town of Arbel and the surrounding cave-dwelling movement had their origins in the need for protection against Hasmonean retaliation.<sup>15</sup>

What happened next is indicated by Leibner's survey of the cave cluster closest to the town of Arbel, which he calls 'Arbel caves West' (Fig 1.3), where his coin and pottery finds point to a significant reduction in occupation of this site, from 49% to 19%, between the late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods, which is to say, between 100 and 50 BCE.<sup>16</sup>

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assumption that it refers to Arbel in Galilee. In *Ant* 12.420-421, Josephus thought so too, but in the days of Bacchides (c.160 BCE), Arbel of Galilee did not exist and was certainly not yet a city in Judaea.

<sup>14</sup> Ilan waxes lyrical when he affirms this popular view: "The sage Nittai, who taught in the mid-second century BCE, was born there. One of the great legal minds of the period, he presided over the chief religious court in the land of Israel. The fact that little Arbel, in Galilee, far from the centers of learning in Jerusalem, gave rise to a personality of such national prominence, is an indication of its high level of development" ('Reviving', *Eretz Magazine*, 62).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Deines, 'Religious Practices and Religious Movements in Galilee', *Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods*, vol. 1, 2014; 83-84.

<sup>16</sup> Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 241 (site 36): "The most significant activity in this cave complex occurred during the Hellenistic period (48% of the finds) and this large

Historical correlation can explain this as a consequence of the reprieve of the Pharisees issued by Queen Salome Alexandra at the start of her reign in 76 BCE, and their subsequent return to positions of authority in Jerusalem. This decline is not reflected in Leibner's survey of the town of Arbel, whose population did not diminish when the Pharisees returned to Jerusalem, but continued to flourish during the Early Roman (Herodian) period.



Fig 1.3: View of the Arbel caves West, the caves closest to the town of Arbel on the plain above.

The next major historical event, with dramatic repercussions in Arbel and throughout the region, was the rivalry between Queen Salome's heirs, Hyrcanus II and his brother Aristobulus II, which led to the intervention of Rome in 63 BCE and the loss of Judaeian independence. After General Pompey entered Jerusalem, as far as the inner sanctum of the Temple, he removed Aristobulus, reinstated Hyrcanus, and instituted the "Judaeian land settlement" on the Jewish State, which was gradually imposed over the next decade by Gabinius, his successor as Roman governor of Syria.

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quantity of pottery corresponds to the Hasmonean numismatic finds from the site. It should be noted that half of the Hellenistic pottery belongs to the Long Rim SJ types attributed to the end of the Hellenistic period. There is reduced, though significant activity during the early Roman period (19%) and a sharp decline in the Middle and late Roman periods (11% and 3% respectively)."

Under the terms of the ‘Judæan land settlement’, Jerusalem was made to pay tribute, her walls were reduced and Judæa was confined to her pre-Hasmonean boundaries, shrinking to about a third of her former size, despite keeping Galilee and parts of Idumæa and Peraea.

As Seán Freyne observed “Such a settlement of the Jewish question was not likely to be accepted without a struggle and resistance crystallized around the ousted Aristobulus and his sons, Antigonus and Alexander”.<sup>17</sup> Some early signs of resistance can be seen in 53 BCE, at Taricheae, the Greek name for Magdala, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The Roman army invaded the lakeside city and captured the Hasmonean Jewish general, Peitholaus, whom they promptly executed for plotting with the Parthians. At the same time, according to Josephus, 30,000 local people were sold into slavery (*JW* 1.180; *Ant* 14.119-122). A decade later the Romans again had a military presence in the area, for in 43 BCE General Cassius wrote to his friend Cicero in Rome, from the Roman camp at Taricheae (Magdala).<sup>18</sup> Magdala had been a stronghold of Hasmonean support since its foundation by Hasmonean officials around 100 BCE. It quickly became the most populated *polis* in the eastern region of Galilee, and its population remained staunchly loyal to the Hasmonean dynasty for many generations to come.<sup>19</sup>

Taking advantage of internal divisions among the Romans, the Parthians invaded Syria and Asia Minor in 40 BCE. Soon afterwards, a Parthian military detachment accompanied the surviving Hasmonean heir, Antigonus II, to Jerusalem, and with great popular acclaim they installed him on the throne, instead of his uncle Hyrcanus II. On their way to Jerusalem, the Parthians had split into two groups, one took the west coast route under their king’s son, Pacorus, and the other, under General Barzaphranes, travelled inland, passing by Magdala, where they would have received a warm welcome.

With King Antigonus on the throne and receiving widespread popular support, Herod was forced to flee from Jerusalem with his immediate family. Leaving them at Masada, he soon reached Rome, where the Senate appointed him to rule over Judæa as their client king, promising him the necessary military support and additional territory. On returning to his homeland, he raised a mixed army of foreigners and countrymen, and

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<sup>17</sup> Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian*, 1998; 59.

<sup>18</sup> Cicero, *Epistulae ad Familiares* XII,11.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 336: “It seems that zealotry originating from Hasmonean ideology is recognizable among the inhabitants of the region even five or six generations after the Hasmonean conquest, up to the days of the First Jewish Revolt”.



three years of civil war ensued (40–37 BCE). After a failed attempt at taking Jerusalem in 39 BCE, he turned back to subdue his opponents in Eastern Galilee, who had joined the struggle on the side of the Hasmonean succession. So, in the spring of 38 BCE, Mt. Arbel became a lively focus of conflict in the Civil War. However, just at the point where Arbel enters the historical record of Josephus, there has been a serious misunderstanding of what he wrote. In order to correct the confusion, we must return to his text:

“He (*Herod*) pushed on to Sepphoris through a very heavy snowstorm and took possession of the city without a contest, the garrison having fled before the assault. Here, provisions being abundant, he refreshed his troops, sorely tried by the tempest, and then started on a campaign against the cave-dwelling brigands, who were infesting a wide area and inflicting on the inhabitants evils no less than those of war. Having sent in advance three battalions of infantry and a squadron of cavalry to the village of Arbela, he joined them forty days later with the rest of his army. Nothing daunted by his approach, the enemy, who combined the experience of seasoned warriors with the daring of brigands, went armed to meet him, and, coming into action, routed Herod’s left wing with their right. Herod instantly wheeling round his troops from the right wing, where he was in command, came to the relief, and not only checked the flight of his own men, but falling on their pursuers broke their charge, until, overpowered by his frontal attacks, they in turn gave way. Herod pursued them, with slaughter, to the Jordan and destroyed large numbers of them; the rest fled across the river and dispersed. Thus was Galilee purged of its terrors, save for the remnant lurking in the caves, and their extirpation required time” (*JW* 1.304-307).

The current interpretation of this passage misrepresents the role of the advance party sent by Herod 40 days before his arrival,<sup>20</sup> and understands the account as a battle between Herod’s army and the heroically resisting, anti-Herodian residents of Arbel. It is therefore asserted that Arbel was a militant, pro-Hasmonean stronghold.<sup>21</sup> Since the enemy of one’s enemy is

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<sup>20</sup> Ilan, for example, claims that “According to Josephus, Herod’s infantrymen and cavalrymen fought against the zealots in Arbel for forty days to no avail. Herod then arrived with his entire army, subdued all the rebels in sight, and turned his attention to the zealots hiding out in the caves”, ‘Reviving’, *Eretz Magazine*, 62.

<sup>21</sup> For example: in 1989, Shimon Applebaum postulated that the people of Arbel were “either military settlers who had been placed in the fertile Arbel Valley by the Hasmoneans, or perhaps a Hasmonean garrison from a nearby fortress”, cited by Leibner (*Settlement and History*, 254); Ilan and Izdarechet also have the rebels firmly established in the town of Arbel: “... when Herod fought the Galilean Zealots, the Hasmonean loyalists fortified themselves in Arbela” (in ‘Arbel’, *New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 1993; 87); more recently, Shivi’el has the entire population

one's friend, why should Herod want to go to Arbel to fight the cave-dwelling brigands, who were "inflicting on the inhabitants evils no less than those of war" (*JW* 1.304). Would he really want to rescue his enemy from the attacks of these hostile cave-dwellers? Furthermore, there is no archaeological evidence of destruction from this time, as one would expect if Herod had attacked his enemy in the town of Arbel.

A more coherent interpretation of this passage reads Herod's campaign as his response to a request for help from his allies at Arbel, who were being attacked by pro-Hasmonean opponents living in the nearby caves. That the Arbelites were Herod's allies is confirmed by the arrival of an advance party, which required prior coordination with the residents, and by the fact that its likely purpose was to set up camp for Herod and the rest of his army, near their town. It appears they achieved this aim without being attacked, for the enemy waited until Herod arrived 40 days later. Judging from subsequent events, it is fair to assume the enemy forces assembled in Magdala before climbing Mt. Arbel from the southeast, in order to attack Herod and his army at their camp, on the plain, and drive them off the cliff.<sup>22</sup> The plan went well at the start, according to Josephus, until Herod managed to halt the push and counterattack.

So, the residents of Arbel, far from being Herod's enemies, supported him and his army, providing food and supplies during their campaign. As it turned out, the operation to clear the area of brigands dragged on for several months, during which Herod kept a military force stationed at Arbel (*JW* 1.314-316, 326; *Ant* 14.431-433, 450).<sup>23</sup> The true operational

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of Arbel escaping to the caves when Herod arrives: "During the suppression of the Jewish rebellion against Herod (in 37 BCE), the population of Arbela hid in the caves..." (*Cliff Shelters*, 34). All these statements mistakenly assume that the townspeople of Arbel were rebellious enemies of Herod. Similarly, the official narrative provided for visitors, at the Arbel National Park, explains the caves as 'cliff-shelters' for the local residents during Herod's campaign. On the contrary, a closer reading of Josephus' account reveals they were allies of Herod.

<sup>22</sup> The location of Herod's camp is clearly important in reconstructing the battle plan. To this point, Ilan's observations in 1989 are all we have, up to now: "Before closing I would like to add that in the flat area near the cliff of Mount Arbel, we have found the remains of what may be a Roman way-station or military encampment. The remains are comprised of walls enclosing an area which was cleared of rocks. They have not been identified with any certainty at this stage, and they are not crucial to the identification of the Arbel cave village. But if they are indeed what we think they are, they will add another aspect to our knowledge of Arbel and the battle fought there" ('Reviving', *Eretz Magazine*, 69). Further investigation of this site has not yet been conducted.

<sup>23</sup> For a summary of Herod's operations against the brigands, see Richardson and Fisher, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans*, 2018; 341.

base of Herod's enemy is revealed later, when the civil war was drawing to a close (37 BCE). Showing themselves to be inveterate enemies of Herod, and violently pro-Hasmonean, the people in and around Magdala seized some senior Herodian supporters and drowned them in the lake (*JW* 1.326; *Ant* 14.450).

An important conclusion from this close reading of the text is that here, in the midst of the Civil War, the residents of Arbel remained loyal allies of Herod. Precisely because of this, they were met with violence from their pro-Hasmonean neighbours, not only the brigands squatting in some of the nearby caves, but also the residents of nearby population centres such as Magdala.

There is no doubt that the inhabitants of Arbel were Jews, so the path to discovering their identity lies in knowing who, among the Jews, were loyal supporters of Herod and, therefore, tolerant of the Romans. By 40 BCE, the Hasmoneans had made themselves enemies of Rome by allying with the Parthians; the Pharisees had been appalled by the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in 63 BCE, and only slowly and reluctantly came to tolerate Herod and his Roman overlords; the Sadducees were no friends of the Romans because of their attack on the Temple in 63 BCE, as well as their excessive tribute and frequent raids on the Temple treasury. The rural peasants hated the Romans because many had been dispossessed and displaced by the "Judaeian land settlement" of Pompey and Gabinius (63–50 BCE).<sup>24</sup> Apart from his strong alliance with the Romans, most of Herod's support at that time came from the non-Jewish populations of Samaria, Idumaea, Western Galilee and the Greek-speaking coastlands. During the Civil War, Herod had few reliable supporters among the Jewish population, except for the Essenes (*Ant* 15.371-379). In an area of Galilee with strong ties to the ruling Hasmonean dynasty, the unlikelihood of finding a whole community that supported Herod and his army when they were encamped on Mt. Arbel, leads us cautiously to conclude that this community was Essene.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> It appears that many of these internal Jewish refugees from the newly independent pagan territories migrated to Galilee, causing severe overpopulation and social crisis. Those who had no means of survival became the 'brigands' mentioned by Josephus, taking by force what they needed from others. Because their poverty was created by the Romans, they were resolutely anti-Roman, and therefore anti-Herodian, and later went on to form the Zealot Party (a more detailed account is given below, in ch. 4 of this volume).

<sup>25</sup> For their support of Herod, they became known locally as Herodians (*JW* 1.326: 'Herod's like-minded'). This persisted in some circles, including the Gospels of Mark and Matthew (Mk 3,6; 8,15 p<sup>45</sup>; 12,13; Mt 22,16). For further evidence and sound reasoning, see Taylor, *The Essenes, the Scrolls and the Dead Sea*, 109-30 (ch. 4).

Before moving on, a brief attempt to explain the presence of an Essene community at Arbel may be needed to anchor this proposal in reality.<sup>26</sup> The *Damascus Document* (CD) points to the departure of significant numbers of new-covenant members following the death of the Teacher, around 130 BCE (CD 19:33–20:27). At one point, the departing members are called ‘the house of Peleg’ (‘house of division’; CD 20:22), the polemical counterpart of ‘house of Yachad’ (‘house of togetherness’). It is known that the final author of this document was an Essene from the ‘Yachad’ community, which went on to establish itself at Qumran, towards 100 BCE.<sup>27</sup> We suggest that, after their separation, the rival ‘Peleg’ community settled at Arbel at about the same time, around or just before 100 BCE. For the same reason the Pharisees had come to Arbel to avoid Hasmonean persecution, the Essenes of the ‘house of Peleg’ migrated here from ‘the land of Damascus’ and became the majority after the return of the Pharisees to Jerusalem in 76 BCE. For 25–30 years, the Arbelite Essenes were reconciled with the Pharisees and lived as neighbours. They can, therefore, be tentatively identified with those whose ‘companions turned back with the scoffers’ (CD 20:10), if we take the ‘scoffers’ in this passage to refer to the Pharisees.<sup>28</sup>

Returning to the town of Arbel, the faint footprints of an Essene presence can be discerned through the mists of time:

1. Apart from its *Beit Midrash*, Arbel also became known for its flax cultivation and linen production (the only other source for linen at this time was at Beit She’an).<sup>29</sup> This industry was essential for the Essenes, as they were only permitted to wear clothes made of linen.<sup>30</sup> The ropes used in the caves, and in the ships on the lake, would also have been made from the flax plant.

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<sup>26</sup> I have argued this, in detail, in another paper titled ‘The Essenes and Jerusalem’, *Qumran Chronicle*, Vol 30, 2022; 77–118, and included in the present volume.

<sup>27</sup> Knibb, *Qumran Community*, 1987; 17.

<sup>28</sup> As suggested by Knibb, *Qumran Community*, 10. The Pharisees were called ‘scoffers’ because initially (in 152 BCE) they separated (hence their name ‘Pharisees’, which means ‘separatists’) from the ‘Teacher of Righteousness’ to follow the ‘Scoffer’, who has been identified by many scholars as the high priest at the time, Jonathan Maccabee.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 256–7, especially footnote 120: “It should be noted that examinations of pollen from the recently published Bethsaida excavations (Geyer 2001: 233) show that flax was an important element in the region’s crops by the beginning of the first century CE. This is in contrast to the accepted view that flax only became an economically important crop from around the mid-second century (Safrai 1986: 36–38).”

<sup>30</sup> Magness, *Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2002; 193–202.

2. There are many cist tombs in the Arbel cemetery with an unusual north-south orientation. This is also the orientation of the tombs at Qumran<sup>31</sup> and at other cemeteries thought to have been used by Essene communities (e.g., 'En el-Ghuweir,<sup>32</sup> Beit Safafa<sup>33</sup>).

3. The monumental main entrance of the remains of the fourth century synagogue in Arbel is orientated to the East, where it opens on to an ancient courtyard. This unusual feature may indicate the plan of an earlier community building, in which an opening to the East was liturgically important. Josephus notes that the Essenes directed their morning prayers towards the sunrise in the East (*JW* 2.128; 4Q503 1:1).

Needless to say, the presence of Essenes in the town of Arbel gives grounds for suspecting they might have been present elsewhere in the area. In his profile of the Essenes, Josephus reports the existence of two orders of Essenes, who disagree only over the importance of marriage and procreation (*JW* 2.160-161). Those who chose to marry lived in a mixed community with their wives and children and worked to support them. If it is granted, on the evidence presented above, that there was an Essene community in the town of Arbel, it is likely to have been a mixed community of this sort, working together to cultivate the fields and provide for all its members (*Ant* 18.19).

One final point should be recalled before moving on to consider the origins of the Arbel cave village: the occupation of the town of Arbel only briefly preceded the construction of the cave-village around 100 BCE, a coincidence that suggests the two may be linked at their origin.

## Theories of Origin

### 1. *The cliff shelter theory*

The principal investigators have proposed one main theory to explain the origin and existence of the Arbel cave village, although it should be said that it is not specific for this unique location. It is a one-size-fits-all theory that applies to all cliff-face cave-dwellings in Galilee, and elsewhere, and it was first applied to the Arbel cave village by Zvi Ilan, after his investigation of the Mt. Arbel caves in 1989: "Recent research has revealed that several settlements prepared refuges for themselves in

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<sup>31</sup> Zias: 'The Cemeteries of Qumran and Celibacy: Confusion Laid to Rest', *DSD*, vol 7 (2), 2000; 220-53.

<sup>32</sup> Bar-Adon, 'Another Settlement of the Judaean Desert Sect at 'En el-Ghuweir on the Shores of the Dead Sea', *BASOR*, 227, 1977; 1-25.

<sup>33</sup> Zissu, "'Qumran Type' Graves in Jerusalem: Archaeological Evidence of an Essene Community', *DSD*, vol 5 (2), 1998; 158-71.

nearby caves in times of war.... It seems that every settlement in the area around the Sea of Galilee had hewn refugee caves, protected by their very location in cliffs, and by front walls which blocked the openings.<sup>34</sup>

In the last decade, this theory has been further developed by Yinon Shivti'el, who has surveyed the most inaccessible cave-dwellings in the region, and termed them 'cliff shelters',<sup>35</sup> in order to distinguish them from the other types of shelters described to date, namely the isolated, rocky 'refuge caves' and the urban, subterranean 'hideout complexes'. He writes "The phenomenon of preparing cliff shelters and the findings discovered in them... indicate that they were meant for survival and in a collective organization around the need to defend and safeguard the living in a situation of deep distress. This was true during the Hellenistic period and, even more, during the period of the Great Jewish Revolt against Rome".<sup>36</sup> Shivti'el's work has helped to create a wide scholarly consensus that affirms the cave-dwellings at these sites were constructed by the neighbouring villagers as shelters in times of trouble. It is therefore accepted that the Arbel caves were used for this purpose during the Civil War against Herod (40-37 BCE) and during the two Jewish Revolts against Rome (66-70 CE and 132-135 CE).

However, by focusing on the use of these caves in times of distress, the 'cave shelter' explanation proposed by Ilan and Shivti'el overlooks the intense and continuous use of the majority of caves at other times too. This objection is articulated by Uzi Leibner as follows: "The significant Early Roman finds might support the assumption that these caves indeed served as places of refuge for rebels during the First Jewish Revolt, however, this cannot be proven and there is a considerable amount of pottery from other periods as well".<sup>37</sup> Arguing from the results of his Eastern Galilee settlement survey, Leibner admits that although "these cave assemblages are not similar in terms of their function to ordinary civilian settlements," he nevertheless includes them in his estimates of settlement size, precisely because "the archaeological evidence indicates continuous settlement here

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<sup>34</sup> Ilan, 'Reviving', *Eretz Magazine*, 69.

<sup>35</sup> Shivti'el's definition of 'cliff shelters' was adopted by scholars of the Israel Cave Research Center, as follows: "caves occurring naturally near the top of steep cliffs in Galilee, close to settlements and with signs of human adaptation for use as shelters and hiding places. Cliff shelters had links with the fugitive's home settlements" (Shivti'el, *Cliff Shelters*, 47).

<sup>36</sup> Shivti'el, 'Artificial Caves Cut into Cliff Tops in the Galilee and their Historical Significance', *Proc. Int. Cong. Speleology in Artificial Cavities*, Hypogea 2015; 74-75.

<sup>37</sup> Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 240.

through several periods and the finds attest to the caves having served as permanent dwellings during certain periods".<sup>38</sup> Leibner's survey evidence directly contradicts the theory that the caves were used only in times of trouble.

Because of the difficult living conditions in, and the extremely difficult access to many of the caves,<sup>39</sup> Leibner also challenges the assumption "that the settlement caves during this period pertained to a civilian population from the nearby abandoned villages that remained to work their lands. There is no unequivocal proof regarding who inhabited these caves at that time".<sup>40</sup> We may know when and for how long the cave-dwellings were inhabited, but the questions about who prepared them, who inhabited them, and why, are not adequately answered by the prevailing 'cliff-shelter-in-times-of-trouble' theory. Applied to the Arbel cave village, it does not offer any explanation for the majority of the cave-dwellings, which are accessible from the ground level.

## 2. *The priestly occupation theory*

The finding of an unusually large number of cisterns and *mikva'ot* in the Arbel cave village, has prompted some scholars to assert that it was occupied at some stage by priests from the Jerusalem Temple. In an article about the discovery of the fifth *miqveh* in the Arbel cave village in 2012, Yinon Shivti'el attributed the installation of the *mikva'ot* there to a group of priests who fled to Galilee following the first or second Jewish Revolt.<sup>41</sup>

Although Shivti'el's proposal appears to be a simple variant of the cliff shelter theory described above, it actually alludes to an ancient list of the heads of the 24 priestly courses (as in 1Chr 24,1-17) paired with 24 Hasmonean-era settlements in Galilee. The list suggests that members of these priestly families had settled in the named villages, at an unspecified time in the past. Richard Bauckham interprets the list to be historically true, and argues that the priestly families arrived c.103 BCE, at the time of the Hasmonean conquest of Galilee.<sup>42</sup> However, even if it were true that priestly families settled in some Galilee villages, including Arbel, at some point in time, it is inconceivable that they would have occupied the caves

<sup>38</sup> Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 241; cf. 146, 214, 239.

<sup>39</sup> Of the 400 caves on Mts. Arbel and Nitai, which show signs of human habitation in the past, at least 35% are only accessible with the use of ropes and rock-climbing equipment.

<sup>40</sup> Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 146.

<sup>41</sup> *Ha'aretz*, 27.04.2012.

<sup>42</sup> Bauckham, 'Magdala in the List of the Twenty-Four Priestly Settlements', *Magdala of Galilee*, 2018; 287-305.

in this dangerous, difficult and desolate environment. As prominent, privileged and respected members of society their homes would have been a fitting reflection of their high status. They would also have had the financial and logistical means to flee from impending threats, if the need arose.

After investigating the matter comprehensively, Uzi Leibner concludes with a refutation of priestly presence, not only in Arbel, but also in Galilee as a whole. He reaches this conclusion by rejecting the historical veracity of the priestly lists and of the settlement of priestly families in the Galilean villages.<sup>43</sup> He argues that the list appears to have been composed from 135–290 CE, in an attempt to keep alive hopes for national restoration following the catastrophe of the second Jewish Revolt. In the sixth century CE, it was adopted into the synagogue liturgy as a liturgical poem, or *piyyut*, which explains why it has been found as an inscription in various synagogues in the Land of Israel and beyond.

### 3. *The military camp theory*

Another suggestion is that the Arbel cave village was occupied by an army unit and functioned as a military base. In 43 BCE, the Roman general, Cassius, signed off a letter to Cicero from a Roman military camp near Taricheae, the Greek name for Magdala. The location of his camp is still unknown. Could the Arbel cave village, only 2 kms from Magdala, have served as a Roman military camp on this occasion, or on any other?

It is highly unlikely that the Romans used this cave-village as a military camp, for they had their own regulations and discipline governing the establishment of an army camp. It was set up according to a predetermined plan, and did not usually make use of existing structures. Furthermore, the ‘argument from silence’ can be invoked, for we would certainly expect to find a different ceramic and coin profile, if the Romans were in occupation for any length of time. Military artefacts would be found more commonly, not just the occasional arrowhead. And it hardly needs to be said that the Roman army would have had no need to construct or use Jewish ritual baths (*mikva’ot*). We can safely conclude that the Romans would not have built or used this site as a military camp, at any time.

If the Romans had not used the cave-village as a military camp, then perhaps it was occupied by Herod’s army during his Galilee campaign in 38 BCE. Except for the fortified ‘great cave’, the cave-dwellings in the Arbel cave village were entirely exposed to attack from above and below,

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<sup>43</sup> Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 404–19.



and especially from rocks thrown from above. When under attack, the caves can function as a trap. Herod's army proved to itself how vulnerable the caves were, when troops were lowered on platforms from the top of the cliff, in order to attack the rebels occupying the most inaccessible caves below (*JW* 1.310-311). It would have been impossible to defend this site from a determined army, like that of the Hasmonean rebels, or even from the Parthians, who were operating in the area at the time. Furthermore, Herod's army camp was probably situated above the cliffs, on the plain of Arbel, where Zvi Ilan spotted traces of what he thought was a Roman-style military camp, during his 1989 survey.<sup>44</sup>

#### 4. *The brigand occupation, or social crisis, theory*

According to Josephus, some of the caves in the Arbel cliffs were indeed occupied by Jewish 'brigands' during the Civil War. They were "infesting a wide area and inflicting on the inhabitants evils no less than those of war" (*JW* 1.304). In response to this news, Herod led his army to Arbel and launched a campaign against the cave-dwelling brigands. But who were these belligerent and unwelcome newcomers to Mt. Arbel?

Josephus relates how a single family of these so-called brigands—father, mother and their seven children—were killed one after the other by their father, who then killed himself rather than surrender to Herod, in spite of Herod's personal appeals and offers of clemency. Even Herod seems to have been shocked to the core by their extremism (*JW* 1.309-313; *Ant* 14.429-430). Herod had previously encountered the 'brigands' in 47 BCE, when he was governor of Galilee. He was hauled before the Jerusalem authorities, because he had executed a local 'brigand' by the name of Hezekiah, together with his band of men, after they had been conducting raids across the Syrian border. Clearly, then, these Jewish brigands had allies among the ruling elite in Jerusalem.<sup>45</sup>

The 'brigand' profile presented by Josephus shows they preferred death to captivity under Herod, they attacked and robbed their Syrian neighbours in Roman territory, and they were 'inflicting on the inhabitants [of Arbel] evils no less than those of war' (*JW* 1.304). In brief, they were extreme, violent, anti-Herodian, anti-Roman Jews. More significantly, they appear to have been destitute and dispossessed of home and land, and for this reason they had installed themselves and their families in the caves of Mt. Arbel, and in many other caves of the region. Apart from

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<sup>44</sup> See n. 22 above.

<sup>45</sup> Freyne suggests that the leaders were members of noble Hasmonean families (*Galilee*, 63).

identifying them as supporters of the last Hasmonean ruler, Antigonus II (40–37 BCE), and as forerunners of the extremist Zealot party, scholars have puzzled over their origin. As the problem began several years before Herod's reign, Herod's taxation and land patronage systems cannot be held responsible.

The origin of Jewish brigandry, however, can be explained by the findings of Leibner's archaeological survey of this part of Eastern Galilee. Leibner carefully documents a doubling of the estimated population, settlement area and number of settlements in the period between 50–1 BCE.<sup>46</sup> Although more accurate dating is difficult, Leibner stresses that small amounts of late Hellenistic pottery were found in the new settlements he surveyed, indicating that they were established right at the start of, or up to a decade before, the formal onset of the Early Roman period in 50 BCE.<sup>47</sup>

So, the dramatic rise in population around 60–50 BCE is best explained by an influx of Jewish inhabitants from outside the area. The date coincides precisely with the humiliating geopolitical changes imposed after 63 BCE, by Pompey, the Roman governor of Syria, and by his successor, Gabinius, which effectively restored pagan rule and identity to the Greek-speaking cities and lands that had been forcefully conquered and colonized by the Hasmoneans half-a-century before.

All of a sudden, under the terms of this 'Judaean land settlement', the Jewish State lost: 1) the whole coastal zone, with its fertile plains and access to the sea, including all its Greek cities (such as Gaza, Ascalon, Azotus, Apollonia, Strato's Tower, Dora), even those with large Jewish populations, such as Joppa and Jamnia, 2) the western part of Idumaea with Marisa, 3) the city of Samaria and surrounding toparchies, 4) the town of Gaba and the royal estates in the Jezreel valley, 5) the five Greek cities in the northern Transjordanian region, which formed the Decapolis

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<sup>46</sup> Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 307-338.

<sup>47</sup> Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 332. In a personal communication on 04.06.2021, quoted with permission, Uzi Leibner gave further evidence for pre-50 BCE dating: "The reason the rise in the number of new settlements is dated to 50–0 BCE, is because the earliest substantial pottery-types collected in them were Early Roman, which first appears around the mid-1st century. In the past few years there were some developments in the dating of these types, and today we know they first appeared a bit earlier, perhaps around 70 BCE. In any case, the sharp rise in population, and the establishment of many new sites ex-nihilo, point in my opinion to immigrants arriving from outside the region. This, together with the abundant Hasmonean-Jerusalemite coins found in many of these sites and the strong connection to Judea implied by the sources, points in my opinion to a population arriving from Judea."

(Scythopolis, Gerasa, Hippos, Pella, Dium) with another five towns, 6) Pnias, Gaulanitis and Lake Semechonitis (Lake Huleh). Jerusalem was made to pay tribute, her walls were demolished and Judaea was confined to her pre-Hasmonean boundaries, with the addition of Galilee and parts of Idumaea and Peraea, thus shrinking to about a third of her former size.<sup>48</sup>

Scholars differ over the immediate social effects of the Judaeian land settlement, but some do speak of widespread expulsion of landowners and peasants from the areas that were given back to the newly restored Greek cities.<sup>49</sup> Uzi Leibner's archaeological survey in Eastern Galilee offers objective evidence of the influx of displaced Jews at precisely this time, 60–1 BCE, when "numerous settlements were established; unsettled or sparsely settled areas, such as the eastern portion of the region or hilly areas with limited agricultural potential, experienced a wave of settlement; and the size of the settled area doubled. During this period the number of sites reached its height. This settlement map remained stable until about the mid-third century when an abandonment of sites and decline in settlement began".<sup>50</sup>

Leibner's data shows that a peak of settlement was reached from 60–1 BCE, which extended into areas of 'limited agricultural potential' and remained at the same level for the next 250 years. In other words, the data indicate that rural settlement reached a 'saturation level' soon after 60 BCE. If, as we suggest, this was mainly the result of migration from the surrounding areas of Gaulanitis, Ituraea, northern Transjordan and Scythopolis, or from further afield, then it is quite possible that, at the same time, the flow of migrants exceeded the capacity of rural Galilee to absorb them. A social crisis would have developed, with destitute, dispossessed migrant families unable to find shelter, food or income. These are precisely the conditions leading to the kind of brigandage that Josephus describes in Galilee, in the period 47–38 BCE and beyond.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Gabba, 'The Social, Economic and Political History of Palestine 63 BCE–CE 70', *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol 3, 95-98.

<sup>49</sup> This is the position taken by Shimon Applebaum and Richard Horsley among others. It is summarized by Hørning Jensen as follows "According to Applebaum, Pompey's decision to strip Jerusalem of its many conquered city-states was nothing less than a game-changer that must have meant the creation of a very considerable class of landless Jewish peasants", 'The Political History in Galilee from the First Century BCE to the End of the Second Century CE', *Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods*, vol. 1, 2014; 57.

<sup>50</sup> Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 333.

<sup>51</sup> Though disputed by some, these conditions appear to have persisted into the next century, forming a backdrop of poverty, ill-health and overcrowding at the time of Jesus'

Desperate for shelter, the migrants would have seized the chance of making their home in any of the inhabitable caves in the region, using force if necessary.

Whatever pertained during the Civil War from 40–37 BCE will have changed over time, so it is entirely possible that, within a generation, the so-called brigands settled down, and for lack of other options, carved suitable homes for themselves and their families in the vacant areas of Mt. Arbel cliff, close to the cliff-base, where access was easier and less dangerous than the higher reaches of the larger cave collections. It is tempting to think, but hard to prove, that these refugee families were the builders and occupiers of the numerous cave clusters, spaced out at intervals along the cliff-face, between 4-12 in number, separated from each other by rocky projections, and all dated to the Early Roman period (50 BCE–CE 135). The number and arrangement of these small cave clusters gives the impression they were domestic units, which could be extended to accommodate family expansion in future generations. This conjecture has the virtue of explaining the origin of a large number of the separate cave clusters in this area, at the same time indicating the refugees' adoption of a more settled lifestyle and a turning away from 'brigandage'. More we cannot say, except that the brigands of Josephus and their descendants should not be overlooked in the identification of the more permanent cave-dwellers of the Arbel cliffs.

Before moving on to describe our own theory concerning the origin and occupation of the Arbel cave village in particular, it is important to summarize the relevance of the various theories presented above. The priestly occupation (2) and military camp (3) theories can be ruled out without further consideration. The cliff shelter theory (1) may account for the construction and occasional occupation of a small number of the higher and more inaccessible caves, and the brigand occupation/social crisis theory (4) best explains the origins and occupation of the smaller cave clusters quarried at regular intervals along the Arbel cliffs, between the larger cave collections at either end. None of these theories, however, can account for the origins and occupation of the large collection of caves at the northeastern end of the Arbel range, which is named the Arbel cave village.

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healing and teaching mission, cf. Taylor, 'Jesus as News: Crises of Health and Overpopulation in Galilee', *JSNT*, 44, 2021; 8-30.

### **New Proposal: The Essene Commune Theory**

There are certain unusual aspects of the Arbel cave village that prompt us to propose it was built and then occupied by an Essene community. It should be recalled that it was built at the same time as, or only a few years after, the town of Arbel, whose Essene presence has been argued above, from its history in the Civil War and from some faint footprints on the ground.

Owing to their closely regulated, ascetic and unique way of life, Essene dwelling places can be recognized by one or more of the following features: a community organization, numerous *miqva'ot* (often large), communal dining-room with adjoining kitchen/pantry, toilet areas distant from habitations, plain and plentiful ceramics, distinctive burial style, frugal dwellings, scribal artefacts and products, an ascetic environment, and points of similarity with Qumran. Foremost among the Essene features of the village of the cave of Arbel (Fig 1.4) are the following:



Fig 1.4: View of the remains of the cave of Arbel, looking northeast. The nearest third of the 'great cave' is the kitchen area, the middle third is the storeroom, and the final third is the dining/assembly room and raised platform, ending in a large conical chimney recess. Under the raised platform is the doorway to the vestibule and outside the cave, to the right of the footpath, are the remains of the ashlar wall.

#### *1. Communal dining room with adjoining kitchen/pantry*

The great cave, which gave the cave-village its name, enclosed a gigantic space about 60m long, 10m wide and 12m high. In the past, it was

laboriously adapted for a certain purpose and protected by an external wall. According to our interpretation of its surface features (Fig 1.5), the internal space was divided into four sections, which can be identified as follows:

i) the central section (14m long) exhibits at least 12 mini-caves in the rear wall, carved on 3 levels, in rows of 3 or 4, giving the impression it was once a storeroom (B1, B2 in Fig 1.5);

ii) southwest of this storeroom is a large room (16m long) with 2 broad vertical channels carved into the back wall. These appear to have been chimneys funneling smoke upwards and outside. Indeed, the exit hole can still be seen in the southernmost chimney. This section looks as if it is the remains of a large kitchen (C in Fig 1.5);

iii) the third and longest section, to the northeast of the storeroom, is a large hall at ground level (18m long), spatially extended over a raised platform (3m long) at its furthest limit, which ends with a tall chimney recess (A1, A2 in Fig 1.5). The chamber formed by the upper and lower levels (21m long) appears to have been an assembly room, but because of the wide corridor connecting this space to the kitchen, passing in front of the storeroom, we can go further and propose this was also a communal dining room;

iv) an antechamber, or vestibule (7m long), situated under the raised platform, between the external entrance and a narrow internal passage leading into the assembly hall (D in Fig 1.5). This could have been used as a changing room.

What is described here amounts to a dining room, storeroom and kitchen complex, joined under what was once the overhanging canopy of a huge cave. It had a sturdy protective wall running along its open entrance, of which a segment survives that includes at least four massive ashlar blocks with the drafted margins and coarse bosses that are typical of the Hasmonean period (early 1<sup>st</sup> cent. BCE). The four parts of this great cave, which are still visible today, bear all the hallmarks of the communal meal/kitchen complex, in which an Essene community assembled for their sacred meals (*JW* 2.129-133). Because of the Essene law prohibiting lifting or moving cooking vessels on the Sabbath (*JW* 2.147), especially between buildings (*CD* 11:7-9), it was imperative that the kitchen and dining room were under the same roof.<sup>52</sup> A similar arrangement has been

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Atkinson, and Magness, 'Josephus's Essenes and the Qumran Community', *JBL*, 129 (2) 2010; 333-34; Later in the same paper (p. 341), Magness writes: "The presence of

documented at Khirbet Qumran<sup>53</sup> and 15 kms to the south at 'En el-Ghuweir.<sup>54</sup>

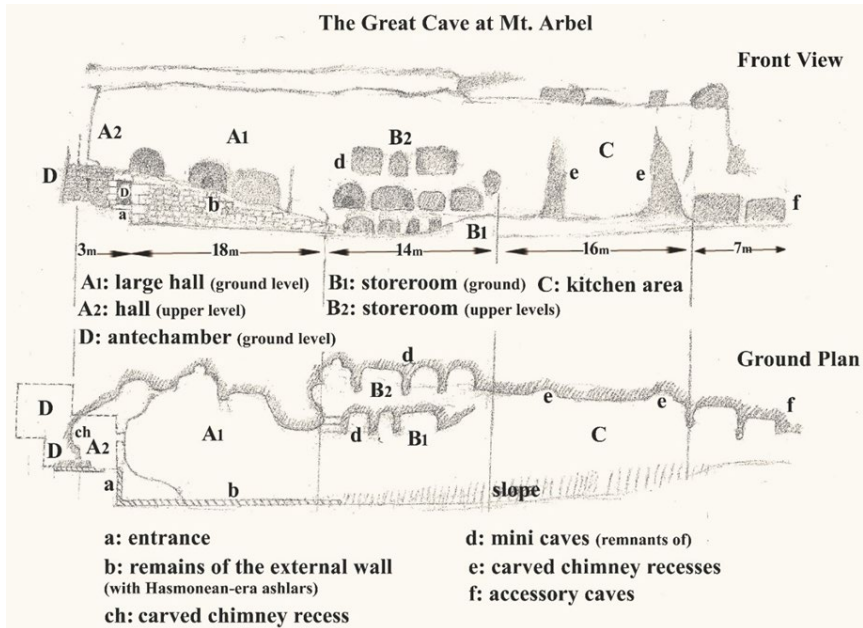


Fig 1.5: Sketch of the great cave, front view and plan, with main features indicated.

The antechamber, or vestibule, is where the members of the community changed from their working clothes into their sacred garments and vice versa (*JW* 2.131; cf. Hippolytus, *Refutation* 9.16) and the raised platform above it, at the northern end of the great hall, seems to have been ideally positioned for liturgical readings and recitations in front of the community, assembled on the lower level. A rough estimate of the floor space indicates the hall could have seated about 100 persons.

## 2. A community organization

In the most ancient section of the Arbel cave village (c.100 BCE), the large number of closely packed cave-dwellings, contrasts with the well

communal dining rooms and assembly halls with adjacent pantries complements information about communal meals provided by Josephus and the Community Rule.”

<sup>53</sup> A communal-meal complex can be recognized at Khirbet Qumran, if we take the ‘pantry’ (L86, 87, 89), adjacent to the large assembly room/refectory (L77), to have served also as a kitchen, before the earthquake, as currently indicated on the placards at the Qumran site itself.

<sup>54</sup> Bar-Adon, ‘Another Settlement of the Judaean Desert Sect’, *BASOR*, 227 (1977) 1-25.

separated and numerically limited clusters of caves elsewhere in the area, and reinforces the impression that the occupants at this site were members of a close-knit community. On the same note, many of the caves are connected by internal tunnels, hewn horizontally and vertically on many different levels, allowing passage from one cave to another. In this short 250-metre section of cliff, the cave entrances are carved in long rows up to 7 levels high, looking much like a modern high-rise apartment block (Fig 1.6).



Fig 1.6: Close up of the original accommodation block at Arbel cave village. The cave with outstanding features can be seen at the bottom right corner.

Calculating one person per cave in this section of cliff-face, we can estimate a population of 100-120 people in the community. This resonates with the number of members needed to serve in the Essene high court, reported to be ‘no less than one hundred’ by Josephus (*JW* 2.145). If we assume the whole community was involved in judging offences, then this particular community was large enough to have been the regional administrative center of the Essene Party. One of the cave-dwellings, in a central position on the lower level, stands out for its large size (5x4x3m), as well as its regularity, ease of access and commanding position. It was skillfully carved with an upper and a lower room, and its dignified external appearance raises the suspicion it may have served as the dwelling of the head of the community, the *mebakker*.



### 3. Numerous *miqva'ot* (often large)

Compared with the other cave-dwelling sites in the Ginnosar area, a large number of water installations have been found in the Arbel cave village, including the 35 cisterns and 5 small *miqva'ot* excavated to date (Fig 1.7).



Fig 1.7: A *miqveh* within the 17<sup>th</sup> century Druze fortress, at Arbel cave village.

These totals do not include the many cisterns and *miqva'ot* that were destroyed in the building of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Druze fortress, when dozens of the original caves were obliterated, or bisected, to create its lofty, vaulted chambers. Fragments of plaster recovered from these chambers are of the same type and antiquity as that used in the surviving water installations. If those that were destroyed could be counted and included, the totals would

increase substantially. Thorough excavation of the site may also uncover more, perhaps larger, *miqva'ot*. As at Qumran, the large number of *miqva'ot* unearthed so far indicates the presence of a religious community with concerns about purity.<sup>55</sup> This finding is entirely consistent with the Essene practice of twice-daily immersion before meals, as described by Josephus (*JW* 2.129-133; *1QS* 3:4-5; 5:13-14).

### 4. An ascetic environment

The harshness of the physical environment, and the difficult and dangerous access to the cave-dwellings (only by rope for many of them),

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<sup>55</sup> Invoking Magen Broshi on the large number of *miqva'ot* found at Qumran, John J. Collins writes “As Broshi has argued, the existence of ten *miqva'ot* in an area no larger than an acre is the strongest archaeological reason for defining Qumran as a religious site. Even allowing for the fact that all ten may not have been in use at the same time (...), the concentration is unparalleled outside Jerusalem” (*Beyond the Qumran Community*, 2010; 205).

made this an unsuitable location for raising children and caring for the infirm. In the communal organization of the Arbel cave village, there appears to have been neither the living-space, nor the privacy, for family life. This means that, in its original organization, women and children would have had no place in this particular cave-village community. It would be reasonable to conclude that this was an all-male community.

##### *5. Points of similarity with Qumran*

The harsh and ascetic lifestyle imposed on the Arbel cave village residents is outwardly similar to that of the Qumranites, and the rocky surroundings are comparable. The similarity of population size and sex, and the approximate dates of foundation of the two communities, around 100 BCE, are also noteworthy. The profusion of water installations and *miqva'ot* is a feature of both sites, indicating a common discipline, and the absence of a synagogue at either site is significant, virtually ruling out all contemporary religious communities except for those that kept the Essene rule. As of yet, the cemetery of the cave-village has not been found, but if and when it is located, the burial style and orientation will help to determine the closeness of the relationship between the Arbel community and that of Qumran.<sup>56</sup> The many similarities to the Qumran scribal community, identified so far, raise the question as to whether the residents of the Arbel cave village were also scribes, writing and interpreting Scripture as at Qumran. This is an important question for further research, but it may be aided by the fact that the largest natural habitat of papyrus outside the borders of Egypt was growing only 30 kms away, in Lake Huleh (Lake Semechonitis).

Subject to verification by further archaeological investigation, these are the main indications that the Arbel cave village was an Essene commune, or 'monastery', similar to Qumran in size and way-of-life. The co-existence of Pharisees and Essenes in this small geographical area, at a time (c. 110-70 BCE) when they were both needing to avoid contact with the ruling Hasmonean authorities, reinforces the suggestion that the

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<sup>56</sup> There are at least four criteria identifying Essene burial practice, according to Zias: "... orientation, tomb architecture, demographic disparity and few if any personal grave goods", 'The Cemeteries of Qumran and Celibacy: Confusion Laid to Rest', *DSD*, vol 7 (2) 2000; 220-53. Because of the steep gradient and rock-scattered surface, there are only three areas of level ground in front of the Cave Village, where burial would be possible. The lowest and largest of these is adjacent to the present-day cemetery of the town of Hamam, at the base of the slope leading up to the cliffs.

original motive for the cave-dwelling phenomenon was not shelter from military attack, but rather refuge from religious persecution.

### Summary and Conclusions

From the historical record, the available archaeological data and our observations in the field, the case has been made for an Essene presence on Mt. Arbel from the beginning of the first century BCE. While further archaeological investigation is desirable to confirm this, the theory is solid enough to provide a satisfying explanation for the origin of the Arbel cave village in 100 BCE, its occupation for at least 200 years thereafter, and its unusual features.

The unusual features can be readily observed to this day and include the communal organization of a dense cluster of around 120 hewn cave-dwellings, the numerous cisterns and *mikva'ot*, the conversion of the adjacent great cave into a fortified, communal dining room/ storeroom/ kitchen complex, and the location of the village in a harsh, ascetic environment, not unlike that of Qumran. Although much work has yet to be done, we suggest that these features, alone, are enough to indicate continuous inhabitation by a large, all-male, community of Essenes.

No other proposal, up to now, has shown the same explanatory power: this was not a temporary settlement for the inhabitants of Arbel in times of trouble, for it was occupied at other times too and, contrary to current assumptions, the people of Arbel supported Herod during the Civil War and did not have to hide from him; it was not a residence for priestly families from Jerusalem, for it was rough, dangerous and beneath their dignity and status; and it was not an army installation, for it was exposed to attack and could not have been defended against a determined military assault. Some of the caves may have been squatted by 'brigands', as a result of the acute land shortage and social crisis caused by the Pompey's "Judean land settlement", but Herod came to evict the belligerent 'brigands' (38 BCE), and the rest seem to have settled down in time, and carved their own family-sized cave-dwellings in vacant sections of the cliff.

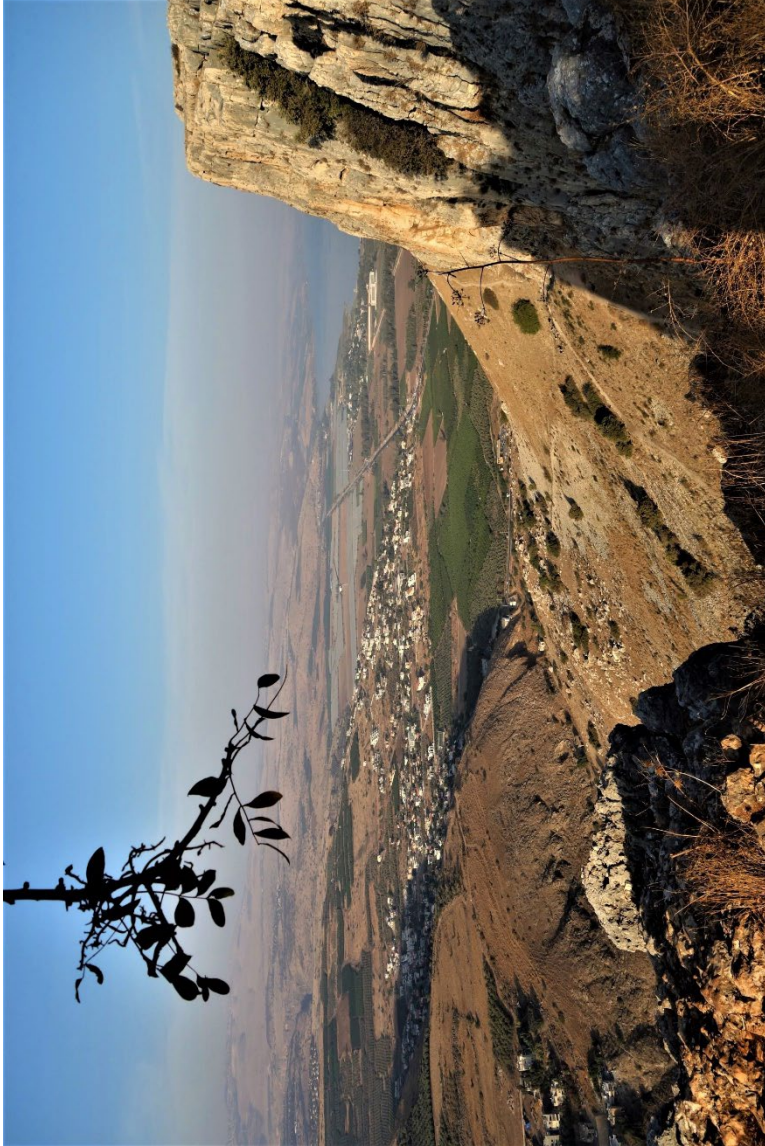
Throughout the first century BCE and beyond, the Essenes appear to have lived in two communities on Mt. Arbel: 1) an unmarried community of 100-120 males living in a large concentration of cave-dwellings, which was located about 2 kms northeast of the town of Arbel and was called 'the village of the cave of Arbel' by Josephus; 2) another community, with married members perhaps, living in the town of Arbel itself and farming

the fertile land on the plateau above the cliffs of Mt. Arbel.<sup>57</sup> It is more than likely that the mixed, farming community supplied the other, all-male, community with their daily physical needs, in return for the participation of their stronger members in the agricultural work and production process. One of the more important products grown by the farming community, apart from food, was flax. This provided linen clothing for both communities, as well as rope for scaling the cliffs to access their caves, and for hauling products up and down the cliff-face (Fig 1.8).

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<sup>57</sup> For Josephus affirms “Otherwise, they are of the highest character, devoting themselves solely to agricultural labour”, *Ant* 18,19.

Fig 1.8: View to the northeast from the Arbel cliffs, looking over the Sea of Galilee and the Plain of Ginnosar. On a clear day, Mt. Hermon can be seen on the horizon behind the lowest part of the branch.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE ESSENES AND JERUSALEM

#### Introduction

According to Josephus, the Essene Party sent offerings to the Temple and individual Essenes were to be found in Jerusalem from time to time.<sup>1</sup> Bethany on the Mt. of Olives may have belonged to them,<sup>2</sup> and Essene-style graves have been found at Beit Safafa to the south of Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> But it is not until Josephus, and only Josephus, mentions the “Gate of the Essenes” as a landmark in the ancient wall around Jerusalem that we become aware that an Essene community existed inside the holy city in Second Temple times.

Built upon this reference to the ‘Gate of the Essenes’ by Josephus (*JW* 5.145), Bargil Pixner, Rainer Riesner, and others have presented, over the last four decades, a considerable body of literary, historical and archaeological evidence for the presence of an Essene community in the southwestern corner of Jerusalem, during the Herodian period.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based on the author’s article of the same title, published in *Qumran Chronicle*, Vol 30, 2022; 77-118. On the Essene votive offerings sent to the Temple, *Ant* 18.19. On the individual Essenes: Judas (*Ant* 13.311-313); Menachem (*Ant* 15.373-378); Simon (*Ant* 17.345-348); and John (*JW* 2.567). Throughout our study, *Ant* is short for *Jewish Antiquities* and *JW* for *Jewish War*. Unless otherwise stated, quotations from *Jewish War* and *Antiquities* are from the Loeb Classical Series, *Josephus: Complete Collection in Nine Volumes*.

<sup>2</sup> Capper, ‘Essene Community Houses and Jesus’ Early Community’, *Jesus and Archaeology*, 496-502.

<sup>3</sup> Zissu, “‘Qumran Type’ Graves in Jerusalem”, *DSD*, 5 (2), 1998; 158-71.

<sup>4</sup> We will refer to this body of evidence as the Pixner/Riesner Mt. Zion–Essene Quarter hypothesis (‘Quarter’ is not to be taken literally, but rather as a ‘part’ of the city, whose size is yet to be determined). The references to this work in English/Italian are as follows (not including those in German or Hebrew): Bargil Pixner, ‘An Essene Quarter on Mount Zion?’, *Studia Hierosolymitana*, 1976; 245-284; Pixner, Chen and Margalit, ‘Mount Zion: The “Gate of the Essenes” Re-excavated’, *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins (ZDPV)*, 105 (1989) 85-95; Pixner, ‘The History of the “Essene Gate” Area’, *ZDPV* 105 (1989) 96-104; Rainer Riesner, ‘Josephus’ “Gate of the Essenes” in Modern Discussion’, *ZDPV* 105 (1989) 105-109; Riesner, ‘Jesus, the Primitive Community and the Essene Quarter of Jerusalem’, *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1992; 198-234; Chen, Margalit and Pixner, ‘Mount Zion: Discovery of Iron Age Fortifications Below the Gate of the Essenes’, *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, 1994; 76-81; Pixner, ‘Jerusalem’s Essene Gateway: Where the Community Lived in Jesus’ Time’, *Biblical Archaeological Review*, 23/3, 1997; 22-31, 64-66; Riesner, *Esseni e Prima Comunità Cristiana a Gerusalemme: Nove Scoperte e Fonti*, 2001; 17-83; Pixner, ‘Mount Zion, Jesus and Archaeology’, *Jesus and Archaeology*, 2006; 309-322; Pixner, *Paths of the Messiah, And Sites of the Early Church from Galilee*

Nevertheless, their hypothesis has raised so many doubts and objections that a large number of scholars and archaeologists have now rejected it altogether.<sup>5</sup> Our aim is to rescue the hypothesis from scholarly rejection, assess its weaknesses and refine it so it can continue to inspire and guide future research.

Granted that, from the times of Josephus in the first century CE, the southwestern hill has been called Mt. Zion,<sup>6</sup> Kathleen Kenyon was among the first to cast doubt on the settlement of this hill before the reign of King Agrippa in 41 CE. Her archaeological investigation of its eastern slope had failed to reveal any remains earlier than this.<sup>7</sup> However, in 1971, Kenyon's 'minimalist' view was overturned by the findings of Magen Broshi on the southwestern hill. Excavating under the property of the Armenian Church, just outside the present-day Zion Gate, Broshi discovered not only artefacts from the pre-exilic occupation of this area, but also the well-preserved ruins of an early Herodian mansion.<sup>8</sup> At about the same time, investigations to determine the course of the city's First Wall confirmed that the entirety of the southwestern hill had been enclosed by a wall built by the Hasmoneans after the Maccabean Revolt (c.140 BCE), and that it was maintained until 70 CE, when the greater part of it was razed to the ground, by the Romans, in the aftermath of the first Jewish Revolt. It was evidently a strategically important part of the city during the Hasmonean and Herodian eras.

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to Jerusalem, 2010; 192-219, 369-79; Riesner, 'The "Gate of the Essenes" in Jerusalem (Josephus, War 5.145)', *Qumran Chronicle*, vol 28-29 (2020-2021), 227-237.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., a report on the recent excavations on Mt. Zion states that "Following the descriptions of Flavius Josephus, Bliss and Dickie identified the gate they found as the "Gate of the Essenes", a view challenged at various times but largely accepted today. Almost a century later, between 1977 and 1988, a monk of the nearby Dormition-Abbey, Bargil Pixner, reinvestigated the area around the gate. Based on the name "Gate of the Essenes", he was inspired by his own theory of a "Quarter of the Essenes" situated nearby this gate. Not supported by any archaeological evidence, this idea is widely rejected by scholars today", 'DEI Excavations on the Southwestern Slope of Mount Zion (2015-2019)', Vieweger, Zimni, et al, *Archäologischer Anzeiger 2020/1*, 271. There is indeed archaeological evidence for Pixner's theory (read on), but there are also many reasons it is scarce. One reason is the failure to survey or excavate the right areas. Until this is done, and until contradictory evidence is found, it is premature to reject his theory.

<sup>6</sup> For the origins of how this displacement came about, see Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish Christian Origins*, 1993; 208.

<sup>7</sup> Kenyon, *Jerusalem: Excavating 3000 Years of History*, 1967, ch. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Broshi, 'Excavations in the House of Caiaphas, Mount Zion', *Jerusalem Revealed: Archaeology in the Holy City 1968-1974*, 1975; 57-60.

In the 1980's, Louis H. Feldman raised an objection, which amounted to an 'argument from silence': with the proliferation of archaeological excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem following the Six-Day War, there were still no inscriptions mentioning Essenes, and if they had been present in any numbers during the siege in 70 CE, Josephus would have written about their role at that time, but he did not.<sup>9</sup>

In fact, the most outstanding evidence of occupation on the southwestern hill, up until then, was the aristocratic dwelling unearthed by Broshi, revealing an opulence that seemed totally incompatible with the presence of an ascetic Essene community nearby. This incongruence gave rise to an objection that was articulated by Joan Taylor as follows: "The suggestion that the area was the Essene quarter, which then became Christian, has been made by Pixner. However, Magen Broshi's archaeological excavations of 1971 brought to light frescos with representations of birds, trees, wreaths, and buildings, as well as mosaics; such decorative work is more consistent with the usual interpretation that this was an upper-class residential area, not a lower-class one. The rather loose attitude to the prohibition on graven images shows that the attitude of the inhabitants was not religiously puritan".<sup>10</sup> The point is well made, but not conclusive, as shown by Pixner's response, which draws attention to his own archaeological findings a short distance away, to the south, where, on the bedrock under the Dormition Abbey, he "discovered some very simple buildings from the same period".<sup>11</sup> There was, in fact, nothing to separate the upper-class and lower-class residents of the southwestern hill, except a distance of about 50 metres and a wall. It does indeed appear that Mt. Zion was shared by rich and poor alike, with the rich residents at the northern and eastern limits and the poor in the other parts. The historical background for this state of affairs is important and will be considered later.

Pixner's response, however, did nothing to resolve the discordance generated by his Mt. Zion–Essene Quarter hypothesis on the one hand and Broshi's archaeological discoveries on the other. The outcome has been a series of studies that are worth summarizing, for their conclusions have all tended to undermine Pixner's hypothesis in one way or another. They are

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<sup>9</sup> Feldman, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship (1937-1980)*, 1984; 964.

<sup>10</sup> Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 208.

<sup>11</sup> Pixner, *Paths of the Messiah*, 369-74.



to be found in recent publications by Brian Schulz, Shimon Gibson and, once again, Joan Taylor.<sup>12</sup>

In a review of the archaeological findings in the Protestant cemetery on the southwestern fringe of Mt. Zion, Schulz is not impressed by the scanty Second Temple remains there. He rejects Pixner's interpretation of these findings as evidence for an Essene presence in the area, though he concedes Pixner's identification of the remnants of the gate that Josephus called the 'Essene Gate' (*JW* 5.145).<sup>13</sup> This reduces Pixner's hypothesis to a discussion on what is signified by the name of this gate: does it suggest the gate was regularly used by an Essene community living inside the city wall, as argued by Pixner, or does it indicate the destination of this route out of the city, an Essene community elsewhere, as others have argued?

Gibson has developed another solution to the apparent conflict between the findings of Broshi and Pixner.<sup>14</sup> Arguing from recent finds under Herod's Upper Palace, situated just south of the Citadel, Gibson identified the Essene Gate as an entrance, now completely sealed, in the part of the western wall that was adjacent to the southern end of King Herod's palace. He suggests that this gate was named 'Essene', because Herod was on good terms with the Essenes, so he allowed them to set up a tent encampment immediately outside the wall at that point. By placing the Essene camp outside the wall, Gibson can explain how that gate got its name, without having to postulate an Essene settlement inside the city. Although his proposal fails to convince, for this "gate was probably a private entrance to Herod's palace",<sup>15</sup> and Herod would never have

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<sup>12</sup> I have decided not to include the study by J.A. Emerton, as it rightly challenges Pixner on his use of spurious sources, especially the Temple Scroll (11QT), the Copper Scroll (3Q15) and the Apostrophe to Zion (11QPs<sup>a</sup>). These are valid criticisms of Pixner's evidence base, but they do not change Emerton's view on the most important matter, which is that Pixner may be right about the Gate of the Essenes and the location of Josephus' *Bethso* ('A Consideration of Two Recent Theories About Bethso in Josephus's Description of Jerusalem and a Passage in the Temple Scroll', *Text and Context: Old Testament and Semitic Studies for F.C. Fensham*, 1988; 94-104, esp. 101).

<sup>13</sup> Schulz, 'The Archaeological Heritage of the Jerusalem Protestant Cemetery on Mount Zion', *PEQ*, 136, 1 (2004), 57-74.

<sup>14</sup> Gibson, 'Suggested Identifications for "Bethso" and the "Gate of the Essenes" in the Light of Magen Broshi's Excavations on Mount Zion', *New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and its Region*, 2007; 25-33.

<sup>15</sup> Broshi and Gibson, in 'Excavations Along the Western and Southern Walls of the Old City of Jerusalem', *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, 1994; 153. The sealed gate in the western wall, which Gibson identifies as the Essene Gate (in his "Suggested Identifications", 29-31), is not visible today, but, leading up to it, the remains of a flight of stairs lined by a low wall on both sides are still visible. The appearance is that of a

allowed anyone to camp there, Gibson remains defiantly opposed to seeing Mt. Zion as a shared neighbourhood: “I also suggest rejecting the hypothesis put forward by Pixner that there was a separate Essene Quarter in the southern part of the Upper City on traditional Mount Zion, in the close proximity to an exclusive aristocratic and priestly neighbourhood situated in the shadow of Herod’s old palace”.<sup>16</sup>

In her latest contribution to the subject, Joan Taylor agrees with Gibson’s localization of the Essene Gate in the western wall, but not with his idea of an Essene encampment outside that gate.<sup>17</sup> Instead, she suggests the Essenes lived in the priestly quarter of the Upper City, and received permission from Herod, on account of his great esteem for them, to pass through his palace complex and the gate in the western wall, in order to visit their toilet facilities outside the wall and return. It will be recalled that Taylor was one of the first to object to Pixner’s identification of an Essene settlement at the southwestern corner of the city, on the grounds that it was an exclusive, upper-class neighbourhood occupied by the wealthy ruling elite.

In summary, the scholarly objections to Pixner’s Mt. Zion–Essene Quarter hypothesis raise serious questions, not only about the level of evidence supporting an Essene presence on Mt. Zion, but also about the characteristics and conduct of the community that established themselves in that place. We suggest that both these aspects of Pixner’s hypothesis should be re-examined in the light of currently available historical, literary and archaeological evidence.

The first part of the essay will address the level of evidence that we possess, by dealing with each item in turn, and the second part will delve into those particular characteristics of the Essene community that enabled them to live in the Temple city during the Herodian era.

### **The Evidence for an Essene Quarter**

The first weakness revealed by the scholarly objections is the relative scarcity of archaeological and literary evidence indicating an Essene

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monumental entrance, through which the king entered and exited his palace. The double layer of security, illustrated by Gibson, reinforces this impression. For sure, neither King Herod nor his successors would have tolerated a tent encampment in this area, and least of all a communal toilet where the Essenes were obliged to relieve themselves. It seems much more plausible that the Essene community shared the southwestern hill with a few wealthy members of the ruling elite.

<sup>16</sup> Gibson, “Suggested Identifications”, 31.

<sup>17</sup> Taylor, *The Essenes, the Scrolls and the Dead Sea*, 86-87.

presence on the southwestern hill in Jerusalem. However, before the ‘argument from silence’ can be invoked there has to be a thorough excavation of the suspected site. This has not yet happened. In the meantime, “absence of evidence is not evidence of absence”, especially since this lack of evidence is consistent with the scarcity of findings pointing to Essene presence elsewhere. Except for the Dead Sea Scrolls and their jars, the Essenes have left a very light footprint in the archaeological record, thus generating controversy over who lived at Qumran and fueling the search for other centres. Bearing these truths in mind, a presentation of the best evidence follows:

#### A. *The Essene Gate*

Archaeological research is not like medical research, which has a well-designed system for evaluating the levels of collected evidence and assess its overall quality.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of Josephus’s description of the First Wall when he traces it to the east and then to the south of the Hippicus Tower (nowadays David’s Citadel):

“Beginning on the north at the tower called Hippicus, it extended to the Xystus, and then joining the council-chamber terminated at the western portico of the temple. Beginning at the same point in the other direction, westward (*facing west*), it descended past the place called Bethso to the gate of the Essenes, then turned southwards (*facing south*) above the fountain of Siloam; thence it again inclined to the east (*facing east*) towards Solomon’s Pool, and after passing a spot they call Ophlas, finally joined the eastern portico of the temple” (*JW* 5.144-45).<sup>19</sup>

Born in Jerusalem in 37 CE, a priest and a historian by profession, Josephus has provided good quality evidence concerning the path of the First Wall in his day. In all the known literature of the time, this is the only mention of a city gate called the Gate of the Essenes. Although the exact location of the place called *Bethso* is not stated, the position of the Essene Gate could hardly be clearer: it is at the point where the west-facing wall turns and faces south (i.e., the line of the wall turns east). This is indeed where F. Bliss and A. Dickie first identified the Essene Gate in 1894 (although they changed their mind subsequently),<sup>20</sup> and where 90 years

<sup>18</sup> E.g., [www.ebmconsult.com/articles/levels-of-evidence-and-recommendations](http://www.ebmconsult.com/articles/levels-of-evidence-and-recommendations) .

<sup>19</sup> Slight adjustments are needed to the translation in the Loeb Series, as indicated in parenthesis, according to the interpretation of Bargil Pixner, ‘An Essene Quarter on Mt Zion?’, 1976; 250.

<sup>20</sup> The first report appears in the *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, London, 1895; (12) 9-25; the revision in *Excavations at Jerusalem 1895-1897*, London 1898, 16-20.

later B. Pixner, S. Margalit and D. Chen re-excavated it and determined the Herodian date and style of its earliest level (1979-1986).<sup>21</sup> A recent archaeological project at the same site (2015-2020), under the direction of D. Vieweger and K. Palmberger of the ‘Deutsches Evangelisches Institut für Altertumswissenschaft des Heiligen Landes’ (DEI), has been able to confirm Pixner’s dating of the lowest of the three gate-thresholds to the early Herodian period (Fig 2.1).<sup>22</sup>



Fig 2.1:  
Frontal view of the remains of the Essene Gate showing its outer aspect. Three gate-thresholds are visible: the uppermost is Byzantine (c. 450 CE), the lowest is the threshold of the original Herodian Essene Gate (37-4 BCE) and the middle level is a repair of the Herodian gate in the Mid-Roman period (c. 150 CE), when Jerusalem became a Roman colony (Aelia Capitolina). Under the original Herodian gate-threshold is a large rock-cut drain.

This is one of the uncommon occasions in archaeology where a historical account concurs with archaeological findings, to confirm a

<sup>21</sup> Pixner et al., ‘Mount Zion: The “Gate of the Essenes” Re-excavated’, *ZDPV*, 105 (1989); 85-95.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Die Grabung im Anglikanisch-Preußischen Friedhof auf dem Zionsberg in Jerusalem’, *ZDPV* 131 (2015), 203-204; ‘Jerusalem, Israel/Palästina. Die Grabung auf dem Zionsberg im Südwestern der Altstadt von Jerusalem (im Bereich des historischen Anglikanisch-Preußischen Friedhofs)’, Vieweger and Palmberger, *iDAI.publications*, e-Forschungsberichte, Deutsches Archäologischer Institut, 2017; issue 1, 88-91, at: <https://www.zionsberg-jerusalem.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/iDAI-2017.pdf> .

discovery and help in its identification. The concurrence of good historical information and careful archaeological investigation represents the highest degree of evidence that can be obtained from this type of research.

The implications of this finding are significant: it is now an established fact that there was, in the late Second Temple period, a gate called by the name 'Essene' in the city's defensive wall, at an identified location in the southwestern corner of the city. The name indicates the function of the gate and informs us that the people who regularly used this gate, to enter and leave the city, were associated with the Essene Party, whom Josephus describes at length elsewhere (*JW* 2.119-161; *Ant* 18.18-22). The burden of proof now falls on those who dispute this fact.<sup>23</sup>

#### B. 'Bethso'

In Josephus' description above, 'Bethso' refers to a piece of land through which the city wall passes before it reaches the Essene Gate. The name 'Bethso' (Βηθσω) is now generally accepted to be the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew construct 'beit tsoah' (בֵּית צֹוּאָה), which literally means 'house of excrement', or 'place of the toilet'.<sup>24</sup> Though not obvious, there is indeed an important halachic connection between the 'place of the toilet' and the Essenes who used the Essene Gate.

Although derived from the rules for combatants in an army camp when 'at war' against their enemies (Dt 23,9-14; 1QM 7:6-7), Josephus informs us that the Essenes applied the same principle to their daily lives: covering themselves with their cloak, so as not to be seen, they used to evacuate their bowels into a small hole, at a secluded place, separate from their dwellings (*JW* 2.148-149). The clear inference is that the place Josephus called *Bethso* refers to the area used by the Essenes as a toilet, and that,

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<sup>23</sup> Gibson disputes the Herodian date of the lowest (i.e. earliest) gate-threshold on the grounds that it was estimated from the ceramics profile of earth-fill that had been brought in from elsewhere ("Suggested Identifications", 21). Instead, he claims it was Byzantine (i.e., post 315 CE), but thereby ignores other important details specified by Pixner: the measurements of the lowest gate threshold conform to those used by Roman, not Byzantine, architects; it shows the workmanship of Herod's builders, including characteristic circular recesses for the door hinges, the drain under the gate is also Herodian and, finally, the Herodian threshold and drain were built into a breach in the Hasmonean wall that was destroyed in 70 CE (*JW* 7.1), long before the Byzantine era. Careful and repeated archaeological examination of the lowest gate threshold has left no doubt about its Hasmonean/Herodian (i.e., early Herodian) dating.

<sup>24</sup> The Jewish scholar, Rabbi J. Schwartz was one of the first to be credited with this gem (*Tevuo't ha-Aretz*, Jerusalem, 1845; 334 in Hebrew). Other scholars later concurred: E. Robinson, F. Spiess and G. Dalman.

according to Josephus' outline, it was to be found somewhere along the path of the First Wall, between the Hippicus Tower and the Essene Gate.

To be more precise, knowing the Essenes sought to remove their toilet activities from public view (lit: "that they may not offend the rays of the sun", *JW* 2.148), we can confidently assert that their toilets were not located at any point along the highly visible and sun-drenched path of the western section of the city wall. However, where the wall inclines to the southeast, and the scarp drops precipitously to the Valley of Hinnom, there is a wide terrace below the wall, stretching for about 200 m. before it reaches the Gate of the Essenes. As toilet activities here would be hidden from view, from all directions, it qualifies as the most suitable site for the toilet zone called *Bethso*.<sup>25</sup> This area corresponds to the gardens of the former Bishop Gobat School, now Jerusalem University College, and scholars have long suspected this was the location of *Bethso* (Fig 2.2).<sup>26</sup>



Fig 2.2: The site of *Bethso*, in the gardens of the Jerusalem University College, formerly Bishop Gobat School. The main building was founded on the remains of a corner tower of the ancient city wall.

Some claim to have seen hewn incisions and canals along the rock-face, below the wall, suggesting that a structure—possibly a roofed

<sup>25</sup> If planted with trees, it could also have been hidden from the rays of the sun.

<sup>26</sup> Among the original proponents were H. Clementz (1900) and G. Dalman (1930).

toilet—once stood in this area, but others are not convinced. One could be forgiven for doubting whether it would be possible to find archaeological evidence of the toilet facility after 2,000 years. Perhaps only a copro-parasitological soil survey of the suspected site could lead to definitive confirmation and more precise localization. Nevertheless, a new piece of information was introduced by Yigael Yadin in 1972, which has tended to dominate the debate, without good reason. The *Temple Scroll*, which describes a plan for the Temple and Jerusalem in the messianic age, commands that “you shall make them a place for a hand outside the city, to which they shall go out, to the north-west of the city—roofed houses with pits within them, into which the excrement will descend, so that it will not be visible at any distance from the city, three thousand cubits” (11QT 46:13-16).<sup>27</sup>

By falsely assuming that the ‘place of the hand’ in this passage of the *Temple Scroll* is the same as the *Bethso* mentioned by Josephus, Yadin has proposed that *Bethso* was located 3000 cubits (1.7 kms) to the northwest of the ancient city. This is an unjustifiable assumption because there is no evidence that the specifications of the *Temple Scroll* were being put into practice at that time. We should instead assume that the prescribed distance of 3000 cubits (1.7 kms) between the city and the toilet was either a symbolical ideal, or a matter for future and messianic interpretation.

The most we can take from the *Temple Scroll*, and even this is highly speculative, is that, within the area Josephus called *Bethso*, there were “roofed houses with pits in them”, where the members could evacuate their bowels without being spied upon. These would probably have been portable wooden structures that were moved regularly from place to place, in order to fertilize the sub-soil and prevent smelly, fly-infested accumulations of excrement. This movable toilet system may explain why Josephus did not refer to *Bethso* as a fixed building, but rather as an ‘area’ through which (διὰ δὲ τοῦ Βηθσω̄ καλουμένου χώρου) the First Wall passed. We suggest it did not have a precise location, because it occupied an area the size of a garden or small field. Viewed in this way, the area of the garden of the Jerusalem University College seems the best suggestion for its location and fits well with the site of the Essene Gate, a mere 150

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<sup>27</sup> Yadin, שער האסיים בירושלים ומגילת המקדש, Qadmoniot 5 (1972) 129-30; English version: ‘The Gate of the Essenes and the Temple Scroll’, *Jerusalem Revealed*, 90-91; for later modifications to the author’s localization of the Essene Gate see *The Temple Scroll: The Hidden Law of the Dead Sea Sect*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985; 178-82; the quote of 11QT 46:13-16 is from 178.

metres to the southeast. No more can be inferred from the *Temple Scroll* on this matter.

Given the proximity of *Bethso* to the Essene Gate, and the good literary and legal evidence (*JW* 2.148-149 and *Dt* 23,9-14) connecting *Bethso* with the Essenes, it is a small step to conclude that the Essenes used the Essene Gate as a veritable ‘gate of necessity’, to access their toilets in the place called *Bethso*. This effectively confirms the Essenes lived inside the city walls and explains why they needed, and frequently used, the Essene Gate (Fig 2.3).



Fig 2.3: View of the Essene Gate from the back (on the right side of the photo). In the upper left corner, the floor of the Hinnom valley can be seen far below, showing how the gate opened on to a precipice bordering that valley. About 150 metres to the right of the gate was *Bethso*, its main destination in Herodian times.

Nevertheless, there are scholars who continue to deny the Essenes lived inside the city, and claim that the Essene Gate is so called because it leads out of the city to a destination where there is a community of Essenes—some in the past have suggested Qumran. City gates nowadays are frequently called by the location to which they lead the traveller, but a glance at the names of the gates in biblical times shows this to have been quite rare.<sup>28</sup> But even if this gate were named after the destination to which

<sup>28</sup> From the Book of Nehemiah (3,1-22; 12,27-43), the gates are: the Valley Gate, the Gate of the Fountain, the Sheep Gate, the Fish Gate, the Old Gate (or First Gate), the Dung



it led, it would surely bear the name of a place, not the name of a national religious movement, like the Essenes. As the Essenes were not to be found at a single destination, this view should be rejected without further consideration.<sup>29</sup>

In summary, the pairing of an Essene Gate and a toilet zone (*Bethso*), in Josephus' description of the First Wall, makes a compelling case for the existence of an Essene community within the city, close to the Essene Gate. For the skeptics, and for a more complete picture of the Essene presence in the holy city, further evidence is of course desirable.

### C. Other Archaeological Evidence

Although a solid case has been made for an Essene presence in Jerusalem, the historical writings and contemporary literature are silent on exactly where they lived. Joan Taylor has proposed the Essenes lived in the priestly sector of the Upper City, which she locates between Herod's Palace and the Temple Mount, in the area now known as the Armenian Quarter.<sup>30</sup> This proposal can neither be confirmed nor excluded on the basis of archaeological evidence from the Armenian Quarter, but it is seriously challenged by Pixner's definitive identification of the Essene Gate at the southwestern corner of the city. Unless we postulate an embarrassingly long distance to the toilet (about 700 metres each way), a better proposal would be closer to Pixner's Essene Gate.

If distance to the toilet zone (*Bethso*), via the Essene Gate, was indeed a consideration in the siting of the Essene settlement, then there would have been no better place than the area inside the gate, on the plateau adjacent to the wall, immediately above the terrace between the Essene Gate and the toilets. This would be the best place to concentrate the search for traces of Essene occupation in the past.

Before describing the relevant archaeological findings in this area, it is worth taking a bird's eye view. The southern part of the southwestern hill,

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Gate, the Water Gate, the Horse Gate, the East Gate, the Gate of Miphkad, the Gate of Ephraim, the Prison Gate (the Gate of the Guard), and from later periods: the Gate of David, Tekoa Gate, Hidden Gate, Gennath Gate, and Essene Gate. Only one of these (Tekoa Gate) is named after a distant destination, the rest reflect some aspect of the gate's function or location.

<sup>29</sup> Josephus reports that the Essenes occupied more than one town (*JW* 2.124), and Philo says they lived "in many cities of Judaea and in many villages, and in great and populous communities" (*Hypothetica*, 11.1). According to both Josephus and Philo, they numbered more than 4,000 in total (*Ant* 18.20; *Quod Omnis Probus liber sit*, 75). The case against the gate's name as a reflection of its destination is well made by Riesner, in "Gate of the Essenes", 230-35.

<sup>30</sup> Taylor, *The Essenes, The Scrolls and the Dead Sea*, 87.

the part known today as Mt. Zion, was in the corner of the city opposite the Temple, as far away as one could be, while remaining in the Herodian city. It was a plateau defended by a steep escarpment, which dropped precipitously to the west and south, into the Valley of Hinnom. Skirting the plateau at the top of the scarp, archaeologists have found the remains of the ancient city walls, the earliest dating back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE (King Hezekiah's wall: 2Chr 32,2-5; Neh 3,8) and the more recent remains of the wall built by the Hasmoneans (Jonathan and Simon Maccabee, 144-141 BCE; 1Macc 10:10-11;12:35-37, *Ant* 13.181-183),<sup>31</sup> which underwent repairs and additions by King Herod (37-4 BCE). The wall was reportedly flattened by the Roman garrison after the first Jewish Revolt in 70 CE, except for a small section by the citadel to the northwest (*JW* 7.2).

Apart from various expeditions to establish the course of the wall, the first modern excavation on the southwestern hill was the one by Magen Broshi in 1971-72, mentioned above. In the Armenian property just outside Zion gate, he divided the plot into two Areas I and II, which he excavated over two seasons. In the plot closest to the Zion Gate, Area I, he uncovered the well-preserved remains of a large Herodian house of two or three stories, with numerous water installations (cisterns, pools and baths), some rock-hewn, others constructed, and all covered with vaulted stone roofs. The discovery of fragments of finely painted frescos in the ruins confirmed that the occupants were wealthy, but since the fresco depicted living things (birds and trees) prohibited by Mosaic Law, it raised questions about their piety. They were certainly not religious leaders, or members of the high priestly family.<sup>32</sup> What we can say is that they were Jews who used the ritual bath (*miqveh*), but were lax about the prohibition of images. Because of their proximity to Herod's Palace, they must have been trusted by King Herod and on good terms with him. The sheathed Roman sword found in the house may have been given to them by Herod's army for self-defence against bandits. The portrait that emerges is of a wealthy family of loosely observant, thoroughly Hellenized, pro-Roman, pro-Herodian Jews, probably of diaspora origin and members of Herod's

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Gibson, 'The 1961-67 Excavations in the Armenian Garden, Jerusalem', *PEQ*, 119 (1987), 91.

<sup>32</sup> This is significant, as a tradition arose in the late Byzantine era (first recorded by a monk called Epiphanius in the 9<sup>th</sup> century) that this was the house of Caiaphas, the site of the trial of Jesus. The older Byzantine tradition situates it on the site of a 5<sup>th</sup> century church dedicated to St. Peter (partly visible on the Madaba map), on the eastern slope of Mt. Zion, as it descends towards the Pool of Siloam. Nowadays, the Basilica of St. Peter in Gallicantu is built upon this site.

inner circle of advisors. The example that immediately comes to mind is the family of Nicolaus of Damascus and his brother Ptolemy, who were both loyal friends and advisors to King Herod, although there may have been many others who match the portrait outlined above.

More important than the occupants, however, is the fact that this Herodian mansion was the only one of its kind to be found on the plateau of the southwestern hill. In his Area II, to the west of Area I, Broshi found the remains of a Herodian wall and cistern, but all the other structures were from the Byzantine, early Arabic, or Crusader periods. Similarly, to the south, under the property of the Dormition Abbey, excavations have revealed only very humble buildings from the Herodian period and, more recently, the remains of a modest Herodian house has come to light on the southern edge of Mt. Zion, in a northerly extension of the Protestant cemetery. The investigators refer to the occupants as “somewhat wealthy”, which seems to indicate they were members of a prosperous middle class, from the upper levels of the Herodian civil or military services perhaps. It can still be said that Broshi’s aristocratic mansion is a unique find on the plateau of the southwestern hill.<sup>33</sup>

Apart from the property of the Dormition Abbey, and the areas selected for the recent DEI excavations (2015-2020),<sup>34</sup> the rest of the plateau on the southwestern hill, extending down to the remains of the city wall, has never been thoroughly excavated. It is covered by cemeteries and gardens, punctuated by numerous cisterns and a few rock-cut *miqva’ot*. More importantly, any structures standing in this area after the first Revolt, in 70 CE, would have been demolished by the Roman army and then refashioned by the Byzantine settlers. Building blocks, cisterns and *miqva’ot* would have been reused by the newcomers, so that only the markings on the bedrock would recall Mt. Zion’s Herodian-era inhabitants. It is to be expected that an archaeological investigation of this quarter would yield scarce findings from the Early Roman period.

So, it should be no surprise that this area has come to be known as the Essene Quarter, not because of precise literary evidence or copious archaeological finds, but because it is exactly where we would expect it to be, close to the Essene Gate and *Bethso*. Furthermore, knowing what we

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<sup>33</sup> The remains of other luxury houses from this period have indeed been unearthed on the eastern slopes of Mt. Zion and to the northeast (the so-called ‘Herodian Quarter’). The modest Herodian house on the southern slope was unearthed in 2019 and is reported in detail in ‘DEI Excavations on the Southwestern Slope of Mount Zion (2015-2019)’, Vitegner, Zimni, et al, *Archäologischer Anzeiger 2020/1*, 285-87.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 269-92.

know of the Essene community's need for separateness and purity (e.g., *JW* 2.150, 1QS 5:18), it had to be a separate compound, or Quarter, in a sparsely populated area, on the fringes of the city. There are very few other places that would have matched these requirements.<sup>35</sup> It is a working hypothesis reached not only by natural 'necessity' or, to be precise, the need to be near the community toilet, but also by exclusion (Fig 2.4).

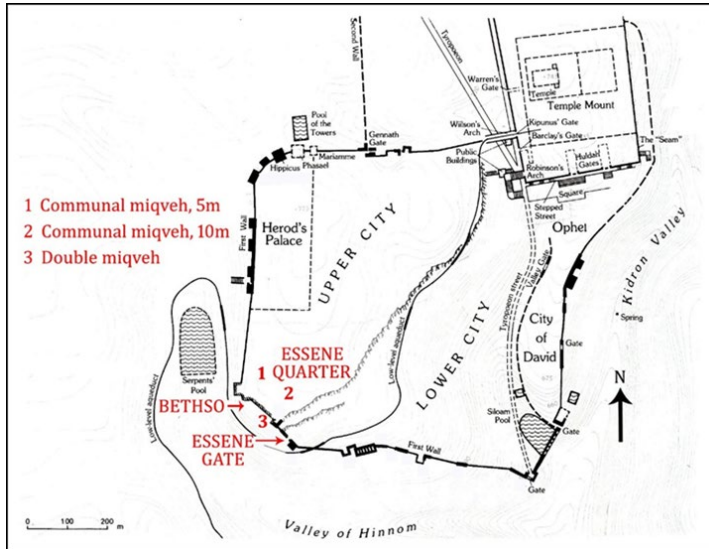


Fig 2.4: Map of the southern Jerusalem, in 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, showing the main archaeological features of the Essene Quarter discovered to date (adapted from Hillel Geva, 'Map of Jerusalem at the end of the Second Temple Period', in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, eds. E. Stern, et al, Israel Exploration Society, 1993; 718, and reproduced with kind permission).

Added to these practical inferences about the site of the Essene Quarter, there are some small-scale archaeological finds that support it, and impart a solid grounding.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Riesner, "To keep themselves separate, they would have preferred to settle in the corners of the walled periphery, where there were no gates bustling with activity. The extent to which the southwestern corner of today's Mount Zion was suitable for Essene residence has already been underlined by L.H. Vincent: «The furthest part of the Upper City and the highest, southernmost reaches of the hill overlooking the valley of *Rabâby* (Hinnom) seem very appropriate as a habitat for the sect» *Esseni e Prima Comunità Cristiana a Gerusalemme*, 50; quoting P. Vincent's *Jérusalem de l'Ancien Testament*, I, Paris, 1954, 65 (my trans. from Italian to English).

<sup>36</sup> Pixner applies his analysis of the Copper Scroll (3Q15) to visualize the topography of the Essene Quarter, in accordance with his study 'Unravelling the Copper Scroll Code:

i) *Small drainage channels*: while surveying the surroundings of the Essene Gate after re-excavating it, Pixner explored a tunnel heading northeast, which had been left intact from the Bliss and Dickie expedition in 1894. He noticed several smaller channels coming from the north, the area of the postulated Essene Quarter, and draining into the larger drain running under the paved road leading to the Essene Gate, before passing out of the city: “This was an indication that a rather important living quarter must have been lying in that direction”,<sup>37</sup> Pixner observed.

ii) *The two communal miqva’ot inside the wall*: in Second Temple times, *miqva’ot* were common in private Jewish homes in Jerusalem. Those near the Temple, intended for the purification of pilgrims, were substantially larger than those in private homes. Here, however, on the southwestern hill, at least 1 km from the Temple, as far away from the Temple as possible while remaining inside the city, two large rock-hewn *miqva’ot* for communal use were found, about 50 metres apart, in the ‘Greek Garden’. Like the *miqva’ot* at Qumran, both have extra-large basins at the bottom of the steps.<sup>38</sup> The first (northwest corner, now covered up) appears to have been surrounded by a wall with door, and had an additional water reservoir, 7 rock-hewn steps and measured 4.7m long x 2.5m wide x 2.5m deep from the lowest point (Fig 2.5).<sup>39</sup>

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A Study on the Topography of 3Q 15’, RQ 11, 3 (43), 1983; 232-65. Since “one cannot prove a hypothesis with another hypothesis” (thanks to John J. Collins), I have not included any of Pixner’s insights on the Copper Scroll in this presentation of the evidence.

<sup>37</sup> Pixner, Chen and Margalit, ‘Mount Zion: The “Gate of the Essenes” Re-excavated’, ZDPV, 1989; 89.

<sup>38</sup> Jodi Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2002; 153, who continues “These features reflect the fact that the *miqva’ot* at Qumran served the needs of a community instead of individual households. They were designed to accommodate dozens of members, many of whom would have had to immerse themselves at the same time of day (for example, before the communal meals) or on the same occasions (for example, on certain holidays and festivals)”. This simple observation of Magness responds to the superficial denials of those like J.A. Emerton, when he writes: “there is nothing about the baths in the relevant part of Jerusalem to indicate that they were Essene” (‘Two Recent Theories’, 97) and Shimon Gibson “the presence of a large number of *miqva’ot* (ritual bathing pools) on Mt Zion is a sure indicator of Jewish houses, but does not in any way prove the existence of Essenes on Mount Zion...” (‘Suggested Identifications’, 32, n. 18).

<sup>39</sup> For a description and photographs of this *miqveh*, see Pixner, ‘An Essene Quarter on Mount Zion?’, 1976; 271-74. He suggests that, because it appeared to have been enclosed by a wall, this *miqveh* was for the “purity of the holy”, which is to say, for the full members and not for the novices (1QS 5:13; JW 2.138). In ‘Jerusalem’s Essene Gateway’, published in 1997, Pixner informs us that this *miqveh* had recently been covered up. The suspected location, in the northwestern corner of the Greek Garden, is shown in Fig 2.5.



Fig 2.5: The suspected site of a communal *miqveh*, about 5m in length, in the northwestern corner of the Greek Garden. It was excavated in the early 1900's and covered up by 1997, according to Pixner (inset photo of the *miqveh* from Pixner's 'An Essene Quarter on Mt. Zion?', 1976; 273, reproduced with kind permission).

The other (southeast corner) is a much larger rectangular opening in the bedrock, whose estimated original size was 10.5m x 4m x 4m. Eleven out of the original rock-cut steps can still be discerned in the centre and to the sides of the steps that were hewn in the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> century, to convert this communal *miqveh* into an underground oratory and hermitage. Adjoining this *miqveh* were at least 3 large rock-cut cisterns, which were united into a single space during the Byzantine alterations. Owing to vandalism, the entrance to this underground cavern is now protected by a wire cage with a concrete roof (Fig 2.6).<sup>40</sup> The several smaller *miqva'ot* and cisterns in the area are not described here as their relationship to the Essene Quarter is still uncertain.

<sup>40</sup> This converted *miqveh* was first described by Abel, *RB*, vol 18, 1, (Jan 1911) 121-24; Pixner mentions it, with a photograph of the original steps, in his 'Jerusalem's Essene Gateway' (1997). It is still possible to visit and inspect this structure at the eastern end of the Greek Garden on Mt. Zion. For a more general account on the findings of *miqva'ot* at this site: Riesner, *Esseni e Prima Comunità Cristiana a Gerusalemme*, 59-65.



Fig 2.6:  
The remains of the large communal *miqveh*, 10.5m in length, at the southeast corner of the Greek Garden. Although it was converted into an oratory in the 4-5<sup>th</sup> century CE, the original steps of the *miqveh* are still visible, and are numbered in this photo.

iii) *The double miqveh outside the wall*: midway between the postulated site of *Bethso* and the Essene Gate, two adjacent *miqva'ot* with vaulted stone roofs typical of the Herodian period (each 5 x 4 x 4m high) can be found carved into the scarp, on a rocky ledge, 3m above the terrace of the Protestant cemetery (Fig 2.7). This location is unusual, to say the least, for in the Herodian period it was outside and under the base of the city wall. These two *miqva'ot* did not, therefore, belong to a private house, and neither were they readily accessible for public use. Their proximity to the toilet zone, *Bethso*, and to the Essene Gate, raises the suspicion that they were used by the people visiting the toilets nearby, whom we have

identified as Essenes. The suspicion is reinforced by Josephus, when he reports that the Essenes had to perform ablutions after using the toilet (*JW* 2.149), for which purpose these *miqva'ot* were perfectly placed. Their location 'outside the wall' suggests that they were also used by Essene members who were in a state of impurity during the day following a nocturnal emission (Dt 23,11-15). Only the Essene rule prescribed waiting until sunset, when, having worked all day in the orchards and fields on the terrace, these members could have immersed in these *miqva'ot* before returning home. So, the odd location of these *miqva'ot* is well explained by their role in the purifications that had to be performed outside the city, according to the Essene rule.



Fig 2.7: The recently restored double *miqveh*, with sealed postern to the left, on a ledge, at the base of the modern wall, 3m above the level of the Protestant cemetery.

In addition to this important role on behalf of the Essene community, the double *miqveh* was also physically connected in at least two ways to the residential area above, which was inside and next to the city wall: firstly, through an ancient 'postern' door, now sealed, which is adjacent to, and contemporaneous with, the two *miqva'ot*;<sup>41</sup> this would have enabled residents to use these *miqva'ot* at night, and whenever the Essene

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Thierry and Vieweger, 'Die Doppelmiquen-Anlage im anglikanisch-preußischen Zionsfriedhof von Jerusalem', *ZDPV*, vol 1, 135 (2019); 32-44, Figs. 1-6; see esp. 41-42 for the dating of the 'third entrance' (postern) and the *miqva'ot*.



Gate was closed; and secondly, they were connected via the water supply of the *miqva'ot*, which was channeled from a cistern inside the city-wall, about 50m to the northwest.<sup>42</sup> This long detour from a protected cistern inside the city may indeed be related to another Essene rule, which prohibits contact between the pure water for purifications and any non-members of the Essene community (1QS 5:13, cf. *JW* 2.138,150). The importance of this double *miqveh* for the observance of Essene purity regulations, and its two physical connections to the residential area above, on the inside of the city wall, support the view that the residential area was occupied by the Essene Community. This is the very same area that Pixner has identified as the Essene Quarter.

In summary, the location of the Essene Gate has been identified with a high degree of certainty and, in view of the fact that going to the toilet outside the city was obligatory for the Essenes, the mention of a toilet zone nearby, called *Bethso* by Josephus, points to the presence of an Essene community within the city—an Essene Quarter. The area next to the wall in the southwestern corner is the most practical suggestion for this Essene Quarter, and the finding of two large communal *miqva'ot* inside this area, far from the Temple Mount, gives added support. A double *miqveh* outside the wall, but linked to this area by a postern and supplied by a cistern within the same area, lends further weight to the existence of an Essene Quarter in this location. Herodian mansions like the one excavated by Broshi in 1971 have not been found elsewhere on the southwestern hill and, except for the remains of the modest Herodian house excavated in the Protestant cemetery,<sup>43</sup> excavations in neighbouring areas have revealed only humble, field-stone buildings from the same period. Considered all together, and interpreted in the light of Essene regulations, this interconnected pattern of findings (i.e., the Essene Gate leading to *Bethso* toilet zone, close to a double *miqveh* with postern entry to a residential area, in which there are two communal *miqva'ot*) provides substantial credibility to Pixner's hypothesis of an Essene Quarter of undetermined size, next to the city wall, in the southwestern corner of Mt. Zion. Contrary to the denials of some scholars, there is good 'cumulative' evidence in favour of this theory and, when considered in its entirety, there is, as yet, no coherent argument or evidence against it.

After presenting the case for an Essene presence on Mt. Zion, in response to the scholarly objections to Pixner's Mt. Zion–Essene Quarter

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<sup>42</sup> Pixner reports and explains this in '*Paths of the Messiah*', 211-12.

<sup>43</sup> See n. 33.

hypothesis, we must now consider the religious characteristics and conduct of the Essene community that established itself in that place, enabling it to live and thrive in Jerusalem during the Herodian period. It is possible that a false understanding of the Jerusalem Essenes has contributed to the difficulty in accepting their residence in the city.

### **The Religious Character of the Essene Quarter**

There is a presumption among scholars that if an Essene community were established in Jerusalem, it would have been a branch, or colony, of Essenes from Qumran. The proponents of the Mt. Zion–Essene Quarter hypothesis also assumed that the Essene residents were originally from Qumran. The assumption was based on the premise that the Essene community moved to Jerusalem after abandoning Qumran, when an earthquake destroyed many of their buildings in 31 BCE. The main investigator, Fr. Roland de Vaux, had originally suggested that the site was abandoned for many years after the earthquake. However, Jodi Magness has since shown that the damage was quickly repaired and the site was reoccupied until the end of the first century BCE (Period Ib). Her revised dating meant that the original proposal no longer had to be considered.<sup>44</sup>

However, sometime between 8 and 1 BCE, a more radical destruction of the site occurred, with fire and loss of life, causing the occupants to abandon Qumran for more than one winter season. The death of King Herod in 4 BCE precipitated a period of messianic ferment and expectation, when a number of claimants to the throne arose in different parts of the country, making themselves famous through their violent deeds. The most likely agent of Qumran's destruction was an ex-slave of King Herod called Simon, who was proclaimed king by his followers near Jericho and proceeded to raise an army, which then set fire to many estates, including Herod's Winter Palace. He was finally captured and beheaded by a Roman force, but not until he had caused considerable destruction in the region (*JW* 2.57-59; *Ant* 17.273-276). The severity of the destruction at Qumran, combined with the political instability following the death of King Herod, may have delayed its rebuilding, while the loss of life inevitably weakened the community and impaired its recovery. There are signs that the rebuilding of Qumran began during the reign of Herod Archelaus (4 BCE–6 CE), but it may have taken several years to complete

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<sup>44</sup> Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran*, 47-72.

(period II). In fact, the Qumran community may never have regained its former spiritual and literary heights.<sup>45</sup>

The catastrophic destruction of the Essene settlement at Qumran, at the end of the first century BCE, again raises the question about whether the inhabitants took refuge in Jerusalem, until they could return to Qumran. If the Essenes of Jerusalem were not from Qumran, it is natural to ask who they were and from where did they come. These questions can best be answered by examining the religious life and character of the Essenes of Qumran, as far we can ascertain from their *Community Rule* (1QS).

According to the *Community Rule*, two vital obligations were undertaken by each new member of the covenant community: the first was a binding oath “to return to the law of Moses with all his heart and soul”, and the second obligation was to keep away from ‘the men of injustice’ (1QS 5:7-13), who were identified as non-members of the group’s covenant.<sup>46</sup> Underlying the command of separation was the need to avoid contamination and corruption through contact with outsiders, who were regarded as unclean. This regulation did not prohibit all transactions with non-members of the covenant, but it restricted them to goods involving the exchange of money (1QS 5:16-20; CD 13:14-15).

Up to this point, there is no ruling that opposes, or precludes, the establishment of a Qumranic community in Jerusalem, provided it was walled off to prevent contact with non-members. However, when the same instruction is repeated with a call to “go into the wilderness” (1QS 8:12-14), most scholars understand a specific reference to the foundation of the Qumran community, especially because the text was found in the wilderness, near the ruins of the settlement of Qumran. Michael Knibb speaks for many when he writes: “it is difficult to dissociate this passage from the occupation of the site at Qumran which began in the latter part

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<sup>45</sup> The evidence put forward by Doudna in ‘Dating the Scroll Deposits of the Qumran Caves: A Question of Evidence’ (*The Caves of Qumran: Proc. Int. Conf., Lugano, 2014*, 2017; 234-46) overwhelmingly supports the view that the Period II occupation of Qumran (1 BCE–68 CE) was very much diminished compared to that of Period 1b (100–4 BCE). There were no new writings in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, and literary activity was limited to copying existing texts. There was a change in the occupants towards the end of Period II. Together with the silence of Josephus and Philo on the community of Qumran, the evidence presented by Doudna points to the first century CE as a period of decline in numbers, and in influence, ending in a take-over by the Zealots. Meanwhile, other Essene communities seem to have been flourishing, in Jerusalem and around the country, attracting those new recruits who might once have joined the community at Qumran.

<sup>46</sup> Knibb, *Qumran Community*, 1987; 109-110. Unless otherwise stated, quotes from the DSS are from this translation and commentary.

of the second century BC; as we have seen, the contents of the Rule are most naturally interpreted as being intended specifically for the group which lived a quasi-monastic existence at the site”.<sup>47</sup>

Knibb then expands on the context as follows: “The demand for complete withdrawal that is made here no doubt reflects a profound dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in Jerusalem, with its corrupt priests and defiled temple, and a conviction that it was impossible in that environment to serve God in any way that they believed to be right, or to preserve the holiness of the community from contamination”.<sup>48</sup>

If there is still any doubt that the members of the Qumran community had indeed broken away from Jerusalem, and from the Temple, it is worth returning to the *Community Rule*, and to the description of the community as the effective replacement of the Temple cult in the present age: “When these exist in Israel in accordance with all these rules as a foundation of the spirit of holiness in eternal truth, to make expiation for the guilt of transgression and the unfaithfulness of sin, and that the land may be accepted without the flesh of burnt-offerings and without the fat of sacrifice – and the proper offering of the lips is like a soothing (odour) of righteousness, and perfection of way like an acceptable freewill offering— at that time the men of the community shall separate themselves as a holy house for Aaron, that they may be united as a holy of holies, and as a house of community for Israel, for those who walk in perfection” (1QS 9:3-6; cf. 8:5-10).

This clear statement of independence from the Temple institution was complemented by a transfer of allegiance from the Temple authorities to the leaders of the covenant community: “Only the sons of Aaron shall rule in matters of justice and wealth, and on their word the decision shall be taken with regard to every rule of the men of the community... They shall not depart from any counsel of the law to walk in all the stubbornness of their heart, but they shall be governed by the first rules in which the men of the community began to be instructed until the coming of the prophet and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel” (1QS 9:7-11).

From the perspective of the *Community Rule*, the Qumran community had established itself in the desert without any intention to move until the dawning of the messianic age. They had no need for the Temple institution

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<sup>47</sup> Knibb, *Qumran Community*, 134. John J. Collins concurs that it “is hard to dismiss as mere coincidence. Accordingly, the suspicion persists that the retreat of this pioneering group to the wilderness marked the beginning of “the Qumran community” (*Beyond the Qumran Community*, 2010, 72).

<sup>48</sup> Knibb, *Qumran Community*, 134.

and no desire to return to Jerusalem before the arrival of the prophet and messiahs of Aaron and Israel.<sup>49</sup> Enshrined in their rule book, it is highly unlikely that anything would have induced them to alter their conduct, least of all a change in sovereign, royal patronage or even the gift of a piece of land in Jerusalem. Everything quoted above from the *Community Rule*, could have been written to recall the original vision of the Qumran community and strengthen its determination to remain “in the wilderness”, despite the arrival of a new sovereign in 37 BCE and the return of royal favour.<sup>50</sup> It is more likely they took refuge in the nearby villages of Ein Feshkha or Ein el-Ghuweir, than they moved to Jerusalem.

The corollary hardly needs to be stated: the Essenes who settled in Jerusalem were not from Qumran. As to who they were and where they came from, we would expect to see some trace of them in the Qumran corpus, and we do. They have left their mark in the *Damascus Document* (CD) which is similar to the *Community Rule* (1QS) in that it contains laws for the community, but differs because it includes an exhortation. The exhortation is addressed to the members of the wider Essene movement, who lived amongst their fellow Jews in the towns and villages of the Jewish homeland.<sup>51</sup> Knibb takes the view that, although composed originally for the members of the wider movement, the existing version of the exhortation has been “written from a Qumran perspective—and it is not clear that it is possible to get behind this”.<sup>52</sup> Taking this editorial stance into account, the final section of the exhortation reveals that a division has taken place within the new-covenant group.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Lawrence Schiffman sums up their stance on Jerusalem as follows: “The city of Jerusalem was for the Dead Sea sect three things. It was a polluted society and sanctuary from which they close to withdraw because of the transgressions of its leaders. It was the object of specific legal requirements regarding the temple and its service, making it the place where the divine presence was supposed to dwell. Finally, it was the place to which the sectarians themselves would return in the end of days. There a perfect temple would be built by God, and a perfect city would stretch beyond that of the present day” (*Qumran and Jerusalem*, 2010, 316-17).

<sup>50</sup> They may have taken advantage of this in other ways, by entering into lucrative contracts to supply the royal estates in Jericho with ceramics, balsam or date products, for example.

<sup>51</sup> See n. 29.

<sup>52</sup> Knibb, *Qumran Community*, 17.

<sup>53</sup> The term ‘Essene’, for the purposes of this study, is shorthand for ‘member of the new covenant group’, which to say, our definition of an Essene is someone who has taken the oath of membership of the ‘new covenant’, at any time and in any place (CD). In later texts, such as 1QS, the term ‘new covenant’ is generalized to ‘covenant’. Entry into the Yachad community is synonymous with entry into ‘the covenant’. Non-members of the

Michael Knibb describes this section as follows: “Warnings and promises continue in the final part of the exhortation (XIX.33b–XX.34), but they are of a different character from those in the preceding sections.... The situation presupposed was one in which a significant group of members... had already broken away from the movement (...). Other members were rebellious in their attitude, although they had not actually defected. The movement was clearly demoralized and in danger of collapse, and this material was written to boost the morale of the members who remained faithful. It belongs... to a secondary stage in the formation of the Damascus Document”.<sup>54</sup>

Without mentioning all the accusations against these rebellious new covenant members, and there are many (CD 19:33–20:27), three distinct passages openly speak about members of the ‘new covenant’ who have already left the new-covenant fold:

- i) “Likewise none of men who entered into the new covenant in the land of Damascus and turned back and acted treacherously and turned aside from the well of living waters shall be counted in the assembly of the people or entered in the roll from the day of gathering in of the teacher of the community until the appearance of the messiah from Aaron and from Israel” (CD 19:33–20:1).
- ii) “They shall be judged in the same way as their companions who turned back with the scoffers. For they spoke error against the statutes of righteousness, and rejected the covenant and the agreement which they established in the land of Damascus, that is the new covenant. Neither they nor their families shall have any share in the house of the law” (CD 20:10–13).<sup>55</sup>
- iii) [... and those] “of the house of Peleg who went out from the holy city, and relied on God at the time when Israel was unfaithful and made the sanctuary unclean, but returned again to [the way] of the people in a fe[w] respects, [al]l of them—each according to his spirit—shall be judged in the council of holiness. But when the glory of God appears to Israel, all those who have broken through the boundary of the law among those who have entered

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community are outside ‘the covenant’ (cf. Schiffman, *Qumran and Jerusalem*, 249–53). The wicked/violent/ruthless of ‘the covenant’ are those who have rebelled or apostatized from the covenant and have become opponents of the Yachad community. In what follows, we argue that they can be identified as members of a rival branch of Essenes.

<sup>54</sup> Knibb, *Qumran Community*, 71.

<sup>55</sup> Of interest, here, is the reference to ‘their companions who turned back with the scoffers’. The scoffers were the followers of ‘the scoffer’, and likely refers to the Pharisees (Knibb, *Qumran Community*, 10). It indicates some Essenes had recently reconnected with some Pharisees. Of note, also, is the mention of families: those being criticized here were married and had families.

the covenant shall be cut off from the mi[dst] of the camp, and with them all those of Judah who have acted wickedly in the days of its trials” (CD 20:22-27).<sup>56</sup>

Each of these passages speaks about the judgment awaiting those who have already ‘stepped out of line’ from the norms of the new covenant, according to the author from the community of Qumran. They all witness to a cumulative ‘turning back’—an apostasy—from the author’s group following the death of the Teacher of Righteousness (c.130-100 BCE), for diverse reasons, and probably at different times. The author may be concealing their departure to form a rival community, which is why the final group is of particular interest. Against ‘those of the house of Peleg’, there is no serious accusation, as with the other breakaways, but just some unspecified disciplinary infraction (“returned again to [the wa]y of the people in a fe[w] respects”) which needs to be judged in the council of holiness.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the name given to them is profoundly appropriate for a group that had split from the Qumran community, for the ‘House of Peleg’ literally means ‘House of Division’ (‘Peleg’ is Hebrew for ‘division’ or ‘separation’).<sup>58</sup> What is more, the name which the Qumran Community gave to itself, ‘House of Yachad’, was the exact opposite (‘Yachad’ is Hebrew for ‘togetherness’).<sup>59</sup> The naming of these two groups betrays a strong polemical motive, indicating tensions and rivalry between them.

This impression is enhanced by the only other context in which the expression ‘House of Peleg’ occurs in the Qumran scrolls. In a contemporizing interpretation of Nahum 3,9, *Peshar Nahum* first identifies the ruin of Amon (Thebes, in Egypt) with Manasseh (the

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<sup>56</sup> Knibb, *Qumran Community*, 74-75; the initial reconstruction of iii) is from Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, 1996; 47.

<sup>57</sup> For the list of possible infractions: 1QS 6:24-7:25; 8:16b-9:2.

<sup>58</sup> On the House of Peleg, Knibb writes: “Those mentioned had apparently joined the movement, but had subsequently become lax in their observance of some aspects of the movement’s laws”, *Qumran Community*, 75.

<sup>59</sup> In modern Hebrew, ‘Yachad’ is a word with many ‘special’ overtones: the basic root (יחד) has too opposite meanings, 1) to be united, to be together 2) to set apart, to be alone. So, ‘Yachad’ as a noun means ‘togetherness’, and as an adverb it means ‘altogether’, while the adjective, ‘Yachid’, means ‘only one’, ‘beloved’, ‘precious and dear’, or ‘solitary’. The intensive ‘Yichud’ means ‘uniqueness’ and ‘miyuchad’ means ‘special’. ‘Hityachdut’ can mean solitude and/or communion. From the semantic range reflected in modern Hebrew, one can understand why this name was so deeply attractive to the community of Qumran—together in their solitude, special and precious to God in their uniqueness.

Sadducees), and then equates two former supporters of Amon, Put and Libya, with “the wick[ed] people of Judah], the house of Peleg, which consorted with Manasseh” (4Q169 4:1).<sup>60</sup> It is a curious passage, which neither Knibb<sup>61</sup> nor Flusser<sup>62</sup> can explain. Nevertheless, if we accept the reconstruction as quoted, the ‘House of Peleg’ is identified with the ‘wicked people of Judah’ and Judah, in the Qumran corpus, consistently refers to the Essenes, while Ephraim and Manasseh are the code-names for the Pharisees and Sadducees.<sup>63</sup>

So, in this context also, the ‘House of Peleg’ appears to be the Qumranic name for those Essenes who had broken away from the Qumranic ideals, and one of their greatest evils was to have established relations with the Sadducees. As the Sadducees were the party of the high priests and ruling elite in Jerusalem, this inevitably points to a rival Essene community, which was now serving the Sadducean Temple institution in some way and, by implication, living in Jerusalem.

In other sectarian works too, there are glancing references to an apostate group from the ‘House of Judah’, who can tentatively be identified with the ‘House of Peleg’: “Its interpretation alludes to the ruthless ones of the covenant who are in the House of Judah, who plot to destroy those who observe the law, who are in the Community Council” (*Pesher Psalms*, 4Q171 2:14-15).<sup>64</sup> Knibb’s commentary is clear: “‘the house of Judah’ is a symbolic name for the movement (...), and thus ‘those who act ruthlessly against the covenant’ (...) are apostates... accused of attacking their former brethren who remained faithful to the ideals of the community”.<sup>65</sup> Identifying ‘the ruthless ones of the covenant’ in *Pesher Psalms* (4Q171 2:14-15), with ‘the wicked of the covenant’ in the *War Scroll* (1QM 1:2), then we find the same group of ‘apostate’ Essenes are allied with ‘the Kittim of Ashur’, and are among those who will be fought

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<sup>60</sup> The translation is again from García Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 197.

<sup>61</sup> Knibb, *Qumran Community*, 218;

<sup>62</sup> Flusser, *Judaism of the Second Temple Period*, vol 1, 2007; 234, n. 51.

<sup>63</sup> This is the firm conclusion of Flusser’s ‘Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes in *Pesher Nahum*’, *Judaism of the Second Temple Period*, 214-57, esp. 254: “To be sure, Josephus describes the groups as philosophical schools, while the Essene scribes employ tribal typology: they are none other than the faithful house of Judah, while their enemies are the two main tribes of Israel who betrayed the Lord—the Pharisees Ephraim, the Sadducees Manasseh”.

<sup>64</sup> Knibb’s translation is ambiguous. The translation is again that of Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 1996; 204.

<sup>65</sup> Knibb, *Qumran Community*, 250. Other allusions can be found at 4Q171 3:12; 1QpHab 2:3-10.



by ‘the sons of light’ in the forthcoming eschatological war (1QM 1:1-3). We interpret this odd alliance to refer to the Essene support for Herod, when he relied on Roman forces from Syria to seize Jerusalem from the Hasmoneans under King Antigonus in 37 BCE (*JW* 1.345, *Ant* 15.468-469). The author of the Qumran War Scroll sees these ‘apostate’ Essenes as enemies to be engaged in the eschatological war.<sup>66</sup>

Before confirming these literary indications of internal division<sup>67</sup> with a passage from the *Antiquities* of Josephus, let us recall the supreme spiritual ideal of the Qumran community, which viewed itself as a replacement for the Temple institution and its legal authorities. However, even before their explicit statement of independence from Jerusalem and her Temple (1QS 9:3-11, cf. 8:5-10), dissatisfaction and rejection of the Temple can already be found in the *Damascus Document* (CD 6:11-14).<sup>68</sup> Knibb explains: “Despite some uncertainties about the translation, this passage seems to constitute a clear prohibition on visiting the temple. This is consonant with the view of V.6b-7 and 1QpHab XII.7b-9a that the temple had been defiled. But it stands in sharp contrast with the statements of the collection of laws, which envisage not only that the members of the movement would send offerings to the temple, but also that they themselves would offer sacrifices in the temple (XI.17b-21a). This contradiction is perhaps to be explained by the assumption that the present

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<sup>66</sup> This points to another important difference (not examined in this study) between the Qumran and the Jerusalem Essenes. The latter had a more positive attitude to Rome, although this clearly changed in the first century CE, in the run up to the first Jewish Revolt (cf. *JW* 2.567; 3.11,19; *JW* 2.152-153).

<sup>67</sup> When John J. Collins wrote “it is doubtful, then, whether the Damascus Document can be adduced as evidence for a split in the movement it describes” (*Beyond the Qumran Community*, 50), he did not view the ‘backsliders’ as a ‘split’. But with the ‘House of Peleg’, we have evidence for a rival group, a faction of ‘Judah’, who had rejected the ideals of the ‘Yachad’ (Qumran). Although subtle and sometimes disguised, there are allusions to this group in other Qumran works, such that when taken as a whole, the evidence of a ‘split’ is compelling (c.120-100 BCE). This is not new but is brought into stark relief by the issue of Jerusalem and the Temple. In the past, both the Groningen Hypothesis of García Martínez (‘Qumran Origins and Early History: A Groningen Hypothesis’, *Folia Orientalia*, xxv, 1988; 113-36) and the Enochic/Essene Hypothesis of Boccaccini (*Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 1998) were based on this evidence.

<sup>68</sup> As Collins puts it, the *Community Rule* “reflects a more advanced state of alienation from the temple cult than was attested in the *Damascus Rule*. In the *Damascus Rule* the temple cult was criticized, even rejected, but the theme of community as a replacement for the cult was not developed” (*Beyond the Qumran Community*, 59).

passage and the collection of laws reflect different stages in the evolution of the beliefs and attitudes of the movement”.<sup>69</sup>

Accepting Knibb’s interpretation, we suggest that those Essenes, whom the Qumranites nicknamed the ‘House of Peleg’, had found a way to obey the contradictory demands of the *Damascus Document*, which allowed them to maintain their connection to the Temple institution and Jerusalem, and avoid the total sectarian position of Qumran. One dares to suggest that this skilful navigation of their own cultic regulations not only sealed their break with the Qumranites, but also enabled them to be a significant force in Herodian society, while remaining true to their own laws. The way they managed to accomplish this feat is tersely explained by Josephus as follows:

“They send votive offerings to the temple, but perform their sacrifices employing a different ritual of purification. For this reason they are barred from those precincts of the temple that are frequented by all the people and perform their sacrifices by themselves. Otherwise, they are of the highest character, devoting themselves solely to agricultural labour” (*Ant* 18.19).<sup>70</sup>

Albert Baumgarten has proposed that the only sacrifice they performed was the sacrifice of the Red Heifer (Nm 19,1-22). By sending votive offerings, which may have included the temple tax, the Jerusalem Essenes basically recognized the legitimacy of the Temple institution. However, their belief that the Temple precinct was defiled created a problem for them, because they became unclean when they visited (CD 5:6-7; 6:11-14). According to Albert Baumgarten’s interpretation, the Essenes solved this problem by sacrificing their own Red Heifer and purifying themselves with its lustrations. This was the sacrifice Josephus mentions, and the Essenes offered it by employing a ritual of purification which differed from that of the Temple. The sacrifice of the Red Heifer did not have to be done at an altar, or in the Temple, but only within view of the Sanctuary.<sup>71</sup> This satisfied the Essenes’ own purity requirements, but not

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<sup>69</sup> Knibb, *Qumran Community*, 52-53.

<sup>70</sup> The translation of *Ant* 18.19 is that of the Loeb Series by L. Feldman, with one word changed by A.I. Baumgarten, as explained in his ‘Josephus on Essene Sacrifice’, *Journal of Jewish Studies* 45,2 (1994) 169-183. In what follows, we sketch his magisterial interpretation of this passage from Josephus.

<sup>71</sup> A visit to the proposed site of Essene Quarter in the southern part of Mt. Zion, today, confirms that the Sanctuary would have been visible from the ridge on the eastern side (imagining the landscape without the tall buildings that have since arisen), and so the Essene ritual sacrifice of the Red Heifer could have been performed from within their compound. It is tempting to link the Essene performance of this ritual with the mention of high-priestly breast plate and ephod stored ‘on the hill of Kochlit’, according to the Copper

those of the indignant Temple authorities. As a penalty for their dissent on this issue, the Essenes' state of purity was not officially recognized and they were forbidden from visiting the Court of the Israelites, where only the Israelites in an official state of purity were permitted to enter. As this was where sacrifices were offered, this prohibition implies non-participation in the regular offering of sacrifices. The Essenes were still allowed to visit the other parts of the Temple to preach and prophesy. In fact, maintaining their own standard of purity was important for them as a prerequisite for the gift of prophecy (*JW* 2.159).

Clearly, the Essenes of the 'House of Peleg' had arrived at a compromise with the Sadducees that allowed them to maintain their own state of purity, at the cost of participation in the Temple sacrificial cult.<sup>72</sup> In return for their contributions to the Temple treasury, they were recognized as a legitimate religious party, helped to some extent, no doubt, by a royal endorsement from King Herod. Baumgarten sums it up as follows: "The Essenes as described by Josephus, as I suggest understanding his comments, are an interesting example of a group..., not quite part of the mainstream, but also not in complete disagreement with it. The tension between their views and the way the Temple was actually administered was quite high, leaving them in an awkward position of dissent on a crucial issue, together with a desire—expressed in their actions on several fronts—to nevertheless remain within the circle of those acknowledging the legitimacy of the Temple.... While I would not call them a mainstream movement, the Essenes as described by Josephus were not as alienated from the central institutions of Jewish life as were other groups of the time", amongst whom Baumgarten had already included the community of Qumran: "Those at Qumran, unwilling to tolerate the dissonance resulting from the fact that things were not done as they believed proper, departed".<sup>73</sup>

From the early first century BCE, the Qumran community were uncompromising in their independence and isolation from the Temple and Jerusalem. Their return to Jerusalem from the desert is actually a trigger

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Scroll, 3QS15 1:9-12 (cf. Pixner, *'Unravelling the Copper Scroll'*, 343). On the rare occasions when the sacrifice of the Red Heifer was performed for the Temple cult, the Sadducean high priest conducted the ritual on the Mt. of Olives, having built a special causeway across the Kidron Valley to avoid corpse impurity from the tombs below.

<sup>72</sup> Non-participation would not have troubled them, as they viewed their own twice-daily sacred meals as a substitute (*JW* 2.130-131) and, for the feasts, they followed their own liturgical calendar.

<sup>73</sup> Baumgarten, 'Josephus on Essene Sacrifice', 182-83.

for the final war (1QM 1:1-3). Regarding their relationship with the Essene community in Jerusalem, the evidence cited above points to unrelenting rivalry. It seems highly unlikely that any kind of liaison existed between the Essenes of Qumran ('Beit Yachad') and those of Jerusalem ('Beit Peleg').<sup>74</sup>

### Historical Outline and Date

An understanding of the history of the civil-war period (40-37 BCE) is essential when passing from the polemical identity to the historical identity of the Essene community that lived in the Essene Quarter of Jerusalem. When Herod forcefully deposed King Antigonus to become King of the Jews in 37 BCE, the Hasmoneans had been in power, in Jerusalem, for more than 100 years and the civil war had raged fiercely for 3 years. After a five-month siege, Jerusalem fell to Herod and his army, aided by a large force of the Roman troops from Syria. A huge massacre of the population and its defenders followed their defeat. Once in power, Herod robbed, expelled and murdered scores of Hasmonean notables and supporters, including members of the Sanhedrin, and instituted a loyalty oath for the rest (*JW* 1.347-358; *Ant* 15.1-8; 15.368-372).

Referring to this time, Shimon Gibson describes the western part of the Upper City (the Armenian Garden) as follows: "It seems likely that scattered Hasmonean dwellings were built in this area during the course of the first century B.C. In the year 25 or 22 B.C., a massive podium was constructed for the palace buildings of Herod the Great".<sup>75</sup> It is reasonable to suppose that many of the "scattered Hasmonean dwellings" were demolished to make way for Herod's Upper Palace and other building projects. For the sake of his personal security, it also seems likely that Herod would have prevented former Hasmonean sympathizers from living

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<sup>74</sup> Riesner (*Esseni e Prima Comunità Cristiana a Gerusalemme*, 81) regards 1QM 3:11 as evidence that a Qumranic Essene community had become established in Jerusalem by the time of the final war: "And on the trumpets of the path of return from battle with the enemy, to go back to the *congregation of Jerusalem*, they shall write: «Exultations of God in a peaceful return»" (1QM 3:10-11). The members of the congregation of Jerusalem are described earlier as "The sons of Levi, the sons of Judah and the sons of Benjamin, the exiled of the desert" (1QM 1:2-3), and they will start to wage war against their enemies "when the exiled sons of light return from the desert of the peoples to camp in the desert of Jerusalem" (1QM 1:3). The 'exiled of the desert' (the Qumranites) were not among the congregation of Jerusalem before the final war, because it is their return from the desert that triggers that war. The quotations from 1QM are from García Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 95.

<sup>75</sup> Gibson, 'The Armenian Garden', 95.

anywhere near his future palace.<sup>76</sup> The need to populate the surrounding area with loyal subjects may partly explain why King Herod invited the Essenes to establish a community on the southwestern hill, which was right behind his palace. He had the Essene Gate built for them, and perhaps other buildings too.<sup>77</sup>

The point has been made that the Essenes who settled in Jerusalem were not originally from Qumran. A clue to their origin can be found in Herod's practice of rewarding loyalty, for Josephus informs us that "King Herod, discriminating between the two classes of the city population, by the award of honors attached more closely to himself those who had espoused his cause, while he exterminated the partisans of Antigonus" (*JW* 1.358). As we have argued elsewhere, Herod's campaign to root out Hasmonean opponents and brigands in Galilee, during the Civil War (38 BCE), had been aided and supported by the Essenes of Mt. Arbel.<sup>78</sup> The establishment of an Essene community in Jerusalem can therefore be understood primarily as Herod's reward to the Essenes of Mt. Arbel, for their support during his Galilee campaign. It suggests a *terminus a quo* for their settlement in Jerusalem around the start of Herod's reign in 37 BCE.

According to Josephus' account, Herod also rewarded the Essenes by exempting them *en bloc* from the loyalty oath (*Ant* 15.371). He then adds that Herod was inclined towards "holding (*the Essenes*) in honour, and for having a higher opinion of them than was consistent with their merely human nature" (*Ant* 15.372), which is to say, Herod tended to see them as divine, so great was his esteem for them. However, there would have been

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<sup>76</sup> Perhaps 'royal vendetta', rather than earthquake, explains the destruction of the previous structure in Broshi's excavation of the aristocratic mansion on Mt. Zion (*Jerusalem Revealed*, 57-60). It is significant that many of the houses in the Herodian Quarter were built upon the foundations of Hasmonean buildings (Avigad, *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 729). If they had all been destroyed by the earthquake of 31 BCE, Josephus would surely have said so (*JW* 1.370, *Ant* 15.121-122; cf. Karcz, 'Implications of Some Early Jewish Sources for Estimates of Earthquake Hazard in the Holy Land', *Annals of Geophysics*, 47, 2004; 774-8).

<sup>77</sup> Pixner, 'The History of the "Essene Gate" Area', *ZDPV* 105 (1989) 96-99.

<sup>78</sup> See this author's 'Arbel Cave Village: Remains of an Essene Commune' in the present volume. The arguments hinge on a close reading of *JW* 1.304-307, describing the start of Herod's Galilean campaign in 38 BCE. It is clear from this account that Herod was responding to the needs of the local community by coming to Arbela, and that he and his army received support from them over a considerable period of time (*JW* 1.304-330). This was an area with a long history of loyalty to the Hasmonean dynasty, so it is highly significant that Herod encountered here an entire community that supported him and his army. We have inferred that they were Essenes and this inference receives substantial confirmation from local archaeological findings.

other, more worldly reasons for inviting them to be his neighbours in Jerusalem.

According to Josephus, the royal patronage began when an Essene called Menachem prophesied to Herod, when he was still at school, that he would be King of the Jews. Later, when he was king, he asked Menachem to prophecy how long he would reign, to which he answered 20-30 years, and Herod was satisfied (*Ant* 15.373-379). Some have doubted the veracity of Josephus' account, rather than accepting it as a gross simplification.

Joan Taylor succeeds in showing how Menachem's prophecy represents an interpretation of the Greek version of Gen 49,10 that was current at the time, and is independently verified by contemporary historians (Julius Africanus *apud* Eusebius, *Church History* I, 6-7).<sup>79</sup> The interpretation, in its simplest form, affirmed that there would be a gentile ruler of Israel before their Messiah appears. In this respect, Menachem was not 'soothsaying',<sup>80</sup> but prophesying on behalf of his community, which had a reputation for authentic prophecy, according to Josephus (*JW* 2.159; *Ant* 15.379). Because of this interpretation, it is reasonable to suppose that the entire Essene Party, numbering around 4,000 men, viewed Herod's rise to power as willed by God. Their prophetic interpretation of Herod's reign would have inspired a much deeper commitment to ensuring its stability than their general vow, on admission to full membership, to "forever keep faith with all men, especially with the powers that be, since no ruler attains his office save by the will of God" (*JW* 2.140). Furthermore, after suffering more than 100 years of Hasmonean persecution, it is likely they also viewed Herod's reign as the long-awaited, divine retribution on the Hasmonean dynasty.

The close relationship between King Herod and the Essenes, which resulted in the establishment of an Essene community in Jerusalem, would therefore have been willingly reciprocated. There would have been times, as at Mt. Arbel in 38 BCE, and later in Jerusalem, when the Essenes returned the favours they received from Herod, by supporting and advising

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<sup>79</sup> Taylor, *The Essenes, the Scrolls and the Dead Sea*, 109-130 (ch 4).

<sup>80</sup> 'Soothsaying' is the term used by Braun, whose critique of Constantine Daniel's hypothesis ('Les 'Hérodiens' du Nouveau Testament sont-ils des Esséniens?') completely overlooks the divine dimension of Menachem's words to Herod ('Were the New Testament Herodians Essenes? A Critique of an Hypothesis', *RQ*, vol.14/1,53, 1989; 76). The widespread impact of the Essene prophecy can be recognized, retrospectively, in the proliferation of messianic claims, causing serious political instability, in the period following Herod's death.

him, especially on religious matters. Believing Herod's reign to be divinely willed, their support for him would have been perceived as approved by God. In this context, there is no question that the Essenes provided Herod with the prophetic and religious legitimacy that he needed for his acceptance by the Jewish population.

It was therefore their whole-hearted support for Herod that earned the Essenes the nickname 'Herodians', especially among Herod's rivals and opponents.<sup>81</sup> The earliest historical use of this name is by Josephus, when he reports the drowning of 'Herodians' (lit. 'Herod's like-minded': τὰ Ἡρώδου φρονούντας) in the Sea of Galilee during the civil war (*JW* 1.326; *Ant* 14.450). As the civil war was drawing to a close (37 BCE), a gang of Hasmonean loyalists from Magdala turned on some senior supporters of Herod and drowned them in the lake. They seem to have offered no resistance, suggesting they were unarmed, which in turn raises the suspicion they were members of a local religious community, rather than a unit of Herod's army or administration.

The term 'Herodians' then occurs several times in the Gospel of Mark (Mk 3,6; 8,15 in p<sup>45</sup>; 12,13), who was recording the sayings of the apostle Peter (Eusebius, *Church History* III, 39.15), and also in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 22,16), who follows Mark. The fact that Luke has never heard of it, and neither Paul nor John mention it, shows that the use of this nickname was not widespread, and may indeed have been limited to lakeside Galilee, where Peter was brought up.

In the New Testament, then, the Herodians are found both in Galilee and in Jerusalem: they are discussing legal issues with the Pharisees outside the synagogue in Capernaum, after Jesus' healing miracle on the Sabbath (Mk 3,6). Jesus later warns his apostles about the 'yeast' of the Herodians (Mk 8,15 in p<sup>45</sup>), using the same metaphor he uses for warning about the religious teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Mk 8,15; Mt 16,6.11; Lk 12,1). In all but one of the Markan manuscripts (p<sup>45</sup>), 'Herodians' was changed to 'Herod' (Mk 8,15), but this makes no sense, as it was not Herod who had a religious or moral teaching, but the religious group supporting him, whom we have identified as the Essenes. The change was probably made by copyists unfamiliar with the term.

The Herodians were also present in Jerusalem, sent out by the Temple authorities to investigate Jesus, before his capture and trial (Mk 12,13; Mt 22,16). In all of these references, the Herodians have a religious purpose and operate in parallel with the other two religious parties, the Pharisees

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<sup>81</sup> Taylor, *The Essenes, the Scrolls and the Dead Sea*, 128-29.

and Sadducees. They are clearly cast in a discursive religious milieu, and not in a political or diplomatic one. At the end of her compelling analysis, Joan Taylor concludes “This survey of the evidence within Mark’s narrative, relevant early Christian texts, and the Dead Sea Scrolls concludes that the ‘Herodians’ of the Gospel of Mark (found also in Matthew) are indeed to be identified as Essenes (...). The Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees of Mark’s Gospel are then the Pharisees, Essenes, and Sadducees of Josephus”.<sup>82</sup>

These Gospels are therefore witnesses to the presence of the Essenes in Galilee and Jerusalem during the mission of Jesus and the early Church, in the first century CE.

### **Summary: The Essenes of Jerusalem**

The main objection to the Essene presence in Jerusalem is not lack of archaeological evidence. The evidence we have is little, but it is of good quality. The main objection of the investigators has been an inability to envisage the Essenes sharing the southwestern hill with residents from other walks of life, because of their stringent purity regulations and their puritanical intolerance of non-members, as indicated in the Qumran corpus. Their purity requirements are seen as totally incompatible with the contingencies of life in the holy city at the time, under the Herodian administration and Temple authorities.

However, certain realities have become clear in this study: firstly, the plateau of the southwestern hill (Mt. Zion) was not densely populated with luxurious mansions of the kind discovered by Magen Broshi in 1971. In fact, his Herodian mansion remains a unique find in this area. In areas to the south, only very humble housing, or modest at best, has been found from the Herodian period. Secondly, the Essenes who settled on the southwestern hill were not originally from Qumran, but from a rival community of Essenes based at Mt. Arbel, who were not only committed to support King Herod, but adhered to a more moderate version of the Essene rule than the one that was followed by the Essenes of Qumran. Although the Arbelites and their scattered daughter communities appear to have practiced the same internal discipline as the Qumranites, they had developed a more open ‘external affairs’ policy: they engaged actively in the religious life of the surrounding society where they were known by some as Herodians; they displayed a more charitable approach to their fellow Jews and they had a respectful attitude towards the Temple

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<sup>82</sup> Taylor, *The Essenes, the Scrolls and the Dead Sea*, 130.



authorities. Whereas the Qumranites were correctly called ‘sectarians’, these Essenes were mainstream. It was these moderate Essenes who were described by Josephus and Philo in their classical works, in which Qumran is not even mentioned.<sup>83</sup> With Baumgarten’s insight into Josephus’ statement on their relationship to the Temple (*Ant* 18.19), we can see how the Jerusalem Essenes arrived at a solution that was satisfactory to all sides, except to the uncompromising leaders of the community of Qumran.

For the Essenes, Jerusalem was the great divider. Since the Qumran Essenes had separated themselves from Jerusalem and her Temple until the messianic age, our investigation has necessarily been focussed on their rivals, the non-Qumranic Essenes, whom they ironically called “Beit Peleg”. From the research of Brian J. Capper, it would appear that they established a formidable network of community centres and guest houses throughout the land, which adopted orphans and abandoned children, helped the poor and needy and cared for the sick. As the home of their master of ceremonies, or head priest, the Essene Quarter in Jerusalem would have been at the centre of these operations.

Amongst its most illustrious members, we suggest, was John the Baptist (*Ant* 18.116-119; *Mk* 1,4-6 et par.), not to forget the temporary sojourn of the young Josephus (*Life* 10-11). Jesus of Nazareth could also have visited the Essene Quarter on occasion (*Mk* 14,13-15), although living up north, the mother house at Mt. Arbel was more likely to have been his closest point of contact with these Essenes. The role of the Essenes of Jerusalem in the origins of the early Church has yet to be told in full, but their prophetic support for King Herod was predicated on the expectation that the Messiah of Israel would follow his reign. And so it was, that when King Herod died, Jesus Christ had just been born. It stands to reason that the support that they had faithfully given to King Herod was transferred on to Jesus and magnified in the messianic hopes pinned upon him.

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<sup>83</sup> It is quite possible that the Qumran Community had become so diminished by the mid-first century CE that there was nothing for Philo or Josephus to report on (see n. 45).

## CHAPTER 3

### RECENT DISCOVERIES ON MT. ZION, JERUSALEM

#### Introduction

Over the last few years there has been a welcome renewal of archaeological activity on the hill to the southwest of Jerusalem's Old City, which has been called Mt. Zion since the first century CE. Although this began as an initiative of the German Protestant Institute for Archaeology of the Holy Land (DEIAHL or DEI), it has been augmented by a series of excavations conducted by the Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA). The DEI excavations of the Essene Gate and its surroundings (2015-2020) exposed large areas of Mt. Zion and added a wealth of detail to previous findings. However, it was the IAA's excavation of the abandoned Shulhan David restaurant site in 2020-2021 (Fig 3.1) that has contributed most to our understanding of Mt. Zion in the Herodian period.<sup>1</sup>

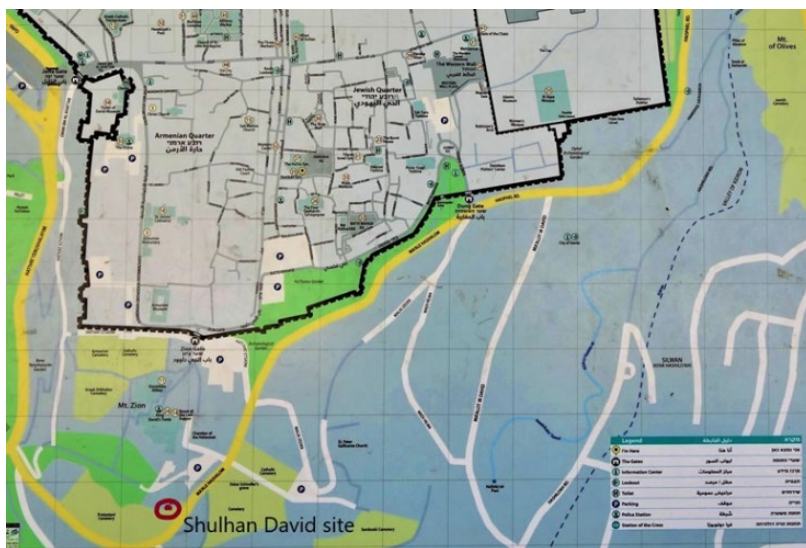


Fig 3.1: Map of the southern part of the Old City of Jerusalem today, including Mt. Zion and the Shulhan David site (adapted from the municipal Old City map produced by Blustein Maps Ltd and reproduced with kind permission).

<sup>1</sup> A preliminary report of the Shulhan David excavation has recently been published online at [www.atiqot.org.il](http://www.atiqot.org.il) (*Atiqot* 110, 2023; 173-183) by the lead archaeologist, Michael Chernin. It mainly concerns the Byzantine-era findings, from the fifth to the eighth centuries CE. The full excavation report is in preparation.

The following general description is based entirely on my own personal observations, sketches and photographs. Further discoveries can be expected, as another ‘salvage’ excavation is currently underway at an adjacent site, a few metres to the north of the former Shulhan David restaurant. Nevertheless, the findings at the Shulhan David site are so consequential for the study of this area in Herodian times, they merit separate description and discussion of their significance.

### **A Brief Description of the Findings**

About 70 metres northeast of the ancient Essene Gate, a section of Herodian road with a centrally placed rock-cut drainage channel has been exposed, identifying it as the continuation of the road originating at that gate and heading in a northeastern direction (Fig 3.2).



Fig 3.2: Herodian road with rock-cut steps on its western side.

On the western side of this section of road, three rock-cut steps are visible, which appear to be the remains of a flight of steps ascending the eastern slope of Mt. Zion.

The general view of the eastern slope shows several other structures (Fig 3.3). A third of the way up the slope, there are two large, rock-cut, subterranean *miqva'ot* (Figs 3.4 and 3.5), one on the left (7 x 5m approx.) and the other on the right (10 x 8m approx.) of the ascending pathway.



Fig 3.3: General view of the Shulhan David site looking to the west: the Herodian road passes just below the rock-cut steps appearing at the bottom of the photo.



Fig 3.4: The two large, subterranean *miqva'ot*: the smaller one in the foreground and the larger one in the background.

Fig 3.5: The larger *miqveh* from above. The roof was removed out of safety concerns.



On a rock shelf above the two *miqva'ot*, the remains of a large Byzantine wall and archway were found (Fig 3.6), indicating the presence of a boundary wall, and closely related to this wall, there was an ancient water cistern.

Fig 3.6: Remains of a gate archway and a large Byzantine wall



Several horizontal markings in the rockface, above and between the *miqva'ot*, indicate that the rock-cut steps originally continued up the slope, to a narrow strip of level ground immediately in front of a natural scarp 4-5 metres high, upon which the modern wall has been built. At the summit, this wall encloses the 'Greek Garden', which extends across the plateau on Mt. Zion.



Fig 3.7: Two, possibly three, horizontal markings in the rock (encircled) are all that remains of the rock-cut steps as they continued up the slope in Herodian times.

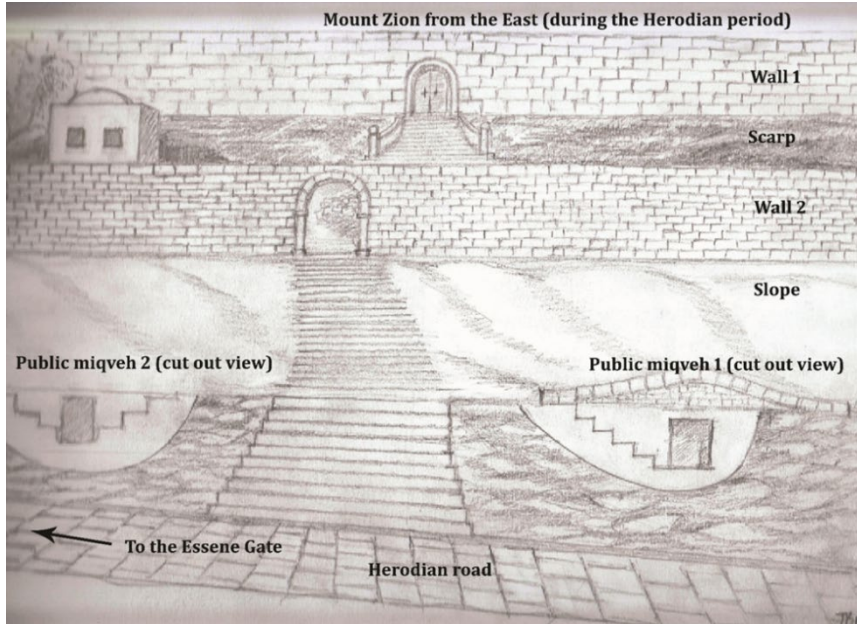
The topography of the southern part of this site has been massively modified by quarrying in past centuries, but especially in the Byzantine, Crusader and Ayyubid periods, so the landscape in Herodian times would have appeared as a steep slope, interrupted by seams of bare rockface (scarp), leading up to the plateau of Mt. Zion, which was thus naturally defended by the steep gradient.

### **An Attempted Reconstruction**

The final interpretation of these findings at the Shulhan David site must await the publication of the IAA's archaeological report, but in the meantime I have attempted to reconstruct the Herodian findings in the following sketch, according to my own observations and interpretations (Fig 3.8). Before visiting the remains at this site in May 2022, I had studied the relevant archaeological, historical and literary evidence concerning Mt. Zion in the Herodian period and had reached the conclusion that this area was settled by a large Essene community from 37 BCE until the first

Revolt in 70 CE,<sup>2</sup> after which it was occupied by a garrison from the Tenth Legion (*Legio Fretensis*) of the Roman Army. With this preparation, I set about interpreting the new archaeological findings, as follows.

Fig 3.8: Postulated reconstruction of the Shulhan David site in Herodian Times



The Shulhan David site is about 70 m north of the Essene Gate, which was a smallish gate, 2.66 metres in width, originally inserted into the southwestern corner of the city wall by King Herod's builders (c. 35 BCE). It was called the Essene Gate precisely because it was used mainly by Essenes going to, or returning from, their toilets on the strip of land nearby, just outside and adjacent to the southern wall of the city—the site called *Bethso* by Josephus (*JW* 5.144-145).<sup>3</sup> Entry into the city from outside, through this gate, would have been difficult, because “this gate

<sup>2</sup> These findings are now published in ‘The Essenes and Jerusalem’, *Qumran Chronicle*, Vol 30, 2022; 77-118 and reproduced in the previous chapter of this volume.

<sup>3</sup> *JW*, *Ant* and *Life* refer to the *Jewish War*, *Antiquities* and *Autobiography* of Josephus, respectively. About the Essene Gate, Milgrom opines: “It was probably a small gate or wicket used exclusively by the Essenes to reach their toilets”, ‘The Temple Scroll’, *BA* 41 (1978) 105-20, esp. 117. Further details about the Essene Gate, *Bethso* and entire area can be found in the article referenced in n. 2 above.

was built where no one would expect a gate to be, for it opens onto the sheer precipice of the Gehinnom Valley”, in Bargil Pixner’s words.<sup>4</sup>

So, although the two newly discovered *miqva’ot* appear to have been in a public space, close to a public thoroughfare, served by the Essene Gate, this would have been a fairly remote and sparsely populated corner of the city, at least 1,000 metres from the Temple Mount. Due to the inaccessibility of this gate into the city, and its distance from the Temple Mount, it is unlikely that Jews came to purify themselves in these public *miqva’ot* before visiting the Temple. Instead, they would have used the large *miqva’ot* closer to the Temple. Neither would the local residents have needed to use the public *miqva’ot* uncovered here, for they were mostly members of aristocratic or high-priestly families, who lived on the eastern slopes of Mt. Zion, in mansions that were equipped with one or more private *miqva’ot*.<sup>5</sup> In brief, the existence of the two impressive public *miqva’ot* at this site is difficult to explain, unless the local residents, who included high priests, Sadducees and Essenes, required a high standard of purity for people entering this part of the city.<sup>6</sup>

Since the Essene Gate was used mainly by the Essenes, it is not unreasonable to suppose that these two communal *miqva’ot* would have been used mainly by the members, visitors and novices (trainees) of the Essene community, in order to purify themselves before entering the Essene Quarter on the plateau of Mt. Zion. Around 55 CE, Josephus was among these novices (*Life* 10-11).

Furthermore, if visitors had to purify themselves in one of the public *miqva’ot* before “ascending” to the Essene Quarter, it is not difficult to discern a parallel with the Temple Mount. And if the Essenes believed their community was the true Temple of the Lord, it could explain how

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<sup>4</sup> Pixner continues: “For people coming from the desert or Bethlehem, the gate could only be reached by crossing the [Gehinnom] valley and climbing a steep path reaching the tower and then the gate”, ‘The History of the “Essene Gate” Area’, *ZDPV*, 105 (1989) 98.

<sup>5</sup> As noted by Avigad: “In any event, it is clear that the installation of a ritual bath in a private house was a technically complex and costly matter. One could, of course, immerse oneself in a public ritual bath, but the inhabitants of the Upper City would hardly have resorted to such plebian means. They had at least one ritual bath, and sometimes even more, in the privacy of their own homes”, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 1983; 142.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Letter of Aristeas* (2<sup>nd</sup> cent. BCE): “Since the city is built on a hill, the layout of the terrain is sloping. There are steps leading to the thoroughfares. Some people make their way above them, others go underneath them, their principal aim being to keep away from the main road for the sake of those who are involved in purification rites, so as not to touch any forbidden object” (105-106), cited from *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, 2015, 7-34.



their compound came to be called “Mt. Zion”, and why Josephus, who knew the community well, appears to be the first writer to associate the entire western hill with that name.<sup>7</sup> In the sketch, I have therefore tried to draw the parallel between the main ascent to Mt. Zion, and the main ascent to the Temple Mount. According to Josephus, the Essenes had many male members and a smaller number of female members (*JW* 2.160-161; cf. CD 12:1-2; 4Q270 fr.7), so it is reasonable to identify the larger miqveh (**Public miqveh 1**) as a communal facility for males and the smaller one (**Public miqveh 2**) for females.

The continuation of the flight of rock-cut steps above the level of the *miqva'ot* is suggested by the faintly visible contours of three rock-hewn steps on the right, as they merge into the natural rockface (Fig 3.7). At the same level, the remains of a Byzantine wall and archway were found (see Fig 3.6), indicating that a sizeable wall had been built here, halfway up the eastern slope, during the Byzantine period (315-630 CE).

Above and beyond the remains of the arch and wall, the ground levels off for about 20 meters before it meets a natural scarp 4-5 m high, on the crest of which is a modern wall enclosing the plateau of Mt. Zion. On the level ground in front of this scarp, a moderately-sized *miqveh* was hewn in the bedrock in Second Temple times.<sup>8</sup> The location and compactness of this *miqveh* suggests that it belonged to a substantial dwelling built above it.

To the north of this *miqveh*, the ground rises towards the ‘Tomb of David’, passing first the eastern entrance to the plateau of Mt. Zion, the

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<sup>7</sup> It should be said that the name “Mt Zion” never appears in the writings of Josephus, and at the time he was writing the name was biblically associated with the Temple Mount (e.g., Is 59,20; 60,14; 62,11; 1Macc 4,36-38; Psalms). However, by attributing the fortifications on the western hill to David and Solomon in his *Jewish War* (5.137, 143), he identifies them, wittingly or not, with the Citadel captured by David from the Jebusites and called “the fortress of Sion, which is the City of David” (1Chron 11,5). Whatever his reason for this attribution, historical ignorance or revisionism, it is difficult to believe that Josephus, as a priest educated in Jerusalem, would have identified the western hill with Mt. Zion, unless he had first been persuaded that Mt. Zion had moved away from the Temple Mount. If this was the case, then the Essenes may have been the ones who had brought him to this view—a view that would have been shockingly endorsed by the Temple’s destruction in 70 CE.

<sup>8</sup> Margalit and Pixner, *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* (ESI) 1985 (Autumn) p. 32 (Hebrew).

area nowadays called the 'Greek Garden', which is also the postulated site of the Essene Quarter in Second Temple times.<sup>9</sup>

In the sketch, I have also depicted two large walls on the ascent to the proposed site of the Essene Quarter, at the top of Mt. Zion. However, since there is little or no archaeological evidence to date, for the existence of the 'Upper Wall' before Ayyubid rule (c. 1200), or for the 'Lower Wall' before the Byzantine period, both walls require some historical and archaeological justification. The rest of this essay will present the evidence for the existence of these two walls in the Herodian period.

### **The Upper Wall (Wall 1 in the sketch)**

Several pieces of evidence can be summoned in support of an upper wall, running northwards from the southern city wall, along the crest of the natural scarp and contributing substantially to the defence of the Upper City in Roman times.

*i. The modern upper wall includes some foundational blocks from a pre-Byzantine era.* This was observed by the DEI team, during their excavation of the modern wall, atop the scarp, in 2019: "The modern terrace wall was founded on the two remaining layers of worked stones, of which the upper one was still visible.... The remaining two courses of masonry have been uncovered. The hewn and worked blocks were set onto a foundation consisting of prepared rock-scarp".<sup>10</sup> The blocks in question, 0.9m x 1m x 0.7m, showed the same characteristics (size, shape and markings) as those that had been uncovered by Frederick Bliss, in 1894, in the 'fosse' at the bottom of the scarp on which this part of the wall was built. The DEI team observe "While Bliss mentions those were usually associated with Crusader times, we know today those mostly stem from an earlier context, and have been indeed found already being reused in Byzantine contexts in the DEIs excavation in the 'Greek Garden'".<sup>11</sup> So, if some of these original blocks had been reused by the Byzantines, we can assume the original wall, whose lower courses can still be seen, would have predated the Byzantines.

Building activity in the Late Roman period was generally haphazard and of poor quality (except for buildings made from reused Herodian

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<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere I refer to this as the Pixner/Riesner Mt. Zion–Essene Quarter hypothesis; for a comprehensive bibliography in English, please see n. 4 of the previous chapter, 'The Essenes and Jerusalem'.

<sup>10</sup> Vieweger, Zimni, et al., *Archäologischer Anzeiger 2020/1*, 2020; 288.

<sup>11</sup> *Idem.* 288.

blocks) and, after the destruction in 70 CE, the only major building project had been the construction of Aelia Capitolina in the north of the city, which ignored this area in the south. The remains of this wall, composed of its characteristic pre-Byzantine blocks, would still have been standing here when Saladin and the Ayyubids decided to restore it, so that it could serve as the city's southern defensive wall (c. 1200 CE). Soon after, however, the main part of the wall was thrown down by his successor, to prevent the Crusaders from reoccupying the city. Evidently some of the lower courses survived and were eventually incorporated into the modern wall. We conclude, then, that it is entirely possible that the characteristic, pre-Byzantine building blocks composed a pre-70 CE wall that defended Herod's Upper Palace and separated the summit of the Upper City from its lower slopes.

*ii. Herod had good reason to build this wall as a fortification around his new palace in the Upper City.* Paranoid by nature, all of Herod's royal palaces were heavily defended from all directions, and one would certainly expect his new palace at the summit of the western hill, in the Upper City of Jerusalem, to be well defended. The western and southern walls were almost impenetrable, but from the Lower City, his Upper Palace would have been vulnerable.

Herod must have remembered the siege of Jerusalem in 37 BCE. Once the outer walls had been breached, the Roman soldiers were able to go straight to the Hasmonean palace, in the Upper City, and capture the last Hasmonean king, Antigonus II, whom they later executed. Josephus describes how the whole city lay open to the invaders and the streets were everywhere filled with the corpses of the defenders (*Ant* 16.477-481). By contrast, Josephus reports that after Titus had breached the city walls in 70 CE, the Romans were unable to gain access to the Upper City from the Lower City, "because of the steep approach on all sides", and consequently they decided to take down one of the strongest sections of the Citadel with war engines, adding 18 days to the duration of the siege (*JW* 6.374-377; 392-400). Clearly, the defences of the Upper City had been improved since the siege that brought Herod to power one hundred years before, in 37 BCE.

It is quite likely that Herod himself had planned the improvement in the defences of his Upper Palace, by constructing at least two, possibly three, defensive walls, between his palace and the Lower City. As we have seen, the first wall (**Wall 1** in the sketch) started near the Essene Gate, at

the southern city wall, and continued northwards along the crest of the natural scarp, on the same course as the modern wall.

*iii. The Herodian Upper Wall appears to have been built next to an aqueduct.* The only clue to the subsequent course of the Upper Wall is the short section of a double Herodian wall (1m + 1.6m thick) that was partially excavated by Magen Broshi in 1972, in the courtyard of the Armenian Monastery of St. Saviour, at least 200 metres due north of the Shulhan David site.<sup>12</sup> According to Broshi's diagram of this double Herodian wall, the thinner part was closely associated with Byzantine water pipes and conduits, suggesting that it was originally an aqueduct, whose water channel was later diverted by the Byzantines to feed into their own water system. If this is confirmed, then it may have been the aqueduct that carried water to the many *miqva'ot* and cisterns on Mt. Zion and, in particular, to the two large public *miqva'ot* recently uncovered at the Shulhan David site.

Confirmation that this was the case comes from the fact that the short section of double wall discovered in the Armenian Monastery lies precisely on a straight line running parallel to Herod's Palace and uniting the start of the Upper Wall in the south, with the huge water reservoir to the north of the Palace, called Hezekiah's Pool. Not only would this double wall have functioned as an impervious inner line of defence in front of the Palace, but it also would have protected access to the main aqueduct supplying water to Mt. Zion and many of its *miqva'ot* (see Fig 3.9).<sup>13</sup>

If confirmed by further discoveries, the existence of a double Herodian wall/aqueduct, running on a north-south axis from Hezekiah's Pool to the scarp above the Shulhan David site, divides the plateau of Mt. Zion into a broad western zone and a narrower eastern zone: the western zone would

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<sup>12</sup> Broshi, 'Excavations on Mount Zion, 1971-1972: Preliminary Report', *IEJ*, 26 (2/3), 1976; 81-88, especially the description of thick walls II and III on p. 83, depicted in Fig 3 on p. 86; and also in his 'Excavations in the House of Caiaphas, Mount Zion', *Jerusalem Revealed*, 57-60, where the thick Herodian walls are indicated as (2) in the site map of Area II, on p. 59.

<sup>13</sup> Since the land on which the reservoir was situated was slightly lower than the land in front of Herod's Palace, the aqueduct would have required a subterranean channel as it passed in front of the Palace, in order to maintain downward flow southwards to Mt. Zion, where it would have reemerged at the surface. A small section of this north-south channel, and the origin of a eastward side-branch, may have been identified under Christ Church, see Gibson and Lewis, 'The Subterranean Tunnel System beneath Christ Church near Jaffa Gate: Evidence of Guerilla Warfare and a Refugee Hideaway from the Time of Titus' Siege of Jerusalem', *New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and its Region: Collected Papers Vol XIII*, 2019; 51-52.

have included the Upper Palace and the Praetorium in the northwest, and the postulated Essene Quarter in the south, with an uninhabited, probably militarized, area in between.<sup>14</sup> Into this part, access would have been restricted to those with special “security clearance”. After the suppression of the first Jewish Revolt, this area was occupied by the Roman garrison of the *Legio Fretensis*, or Tenth Legion. According to Eusebius, the southern part was later used for cultivation.<sup>15</sup> The Herodian double wall/aqueduct structure would have provided water for these fields, as well as an inner defence line for the Tenth Legion camp.

On the eastern side of this Herodian wall/aqueduct, there is positive archaeological evidence for at least two Herodian dwellings and circumstantial evidence for a third. The positive evidence is provided by the large aristocratic mansion unearthed by Broshi in 1972 at the northern end<sup>16</sup> and by the more modest Early Roman dwelling revealed by the DEI on the southeastern slope of Mt. Zion in 2019.<sup>17</sup> Due to extensive construction in the past, very few Herodian remains have been identified under the area occupied now by Dormition Abbey and David’s Tomb complex. Nevertheless, since construction at this site dates back to the late first century, it provides circumstantial evidence for a very particular Herodian building: the one with an ‘upper room’ in which the Last Supper and the first ‘Christian’ Pentecost took place in 33 CE (Lk 22,12; Acts 1,13).<sup>18</sup> The Herodian artefacts found in the subsoil under the neighbouring Franciscan Monastery of the *Cenacolino* may have come from this building.<sup>19</sup> Whatever the case, the continuous building activity here, dating back to the late first century,<sup>20</sup> confirms the presence of

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<sup>14</sup> It is very likely there would have been a wall here too, running east-west, separating the palace area from the southwestern hill and Essene Quarter (as in Fig 3.7). However, if this wall did exist, it did not follow the same course as present Old City wall; cf. Broshi and Gibson, ‘Excavations Along the Western and Southern Walls of the Old City of Jerusalem’, *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, 1994; 153-54.

<sup>15</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, VI. 13, written from 314-324 CE.

<sup>16</sup> See n. 12.

<sup>17</sup> Vieweger, Zimni, et al., *Archäologischer Anzeiger 2020/1*, 2020; 285-288.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Murphy-O’Connor, ‘The Cenacle—Topographical Setting for Acts 2:44-45’, in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, 1995; 303-321. Also Pixner, *Paths of the Messiah*, 2010; 239-252, 319-367.

<sup>19</sup> Bagatti and Alleata, ‘Ritrovamento Archeologico Sul Sion’, *Liber Annus* 31 (1981), 249-256, esp. 251, and Tavv. 17-22 at the end of the volume.

<sup>20</sup> According to Pixner and Murphy O’Connor, building on the work of Bagatti, Testa and Pinkerfield (1951).

another sizeable Herodian building at this site, on the eastern side of the projected Herodian wall/aqueduct.

### **The Lower Wall (Wall 2 in the sketch)**

The remaining blocks of a wall and of an entrance archway, unearthed halfway up the slope at the Shulhan David site, immediately above the largest of the two public *miqva'ot*, can be dated with confidence to the Byzantine era (325–630 CE). Some historical background is therefore needed to explain the prior existence of this wall in the Herodian period.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the same walls that had defended the Upper Palace from the Lower City would have served as a defence for the garrison camp of the Tenth Legion (*Legio Fretensis*) for the next 200 years. The walls were eventually razed to the ground by the soldiers, when they were transferred to Eilat at the end of the third century (c. 270 CE), leaving Mt. Zion without walls and defences following their departure. However, when an ‘anonymous pilgrim’ from Bordeaux visited Jerusalem in 333 CE, a wall had been built around the sacred sites on Mt. Zion, which he called *Murus Sion*.<sup>21</sup> As described by the Bordeaux pilgrim, the location and date of this wall match precisely the remains of the wall found at the Shulhan David site. Since the Byzantine era began around 325 CE, this wall would have been newly built when the pilgrim visited in 333 CE. It offered protection for the holy sites on Mt. Zion, in a period when there was no city wall, for it was not until 450 CE that the Byzantine Queen, Eudocia, restored and fortified the southern wall of the city, thus removing the need for a protective wall surrounding Mt. Zion.

So, the historical record suggests that the Byzantine wall whose remnants have been discovered here, at the Shulhan David site, can and should be identified with the *Murus Sion* first mentioned by the anonymous pilgrim of Bordeaux in 333 CE. The archway whose remains have been recovered (Fig 3.6) may indeed have been the main entrance through which the Bordeaux pilgrim passed on his visit to the holy sites on Mt. Zion.

However, the location of this wall, on a ledge *below* a natural scarp, makes it highly unlikely that *Murus Sion* was built there ‘*de novo*’, for the first time. Rather, the position of this wall suggests that it was originally a “barbican wall” (a “pre-wall”), which is to say, an outer defensive wall that was built to defend an inner wall that was vulnerable to undermining,

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<sup>21</sup> *Itinerarum Burdigalense* 16.

for it stood atop an exposed rockface.<sup>22</sup> The inferior location of the second wall (**Wall 2**) therefore suggests that it was established on the foundations of a prior, pre-Byzantine wall. The only way to prove or disprove this suspicion would be to excavate further in this area and examine other sections of the wall for the remains of more ancient foundations. Whatever the result of this search, this wall is exactly where one would expect to find an outer defensive wall for the Upper Palace, built by Herod around 30 BCE and demolished by the departing military garrison around 270 CE.

There are two other compelling reasons for assuming that the Byzantine wall, identified with *Murus Sion*, was built upon Herodian foundations. The first concerns the distribution of “LXFRE” tile fragments, that were produced by the Tenth Legion during their occupation of the Upper City (70-270 CE). As illustrated by Hillel Geva, these tile fragments have been found scattered over a wide area of the Upper City, which include the areas enclosed by the Lower Wall (**Wall 2**), and are not limited to the area enclosed by the Upper Wall.<sup>23</sup> If we accept the conclusions of a recent study by Shlomit Weksler-Bdolah, strongly endorsing the view that the Roman garrison was protected by a wall, then the wall in question appears to have been the Lower Wall in its pre-Byzantine manifestation.<sup>24</sup> If confirmed archaeologically, by the discovery of Herodian foundations, then the remains of the Lower Wall at the Shulhan David site should settle the debate about the whereabouts of the camp of the Tenth Legion and whether, or not, it was defended by a wall.

The second reason for supposing the Byzantine wall was built on the course of a previous Herodian wall is related to its particular location, on a narrow shelf of rock just above the two large public *miqva'ot*, and several metres below the southern end of a Herodian wall/aqueduct bringing water from Hezekiah's Pool (the Upper Wall). This location suggests that, apart from serving as a lower line of defence, the Lower Wall would also have protected the water supply to the *miqva'ot* from

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<sup>22</sup> There are probably two other examples of this type of military defence in Jerusalem, dated to the reign of King Herod, as explained by Broshi, in ‘Along Jerusalem's Walls’, *Biblical Archeologist*, 40 (1977); 12-13 (The Herodian Outer Rampart), restated in Broshi and Gibson, ‘Excavations Along the Western and Southern Walls of the Old City of Jerusalem’, *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, 1994; 151-52.

<sup>23</sup> Geva, ‘The Camp of the Tenth Legion in Jerusalem: An Archaeological Reconsideration’, *Israel Exploration Journal*, 34, 1984; especially the diagram on p. 247.

<sup>24</sup> Weksler-Bdolah in *Aelia Capitolina—Jerusalem in the Roman Period*, 2020; 1-50, esp. 19-32.

interference causing blockage, contamination or discolouration, which would have invalidated the water supply and the *miqva'ot* themselves.<sup>25</sup> The water infrastructure for the *miqva'ot* was carefully preserved and protected in the area between the upper and lower walls.

The course of the Herodian Lower Wall is less evident than the fact of its existence, but if it had followed the natural contour of the hill, it would have continued northwards atop the man-made scarp which later formed the western wall of the Byzantine Cardo. There may have been an extension running around the lower slopes of the Upper City, including the public buildings there and Herod's 'Lower Palace'. This larger area corresponds to the distribution of Tenth Legion tile fragments, as reported by Hillel Geva.<sup>26</sup>

### The Essene Quarter

It is difficult, if not impossible, to explain the existence of the two newly discovered public *miqva'ot*, at the Shulhan David site, without relating them to the presence, nearby, of a large community of religious Jews requiring a high level of purity for residents and visitors alike. These *miqva'ot* were too far from the Temple, and too inaccessible, to attract visitors needing to purify themselves for entry into the Temple precincts. In this context, and in light of previous research on the Essene Gate and *Bethso* mentioned by Josephus (*JW* 5.144-145), the discovery of these two large *miqva'ot* is entirely consistent with, and provides further evidence for, the existence of an Essene settlement on the plateau of Mt. Zion.

Reflection on the topographical features of this site, and the discovery of an ancient wall just above the public *miqva'ot*, leads to speculation on the structures that were standing there in Herodian times. We have therefore given cogent reasons for the existence of two walls at this site, an upper and a lower wall—the main reason being their contribution to the defence of the zone around Herod's Upper Palace. Extra defence at this site became imperative after the southern city wall was breached, at a lower level, to make way for the Essene Gate.

This proposal does not in any way deny the presence of an Essene community on Mt. Zion, to the south of Herod's Palace, which would also have enjoyed a protective benefit from the postulated defensive walls. The two walls are, in fact, an important part of the Mt. Zion/Essene hypothesis, as they would have provided the Essenes with an inner space for full

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. "Mikveh", by Kotlar and Baskin, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol.14, 225-27.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. n. 23 above.



members only, on the southern part of the plateau of Mt. Zion, in the area that is now called the Greek Garden, and an outer space, still separated from the lower city, for married members, novices, and visitors. Entry to both sections would have required purification in the large communal *miqva'ot* exposed in the recent Shulhan David excavation, and this appears to have been their main purpose. It is entirely possible that King Herod planned the walls in this way to accommodate the spiritual needs of the Essene community, just as he had built the Essene Gate to serve their physical needs.

In brief, the discovery of the two public *miqva'ot* at the Shulhan David site not only provides further evidence for the presence of an Essene community on Mt. Zion, but also leads us to propose a double defensive wall at this location. To the extent that the Essene Gate had left the southern wall vulnerable to penetration at that point, the need for parallel walls to defend the upper parts of Mt. Zion, and the Upper Palace nearby, was particularly pressing (see Fig 3.9).

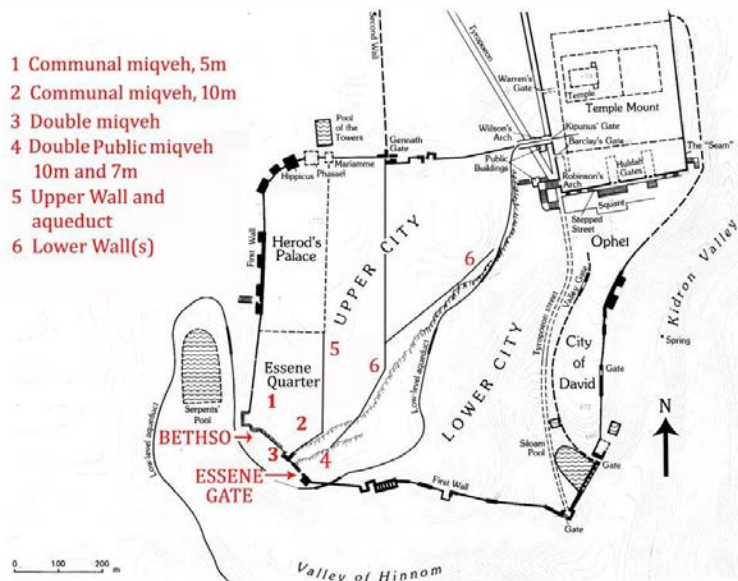


Fig 3.9: Map update of southern Jerusalem in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

The Shulhan David site is no. 4 on the map, and the Upper Wall/aqueduct, joining 4 with the 'Pool of the Towers', i.e., Hezekiah's Pool, is no. 5. The proposed course of the Lower Wall is represented by no. 6. The map has been adapted from Hillel Geva, 'Map of Jerusalem at the end of the Second Temple Period', in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, eds. E. Stern, et al, Israel Exploration Society, 1993; 718, and reproduced with kind permission.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE PARABLES OF ENOCH (*I ENOCH* 37-71): PROVENANCE AND SOCIAL SETTING

#### Introduction

The para-biblical writing called the Parables of Enoch,<sup>1</sup> which comprises the central and largest section of *1 Enoch* (chs. 37–71), has left little or no external trace of its origin. Although careful study has identified a Semitic (Aramaic or Hebrew) original, which was subsequently translated into Greek, “the Parables are attested only in an Ethiopic (Ge’ez) version, which is an integral component in the Ethiopic Bible; there are no fragments of the Semitic original or an intermediate Greek translation”.<sup>2</sup> More significantly, there was no trace of it among the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered near Qumran, despite the finding of fragments of text, in Aramaic, from most of the other parts of *1 Enoch*.<sup>3</sup> A direct connection between the Book of Parables and the Qumran community cannot therefore be assumed or upheld.

The Book of Parables, then, can be seen as one piece of the ancient jig-saw puzzle, whose place in the existing reconstruction has not yet been found.<sup>4</sup> To make matters worse, there is a lack of specific detail, internal to the Ethiopic text, which might help scholars find a place for it in the existing picture. This is not just because biographical, social, historical and geographical features have been generalized, in order to maintain the appearance of Enochic origin, but also because these features do not fit into any familiar pattern. In terms of the jig-saw puzzle metaphor, we have so far been unable to identify the provenance of the Book of Parables because the neighbouring pieces of the picture, which form its immediate context, are also missing. In other words, there is currently a sizeable ‘lacuna’ in this part of the picture.

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<sup>1</sup> The ‘Parables of Enoch’, ‘Book of Parables’, ‘Parables’ and ‘Similitudes of Enoch’ are the most commonly used titles for the text of *1 Enoch* 37-71. However, the real title, according to ancient Hebrew tradition, corresponds to the first word or words of the text, which are “The Vision of Wisdom that Enoch saw” (*1 En* 37:1). The translation used and quoted in our study is that of Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation*, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of Enoch Chapters 37-82*, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> 4Q 201, 202, 204-212.

<sup>4</sup> Nickelsburg epitomizes this when he writes: “Thus, the text’s communal and geographical provenance remain a mystery”, *1 Enoch* 2, 66.

If this diagnosis of the situation is accurate, there can be no resolution unless we find and assemble the pieces of the puzzle into which the Book of Parables can then be fitted. We simply have to look harder for the social, historical and geographical settings, the actual sticks and stones, in which the author of the Book of Parables lived and wrote. Only then, having found and assembled the adjacent pieces, will it be possible to match and insert the Book of Parables into the emerging picture.

### **The Author of the Book of Parables**

Study of the text of the Book of Parables finds that although it draws from a variety of literary sources, these have been shaped by a firm compositional hand, to produce a text that has been artfully constructed on a literary and oral level.<sup>5</sup> It is therefore justified to consider it as the product of a single author, with the interpolation of some additional material from other hands.<sup>6</sup>

The author of the Book of Parables identifies himself pseudonymously with the ancient patriarch Enoch (Gn 5,19), as he records what is revealed to him during his heavenly ascent and journey (cf. Gn 5,24). His work conforms fully to the definition of a Jewish apocalypse, of the type written in the Land of Israel from the mid to late Second Temple period.<sup>7</sup> The author's revelation is written in three sections he calls "parables" (*1En* 37:5; 38:1; 45:1; 58:1), in which he describes the preparations for eschatological judgment and salvation with increasing detail and urgency. His book immediately follows the Book of the Watchers (*1En* 6–36), which he frequently returns to, and develops. From this, it is evident that the author of the Parables had a good knowledge of the Book of the Watchers and crafted his book as a sequel to it. The origin of evil in the world, through the descent of the rebel angels on to Mt. Hermon, is a major theme in the Book of the Watchers, and the imminent judgment of those fallen angels, together with the judgment of the kings, the mighty, the landowners and the unrepentant sinners is the main concern of the Book

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<sup>5</sup> Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 34.

<sup>6</sup> According to Darell Hannah, most scholars today would agree that the Parables contains interpolations from a Noah apocryphon, although the precise delineation of these interpolations is still debated. Hannah has proposed *1En* 54:7–55:2; 60:1–10, 24–25; and 65:1–69:25 as certain, and ch 64 as likely, cf. Hannah, 'The Book of Noah, the Death of Herod the Great and the Date of the Parables of Enoch', in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, 2007; 473.

<sup>7</sup> It is a typical example of the genre 'apocalypse', whose definition is now well known and widely used, thanks to the definitive work of Collins, in 'Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre', *Semeia*, 1979.

of Parables. Without going into further detail, it is clear that the author of Parables was continuing a tradition that began with the Book of the Watchers, and that Mt. Hermon was an important point of reference for both (*IEn* 6:6; cf. *IEn* 39:1-2; 64:1-2).

Apart from the flashbacks to the rebellion of the angels, there is another important link between these two Enochic texts: The Book of Parables repeats, with some variation, the names and transgressions of the rebel angels (*IEn* 69:2-3), as they appear in the Book of the Watchers (*IEn* 6:3-8; 8:1-4). This list is followed by another list of rebel angels and their fateful effects, which bears little relation to the first list (*IEn* 69:4-15). Although it is not clear whether these two lists are original and displaced or just imported from elsewhere, it is abundantly clear that they constitute a substantial repository of information about the rebel angels, including and transcending what is presented in the Book of Watchers. Loren Stuckenbruck informs us that, apart from the Book of Giants and the name 'Azazel', and "despite the influence of the Enochic accounts, the names of the chief angelic perpetrators of evil are conspicuously absent outside the earliest Enoch tradition".<sup>8</sup> This means that the convergence of the lists of angelic names in the Parables of Enoch (*IEn* 69:2-15) is an indication that the author/editor considered himself to be a transmitter of that same tradition.

The matter would probably rest there if we knew nothing more about this tradition. However, in his description of the countryside Essene movement, Flavius Josephus informs us that on entering the community, each member swore an oath to "preserve equally the books belonging to their sect and the names of the angels" (*JW* 2.142).<sup>9</sup> The unique collection of the names of the rebel angels, in a traditional form, within a work attributed to Enoch, almost certainly reflects this particular aspect of

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<sup>8</sup> Stuckenbruck, *The Myth of the Rebellious Angels*, 2017; 82.

<sup>9</sup> *JW*, *Ant* and *Life* are the abbreviations used respectively for *Jewish War*, *Antiquities* and the *Autobiography* by Josephus (quotes are from *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, 1999, unless otherwise indicated). A reference to oath-taking on joining the community can be found in 1QS 5:8-9, though Josephus does not appear to have been dependent on this (cf. *JW* 2.137-142). Given that most of his material would have been inaccessible to outsiders, the detail he gives is exceptional. The best explanation is the one given by him in *Life* 9-11, that at the age of 16 (53/54 CE) he was a guest at an Essene community for a few months. His recollection of the details of the admission oaths indicates that he may have studied them carefully with a view to becoming an Essene himself. By referring to them as "awesome oaths", however, he hints he was intimidated by them, and by the punishments for transgressors, thus indicating why he decided not to join. In all his writings, he retains the highest regard for the Essenes.

Essene piety.<sup>10</sup> The somewhat awkward inclusion of the list of the names of the rebel angels in the Book of Parables, with an updated description of their transgressions (*1En* 69:2-15)<sup>11</sup> and modelled on the original list in the Book of the Watchers (*1En* 6:3-8; 8:1-4), suggests that the author of the Parables was indeed fulfilling an obligation to ‘preserve the names of the angels’, which in turn would ensure the preservation of his book. This is significant as it would identify him, and the group which edited his work, as full members of an Essene community. Since no part of the Book of Parables has been found at Qumran, he could not have been a member of the Essene community at Qumran. Nevertheless, Philo, Josephus and Hippolytus all describe the Essene movement as disseminated throughout the country, in cities and villages, and as more diverse than the Qumran community.<sup>12</sup> It would seem justified, then, to describe our author, by exclusion, as a ‘non-Qumranic Essene’.

This suggestion receives further clarification from an examination of the literary characteristics of the Book of Parables. Although its terms, expressions, themes and technical formulations exhibit many similarities to those of the Dead Sea scrolls, the substantial differences argue against its origin in the same community. At the end of her recent study, Devorah Dimant sums up the complex literary relationship as follows: “In consequence, the *Book of Parables* should be viewed as having been created by circles close but not identical to the Qumran group, or by those who have drawn upon its legacy”.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, John J. Collins notes: “In view of the absence of the Similitudes from Qumran, we may safely conclude that they were not composed there. (...) It is sufficient that the authors of the Similitudes were well versed in the earlier Enoch books and adapted some of their

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<sup>10</sup> No attempt will be made here to try to explain why the lists of angels were important to the Essenes, or for what purpose they may have been used.

<sup>11</sup> For a thorough literary analysis, see Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 297-303.

<sup>12</sup> Josephus, *Ant* 18.20, *JW* 2.124; Philo, *Quod Omnis Probus* 75-6, *Hypothetica* 11:1,8; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 9.15,21.

<sup>13</sup> The quotation is from Dimant, ‘The Book of Parables (1 Enoch 37–71) and the Qumran Community Worldview’, *From Enoch to Tobit: Collected Studies in Ancient Jewish Literature*, 2017; 155. In the same study, Dimant gives examples of the ‘contiguity between certain formulations in the *Book of Parables* and the content and terminology of the Qumran community literary output’, *From Enoch to Tobit*, 139-155. Examples of common terms and expressions are also given by Greenfield and Stone, ‘The Enochic Pentateuch and the Date of the Similitudes’, *Harvard Theological Review*, 70, 1/2 (1977), 51-65; and common themes are outlined by Fröhlich, ‘The Parables of Enoch and Qumran Literature’, in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 348-349.

conceptions and terminology. Nonetheless it is quite possible that the Similitudes originated in a closed circle somewhat analogous to Qumran. The quasi-technical terminology and the distinctive faith in ‘that Son of Man’ support the idea that the authors of Similitudes belonged to a group apart”.<sup>14</sup>

Although these distinguished scholars do not specifically identify the author of Parables as a non-Qumranic Essene, their observations would appear to be entirely consistent with this suggestion.

## Social Setting

### a. *The Protagonists*

The suggestion the author may have been a member of an Essene community, other than that of Qumran, receives further support from a simple reconstruction of the social context represented in the text. The author writes for, and appears to identify himself with, the faithful people of God, to whom he refers numerous times as the “righteous”, the “chosen” or the “holy”, and in various combinations of these worthy qualities. Part of this faithful community are already in heaven, while the rest are on earth, where they assemble in local communities and suffer persecution at the hands of the kings and the mighty, up to the shedding of their blood:

“And they [*the kings and the mighty*] persecute the houses of his congregation, and the faithful who depend on the name of the Lord of Spirits. In those days, there had arisen the prayer of the righteous, and the blood of the righteous one, from the earth into the presence of the Lord of Spirits. In these days the holy ones who dwell in the heights of heaven were uniting with one voice, and they were glorifying and praising and blessing the name of the Lord of Spirits, and were interceding and praying in behalf of the blood of the righteous that had been shed, and the prayer of the righteous, that it might not be in vain in the presence of the Lord of Spirits; that judgment might be executed for them, and endurance might not be their (lot) forever.” (*1En* 46:8–47:2)

From the text of the Parables, George Nickelsburg extrapolates the following information about the ‘houses of his congregation’: “They saw themselves as the “chosen,” that is the true Israel, who were also the “the righteous”, thus faithful to the commandments of “the Lord of Spirits.” (...) That they gathered for purposes of worship is indicated by the liturgical echoes that are scattered through the book. The repetitive

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<sup>14</sup> Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 1998; 191-2.

formulations of and references to angelic worship in 39:6–40:10 and 61:6–13 perhaps indicate that the members of the congregation saw their worship as in concert with the praise that the heavenly choruses directed to the Lord of Spirits and the Chosen One”.<sup>15</sup> This last point is supported by the common terminology, the “holy ones”, for the angelic host in heaven and for the faithful on earth.<sup>16</sup>

The text goes on to describe the preparations for divine judgment and the dramatic eschatological reversal that will follow. In summary, the author appears to be closely associated with a congregation of righteous, chosen and holy people, who worship God in communion with the angels and with their own resurrected members in heaven, and who live in small communities on earth, where they suffer persecution from the kings and the mighty, and look forward to a reversal in their condition at the divine judgment. This congregation is the intended recipient of the wisdom revealed in the Book of Parables.<sup>17</sup>

This profile of the author’s community should be sufficient to identify it among the various groups in existence in the second temple period and beyond, but the scholars who have tried to do this have had no success. Although it is strongly reminiscent of the Qumran community that worshipped with Hymns, Psalms and special compositions such as the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, it does not share the same halachic or cultic interests, nor the same sectarian concern for separation, a concern that became extreme and ‘introversionist’ at Qumran. This point has been made again and again, most notably by Pierluigi Piovanelli,<sup>18</sup> George Nickelsburg,<sup>19</sup> and by Lester Grabbe, who works through a check list of possible groups that might have produced this writing, and ends up with a profile that does not fit any known group, including those of the Pharisees and Sadducees.<sup>20</sup> Along the way he discounts the Qumran community and

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<sup>15</sup> Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 65.

<sup>16</sup> For a useful survey, see Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 100.

<sup>17</sup> Aply summed up by Piovanelli: “The entire text is a hymn to the glory of “the children and the chosen ones” of the Lord of the Spirits (62:11), an invitation to take courage and not abandon the hope (cf. 104: 4)”, in “A Testimony for the Kings and the Mighty Who Possess the Earth”: The Thirst for Justice and Peace in the Parables of Enoch’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 371.

<sup>18</sup> Piovanelli, ‘A Testimony’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 373-375.

<sup>19</sup> Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 66.

<sup>20</sup> “These characteristics seem to describe a messianic group with its own identity but that has not necessarily withdrawn from Jewish society. Members are pacifist, or at least aiming to let God be the active one in their salvation, and are certainly not seeking to establish God’s kingdom by military means. The group includes intellectuals (whether

the Essenes, although he admits “The Book of Parables has much in common with Qumran (though it is not certain that any of the Enochic writings are the products of Qumran)”, and “As with Qumran (which is often identified as Essene in some way), the Book of Parables seems to be compatible with what we know of the Essenes, who are said to have been interested in esoteric books”. Nevertheless, he finally dismisses an Essene connection by noting: “there seems to be nothing specifically Essene in the Parables”,<sup>21</sup> a remark that echoes the lack of those specifically sectarian interests and concerns noticed by other scholars. So, to sum up, although the Book of Parables has much in common with Qumran, and is compatible with what we know of the Essenes, no connection can be asserted because of the non-sectarian and universal character of this book.

At this point, we should remember that there were differences as well as similarities between the Essenes at large and the Qumran community in particular, and that it was probably because of these differences that the Book of Parables, along with several other works, never found their way into the collection of Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>22</sup> If our definition of what is Essene, and what is not, is based solely on the content of the Dead Sea Scrolls, then our definition will fail to take account of those other Essene writings that were excluded from Qumran for whatever reason. There will be, as indeed there is, a sizeable ‘lacuna’ in our understanding of the non-Qumranic Essenes.

The non-Qumran Essenes have, nevertheless, left a significant mark in the Dead Sea Scrolls, in those passages of the *Damascus Document* (CD) that allude to the division which occurred among the Essenes *after* they had united into, and defined themselves by, a ‘new covenant’. It was a division within the Essene household that effectively became permanent.<sup>23</sup>

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priests or scribes) with a strong interest in cosmology, though no evidence of knowledge of Greek exists”, Lester Grabbe, ‘The Parables of Enoch in Second Temple Jewish Society’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 402.

<sup>21</sup> The three quotations are from Grabbe, ‘The Parables of Enoch’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 399.

<sup>22</sup> These works include the Epistle of Enoch, Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, and others.

<sup>23</sup> Our research supports the basic tenet of the hypothesis of Florentino García Martínez (‘Qumran Origins and Early History: A Groningen Hypothesis’, *Folia Orientalia*, XXV, 1988; 113-36), further developed by Gabriele Boccaccini (*Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 1998), that there was a division within the ‘new covenant’ community known as ‘Essene’, and that this division is indeed reflected in the *Damascus Document*, and other sectarian works (*Pesharim*). For other arguments, see Ben-Daniel, ‘The Essenes and Jerusalem’, *Qumran Chronicle*, 30, 1-4, 2022; 77-118; and in this volume.



After expressing several stern warnings to those who fail to live up to the demands of the new covenant, which they entered in the land of Damascus, “who again betray it and depart from the fountain of living waters” (CD [B]I,1=19:34),<sup>24</sup> the *Damascus Document* gives the impression that a further departure of the followers of the Teacher of Righteousness had already occurred, because, among other things, “they returned again to the way of the people in small (or ‘a few’) matters” (CD [B] II,23-24=20:23-24).<sup>25</sup> Here, the departure of ‘the House of Separation’ (or ‘Division’, Heb: *Peleg*), as the parting members are called, is still fresh, for these individuals are invited to appear before the council and be reconciled or judged, before the Glory of God returns to Israel and it will be too late (CD [B] II,23-34=20:23-34). The reasons given for the recent internal division are various: failing to perform the duties of the upright, having idolatrous desires, ‘walking in stubbornness’, rejecting or criticizing the precepts of righteousness, and despising the covenant and the pact—the new covenant—which they made in the land of Damascus. Above all, in a context that emphasizes disengagement from the surrounding society,<sup>26</sup> the charge against those who “returned again to the way of the people” is redolent with disagreement on matters of purity and segregation from fellow Israelites (the people). Ironically, “the House of Separation” was the name given to those Essenes—for they were also members of the ‘new covenant’—who resisted the command to separate themselves from their fellow Jews. Gabriele Boccaccini states it thus: “The Damascus Document also reveals that the catalyst of the schism between the parent movement and the teacher of righteousness was his decision to call for stricter segregation from the rest of Israel, whom he considered under the dominion of Belial”.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> All quotations and references are from *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, Vermes, 2011; 134-137.

<sup>25</sup> Boccaccini explains this as follows “In other words, the house of Peleg is a group of people who share the Enochic view of the contamination of postexilic Judaism, but are now accused by the teacher of righteousness of being inconsistent with their own positions and too ready to compromise”, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 1998; 151-2. My only reservation is that the teacher of righteousness had been ‘gathered in’ by this time, so the accusers were his loyal followers.

<sup>26</sup> The process of disengaging is expressed in a variety of ways, e.g., “departing from the people”, “separating from the sons of the Pit”, “distinguishing between the clean and unclean, the holy and profane”, “keeping apart from every uncleanness according to the statutes relating to each one”.

<sup>27</sup> Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 150. There may be some terminological confusion because the parent group are here called ‘Enochians’. They should really be identified as Essenes at this stage, because they are also members of the new covenant

The internal division and hostility attested by the *Damascus Document* increases in intensity in the later works of the Qumran sectarians (*Pesher Nahum* 4Q169 4:1, *Pesher Psalms* 4Q171 2:14-15 and *Pesher Habakkuk* 1QpHab 2:1-4; 5:8-12), accompanied by increasing divergence in religious, theological and eschatological points of view.<sup>28</sup> The main difference, however, remained the issue of separation from the surrounding society. Although both groups continued to abide by the rules and discipline of the Essene ‘new covenant’, and both groups can therefore be regarded as Essene, the Qumran Essenes were essentially a sect, *sui generis*, separated from the people of Israel and divorced from the Temple, whereas the non-Qumran Essenes, while maintaining some degree of doctrinal secrecy, were more open to dealing with fellow Jews, and even contributed to the Temple institution in a limited way (*Ant* 18.19). In brief, unlike the extremely sectarian Qumran Essenes, the non-Qumran Essenes were not sectarian in the strict sense of the word.<sup>29</sup>

Nothing illustrates this better than the final warning from the extremely puritanical Essenes to their moderate and socially aware counterparts, shortly after their final parting, as recorded in the *Damascus Document*: “They shall be judged in the same manner as their companions were judged who deserted to the Scoffer. For they have spoken wrongly against the precepts of righteousness, and have despised the Covenant and the Pact—the New Covenant—which they made in the land of the Covenant” (CD [B] II,10-13=20:10-13).<sup>30</sup> Those who deserted to the ‘Scoffer’ are the Pharisees and it is of great significance that the moderate Essenes are now described as their “companions”.<sup>31</sup>

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community known by that name. There is no historical record of a group who were called ‘Enochians’ or ‘Enochic Jews’.

<sup>28</sup> Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 150-156. The magnitude of the difference can be grasped by comparing, or rather contrasting, the eschatological prophecy represented in the Parables of Enoch with that of the War Scroll (1QM), produced contemporaneously by the Qumran community

<sup>29</sup> Secret society perhaps, but not a ‘sect’. For a practical and verifiable criterion for what constituted a sect in second-temple Judaism, see Bauckham, ‘Parting of the Ways: What happened and Why’, *Studia Theologica* 47, (1993); 135-151.

<sup>30</sup> Trans. Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 137. The ‘Scoffer’ is the high priest Jonathan Maccabee, also called the ‘Liar’ and the ‘Wicked Priest’. Around 152 BCE, the Pharisees (‘separatists’) remained with the high priest Jonathan in Jerusalem and ‘separated’ from the Teacher of Righteousness, who went into exile with the rest of his followers, in ‘the land of Damascus’, where they became known as Essenes.

<sup>31</sup> Other versions have ‘scoffers’, but the meaning differs little, if one takes ‘scoffers’ as a derogatory term for the Pharisees, because they had followed ‘the Scoffer’ (see

In the context of this internal division, and of the divergence of the two Essene factions, the lack of sectarian characteristics in the Book of Parables, along with its more universal and tolerant character, are no longer barriers to recognizing it as the work of an Essene author, living in a non-Qumranic community, somewhere in or near the Land of Israel. In fact, the Book of Parables now becomes a unique source of information about this branch of the Essenes, which can be called ‘mainstream’ to all intents and purposes.

**b. *The Antagonists***

The discussion of the social setting of the Book of Parables is not complete without considering the chief human antagonists, those who rebelled against the Lord of Spirits and persecuted his people (*IEn* 46:8), who are mentioned in the text at least 15 times in similar, though not identical, expressions. They are called ‘the kings, the mighty (the strong or exalted) and those who possess the land’. In addition to the rebellious angels and the unrepentant sinners, ‘the kings, the mighty and those who possess the land’ are all selected for eternal condemnation at the impending judgment.

“And the son of man whom you have seen—he will raise the kings and mighty from their couches, and the strong from their thrones. He will loosen the reins of the strong, and he will crush the teeth of the sinners. He will overturn the kings from their thrones and their kingdoms, because they do not exalt him or praise him, or humbly acknowledge whence the kingdom was given to them.

The face of the strong he will turn aside, and he will fill them with shame. Darkness will be their dwelling, and worms will be their couch, and they will have no hope to rise from their couches, because they do not exalt the name of the Lord of Spirits.

These are they who judge the stars of heaven, and raise their hands against the Most High, and tread upon the earth and dwell on it.

All their deeds manifest unrighteousness, and their power (rests) upon their wealth. Their faith is in the gods they have made with their hands, and they deny the name of the Lord of Spirits.

And they persecute the houses of his congregation, and the faithful who depend on the name of the Lord of Spirits.” (*IEn* 46:4-8)

Pierluigi Piovanelli has captured the author’s intense irritation with these elites at the top of ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman societies and

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previous note). In this case, however, the ‘companions’ would be the like-minded Essenes who had already ‘deserted’ and reconciled with the Pharisees.

contrasts the unprecedented focus of his attack with Enoch's previous literary targets. "This explicit and uncompromising attack against the political leaders of the day is a novelty in the Enochic tradition. Thus, for example, even if some scholars interpret the myth of the fallen angels in the Book of the Watchers (*IEn* 6–11) as a metaphoric response to persecution by the Hellenistic kings, the text never suggests such identification. On the other hand, even if the Epistle of Enoch contains many woes against the rich (94:6–95:3; 96:4; 97:7–10) that cruelly oppress the righteous (103:9–15), kings and mighty ones are never accused of being guilty of such a crime. (...) ...such a shift from economic to political injustice demonstrates that some changes had occurred in the social world of the circle that produced the Book of Parables".<sup>32</sup>

Condemnation falls on the kings and mighty for their denial of God, for their persecution of the people of God and for their idolatrous conduct, raising the suspicion that they were pagan rulers, Greek or Roman, or Jewish kings, such as the Hasmoneans or Herodians, who compromised with pagan rulers and adopted their practices and customs. The 'mighty' most probably refers to the military commanders in the service of the kings.

Granted that the author was a member of the Essenes, who returned to the Land of Israel from exile around 100 BCE, and settled in multiple communities around the country during the reign of one of the later Hasmoneans (Alexander Jannaeus, Salome Alexandra, Hyrcanus II, Aristobulus II, Antigonos), it is fair to assume that they would have been persecuted by these 'kings and their mighty men'. Not only had the Essenes refused to submit and conform to the high priestly rule of the Hasmoneans from the time of Jonathan in 152 BCE, for which reason they had withdrawn from the Temple cult and taken themselves into exile, but they had also more recently prophesied and actively supported the ascent of Herod to the throne, to replace them.<sup>33</sup> The Hasmoneans and their

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<sup>32</sup> Piovanelli, 'A Testimony', *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 372–3.

<sup>33</sup> The Essenes supported Herod before, during and after the Civil War, and received royal prerogatives in return. Their support dates from Herod's childhood, when an Essene prophet told him he would be 'King of the Jews', apparently basing himself on the interpretation of an ancient prophecy (Gen 49,10). After Herod became king, the Essenes were given the Essene Quarter in Jerusalem, located behind Herod's Palace, and the whole community was exempted from the loyalty oath that Herod imposed upon other religious groups. Josephus sums up the relationship as follows: "...Herod had these Essenes in such honour, and thought higher of them than their mortal nature required" (*Ant* 15.372). There is little doubt that the Essenes were Herod's greatest supporters among the Jews, for they saw his reign as the fulfilment of prophecy and, therefore, divinely sanctioned.

mighty henchmen had accumulated decades of resentment against the Essenes, so the Essenes' return to the Land of Israel, from exile in the 'land of Damascus', would more than likely have triggered the urge to punish and persecute them.

The final group of antagonists, 'those who possess the land', is a new group, never previously singled out for condemnation. First, however, we should allow George Nickelsburg to explain the complexities of translating this expression from Ge'ez. There are several options, depending on the choice of subject, verb and object. Either the antagonists are mighty kings who have seized control of the inhabited earth which they now rule over (general reference to the political and military leaders of the time), or they are local kings, military officials and wealthy individuals who have come, by foul means or fair, to possess much of the Land of Israel and its produce (local interpretation). Because the expression occurs at least seven times in a context of injustice towards the righteous, Nickelsburg decides for the local option: 'those who possess the land' refers to the wealthy owners, legitimate or illegitimate, of the local agricultural land.<sup>34</sup>

In Hasmonean and Herodian times, 'those who possess the land' applies especially to members of the wealthy landowning aristocracy, the lay nobility, the leading families, who lived and thrived in Jerusalem. These were the descendants of the heads of the families (the elders) who returned from exile and, together with the high priests, assumed a leading role in the government of the post-exilic community. With the Levites, they accompanied the daily liturgy from the Court of Israelites. The services they undertook for the Temple, such as the regular provision of firewood, show that they were landowning families. They also formed the economic backbone of the Sadducean party and commanded a small majority in the Sanhedrin.<sup>35</sup> Later, they were given the responsibility of collecting the taxes due to Rome as tribute, making up any shortfall with their own wealth. They acquired the best land in the country, transported its produce to Jerusalem and made a handsome profit from selling it at Jerusalem's inflated prices. This is illustrated by the account of 'the three men of great wealth', who, at the beginning of the first Jewish Revolt, pledged to provide food and wood for Jerusalem for twenty-one years. Even though their political power started to decline with the last of the

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<sup>34</sup> Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 103-6.

<sup>35</sup> Most of the information about the rich landowners comes from Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 2016; 92-99, 222-232.

Hasmonean rulers, it appears their wealth continued to grow well into the first century CE. Joachim Jeremias sums them up as follows: “Thanks to their ties with the powerful priestly nobility, the rich patrician families were a very influential factor in the life of the nation. Especially under the Hasmoneans, up to the beginning of Queen Alexandra’s reign (76 BCE), was political power in their hands. Together with the leading priests they made up the Sanhedrin, and consequently they, together with the sovereign, possessed judiciary power and authority to govern. The decline of their power dates from the time of Alexandra; under her the Pharisees gained a foothold in the Sanhedrin, and the mass of people rallied more and more to them”.<sup>36</sup>

Adding these wealthy landlords to the kings and the mighty, and repeating this triad in a list of criminals awaiting judgment, suggests that the rich landlords also had a role in persecuting the righteous. In the context sketched above, of the return of the Essenes from exile at the start of the first century BCE, it is conceivable that the Essene project of establishing agricultural communities in rural areas was blocked or frustrated by the rich landlords, because their interests collided. These rich landlords may also have been acquiring land in the areas where the Essenes wanted to settle. In some areas, large amounts of land had already been seized by the king and by his household, so the kings could and should be included in the category of ‘those who possess the land’. Undoubtedly the ‘mighty’, referring to the military officers, should be included too, as their services were often rewarded by the king with the gift of estates and land in rural areas. So, between ‘the king, the mighty and the wealthy landlords’ a large proportion of the best agricultural land in the country had been taken out of the control of traditional homestead farmers, who were then re-employed as tenant farmers or day-labourers on land that was now owned by powerful, wealthy and often absentee landlords. The nationwide ‘land grab’ of the wicked triad impoverished many traditional farmers and forced them into a form of servitude. It was a process that appears to have continued across the country, throughout the first century BCE and well into the first century CE.

According to James Charlesworth, the factors leading to this disenfranchisement of the traditional peasant farmer, such as onerous taxation and land seizure under the royal patronage system, became more severe during King Herod’s reign, mainly due to the cost of his foreign and domestic building projects, and this alone could account for the social

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<sup>36</sup> Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 232.

injustice represented in the Book of Parables.<sup>37</sup> He then argues that the author's concern with the socio-economic decline of peasant farmers helps to date his book to the reign of Herod, and this has been largely endorsed by Nickelsburg in his commentary.<sup>38</sup>

More recently, however, doubts have been expressed about this assertion: some historians claim that conditions for the peasant farmers were not much worse during Herod's reign, than during the antecedent rule of the Hasmoneans.<sup>39</sup>

David Fiensy seems to strike the right balance when he writes: "Doubtless Herod had considerable personal estates from which to draw but he also evidently increased taxes to afford all of his activity. We know this because after Herod's death, the Jews of Palestine sent delegates to Rome to report his misdeeds. On the list of his crimes was that he had decorated surrounding non-Jewish cities at the expense of the Palestinian ones. He had impoverished the entire Jewish nation with his building programs both inside Palestine and outside (Josephus, Ant 17.307; J.W. 2.285)".<sup>40</sup>

In summary, under Herod, the average Jewish farmer would have found it more difficult to make ends meet, but the extra tax burden did not cause widespread social crisis or unrest. On its own, it does not explain the stark condemnations of the ruling elite in the Book of Parables, nor the allusions to grave social injustice in that book. There was indeed a severe social crisis during Herod's reign, and although it was perpetuated, even exacerbated by, the land grab of the powerful and wealthy, the main geopolitical causes lay elsewhere, as we will see at the end of this paper. In contrast to the author of the Parables of Enoch, who blames the ruling elite, Josephus unsympathetically refers to the perpetrators of this crisis as "brigands".

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<sup>37</sup> Charlesworth, 'Can we Discern the Composition Date of the Parables of Enoch?', *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 459-468, with updates in Charlesworth, 'The Date and Provenience of the Parables of Enoch' and in 'Did Jesus Know the Traditions in the Parables of Enoch', *Parables of Enoch: A Paradigm Shift*, 2013; 48-53 and 180-184 respectively.

<sup>38</sup> Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 63-64.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Richardson and Fisher, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans*, 2018; 321-324.

<sup>40</sup> Fiensy, 'Assessing the Economy of Galilee in the Late Second Temple Period: Five Considerations', *The Galilean Economy in the Time of Jesus*, 2013; 181.

### The Date of Authorship

Until about a decade or two ago, the dating of the Parables was one of the most contentious issues in the study of this book. Suggestions varied from c.70 BCE (R.H. Charles) to c. 270 CE (Joseph Milik) and everything in between. However, at the Enoch Seminar held at Camaldoli, Italy, in 2005, a consensus crystallized among the majority of scholars, for a date towards the end of the reign of King Herod the Great, which is to say around the end of the first century BCE. A minority argue for a later date, in the second half of the first century CE, but this could also reflect a later stage in the composition. As there is no early manuscript history to guide the dating, and since the uniform literary style is not that of the author or authors, but of the 4<sup>th</sup>-century translator from Greek into Ge'ez, the matter is still debated, but without any new evidence to challenge the consensus.<sup>41</sup>

Paolo Sacchi summarizes several avenues for research on dating: “As is well known, the dating of the Parables can be made only by internal criteria, because we have no external evidence from ancient sources about the Parables. This research can proceed in many different ways: (1) we can look for quotations in the patristic literature to obtain a terminus ante quem; (2) we can look for literary sources that could provide a terminus a quo; (3) we can analyze the ideology of the book itself to establish some ideological links between the Parables and other literary documents, which then help us determine what time period best fits the text; and (4) we can explore possible historical allusions in the text. This last approach is in my opinion the most secure, if and when it is possible. This method of dating has been applied to many other texts, such as the book of Daniel and the book of Dream Visions, whose dating is reasonably deduced from the last known event recorded in each respective narrative”.<sup>42</sup> Since avenues (1), (2) and (3) have not so far produced a solid basis for dating

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<sup>41</sup> In brief, the present state of the question is whether the Book of Parables was written a generation before the public ministry of Jesus Christ (c. 20-1 BCE), a generation after (50-70 CE), or whether the earliest part was written before and the latest part was added after. For useful reviews on dating and analysis, see the contributions of Suter, ‘Enoch in Sheol: Updating the Dating of the Book of Parables’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 415-443; Stone, ‘Enoch’s Date in Limbo; or Some Considerations on David Suter’s Analysis of the Book of Parables’, op. cit. 444-449; and Sacchi, ‘The 2005 Camaldoli Seminar on the Parables of Enoch: Summary and Prospects for Future Research’, op. cit. 499-512.

<sup>42</sup> Sacchi, ‘The 2005 Camaldoli Seminar’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 505-6.



the Parables, the present consensus is built upon two identifiable historical allusions (4), and probably a third.<sup>43</sup>

The first of these is an allusion to the final illness of King Herod in 4 BCE. Josephus Flavius relates that, shortly before his death from complications of diabetes (Fournier gangrene and end-stage renal failure), Herod visited his villa at Callirrhoë, on the northeastern shores of the Dead Sea, where there were thermal baths, well known throughout the Empire for their healing properties. In his case, however, the waters did not help and Herod died a few days later in severe pain, interpreted by some as divine punishment for his sexual immorality (*JW* 1.656-658; *Ant* 17.168-172). Due to Herod's international fame, the circumstances of his death became widely known, so it should cause no surprise to find echoes and allusions in contemporary literature.

In the Book of Parables, the fiery valley in which the rebellious angels were incarcerated to await judgment is identified with the valley that generates the thermal springs to which 'the kings and the mighty and the exalted' resort for healing. But because they have believed in satisfying their own pleasure and have denied the name of the Lord of Spirits, the place where they seek healing will also become the place of their judgment (*1En* 67:4-12). The allusion to Herod's judgment and death becomes even more evident when we discover that it was written as an update by the author of the Parables, and that this same author describes the punishment as a judgment for seeking (sexual) pleasure, a known fault of Herod, but a slight deviation from the reason stated in the rest of the text, namely, for persecuting and oppressing the righteous. This can therefore be understood as a specific allusion to Herod's terminal illness, in the light of his recent death in 4 BCE.<sup>44</sup>

The second of the historical allusions in the text is to the Civil War (40–37 BCE), and especially to its three crucial phases: (1) the invasion of the Parthians in 40 BCE to remove Hyrcanus II from the throne in Jerusalem and replace him with his nephew Antigonus; (2) the internecine strife and murder between the Hasmonean supporters of Antigonus and those of his main rival, Herod, whom the Roman Senate had meanwhile appointed as king; (3) the arrival of Roman troops from Syria to assist Herod in removing Antigonus and installing himself on the throne in

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<sup>43</sup> The third is an intensification of the social problem identified by Charlesworth (mentioned in previous section), and will be described later, in full, in the section 'New Light on the Social Setting'.

<sup>44</sup> For the full exposition, see Hannah, 'The Book of Noah', *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 469-477.

Jerusalem. Josephus has given us a detailed account of these and many other aspects of the Civil War (*JW* 1.288-358 and *Ant* 14.392-491).

In the Parables of Enoch, the author refers to the same three phases of the Civil War (*1En* 56:5-7; 56:7-8; 57:1-3), but instead of describing them in the past, he projects them into the future, and presents them as stages of the eschatological war leading to the triumph of the righteous. The author appears to have modelled his prophecy of the eschatological war between good and evil on these developments in the Civil War (40-37 BCE), in a way that suggests that he had personally witnessed them and they were still fresh in his memory. This establishes the date of the Book of Parables to the generation immediately following the Civil War, i.e., from 35 to 20 BCE. If another period of dire suffering and social inequality was the impetus for writing, one would have to look no further than the regional drought and famine of 25/24 BCE (Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.299-326).

So far as the dating of the Parables is concerned, then, we arrive at a period from 35 to 4 BCE, which is to say, sometime during the reign of King Herod the Great.

### **The Geographical Setting**

The passages in the Book of Parables that betray the author's personal experience of the Civil War (*1En* 56:5-8; 57:1-3) not only allow us to date the work, but to locate it to a place that was deeply affected by that event. It was somewhere north of Jerusalem, as armies are seen moving south on their way to that city (*1En* 56:7; 57:1). To identify the author's location, the account of the Civil War by Josephus provides a wealth of well-sourced information, due to his dependence on the writings of Nicholas of Damascus.<sup>45</sup> Besides Jerusalem, Josephus's account highlights Eastern Galilee as a major hub of conflict in the Civil War, so this would seem to be a good place to look for the home of our author (Fig 4.1):

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. 'Nicholas of Damascus' by Stern in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol 15, 2007, 252.

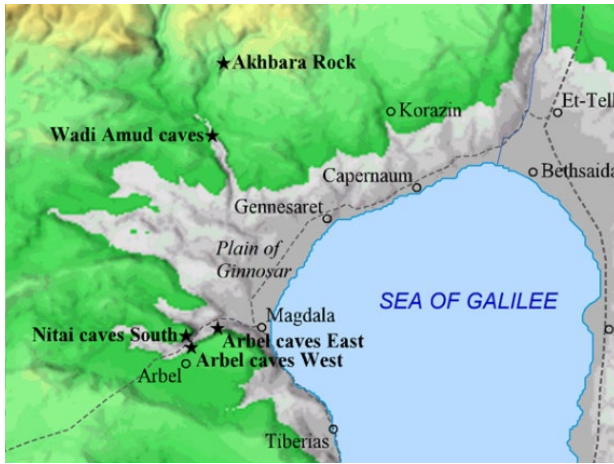


Fig 4.1: Map of the Plain of Ginnosar with the main inhabited cave sites in the limestone cliff ranges to the north and south. Mt. Arbel is the mountain to the southwest of Magdala, and the Arbel cave village is here called 'Arbel caves East' (created using Bible Mapper 5.0).

Situated on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, Magdala (Taricheae in Greek) had been a stronghold of Hasmonean support since its foundation by Hasmonean officials around 100 BCE and it soon became the administrative centre (*toparchy*) and most densely populated *polis* in the region.<sup>46</sup> After the crushing defeat of the Roman army by the Parthians in Mesopotamia in 53 BCE, many of the pro-Hasmonean Jews who had supported Aristobulus II against Hyrcanus II turned to the Parthians for help in restoring their independence from Rome. They found a leader in the Jewish general Peitholaus, *hypostrategos* of Jerusalem (*JW* 1.162,172; *Ant* 14.93), who started to plot a revolt against the Romans. This provoked a Roman military invasion under general Cassius, who executed Peitholaus in or near Magdala and enslaved 30,000 local men (Josephus, *JW* 1.180; *Ant* 14.119-122). In 43 BCE, Cassius signed off a letter to Cicero with *ex castris Taricheis*, i.e., from the Roman military camp at Magdala (Taricheae), indicating ongoing military activity at that place.<sup>47</sup>

Taking advantage of the Roman leadership crisis in 40 BCE, the pro-Hasmonean forces from Parthia swept past Magdala, led by their general Barzaphranes, on their way to Jerusalem to depose Hyrcanus II and enthrone his nephew Antigonus (*JW* 1.248-249; *Ant* 14.330-332). Soon after, Herod managed to escape to Rome, where the Senate recognized him as King of the Judaeans and promised him Roman military support.

<sup>46</sup> See Bauckham, *Magdala of Galilee*, 2018; 17-21, for a clear and concise account of what is known about the origins and early history of Magdala.

<sup>47</sup> Cicero, *Epistulae ad Familiares* XII,11.

In late 40 BCE, after only a week in Rome, Herod returned to his homeland, raised an army and the Civil War ensued.

Josephus relates how, a year later (in winter 39/38 BCE), Herod took Sepphoris, the capital of Galilee, in a snowstorm, without a fight (*JW* 1.303), before moving his entire army to Arbel, a mere 2-3 kms west of Magdala, in order to confront his enemy directly. After defeating a surprise attack on his camp on Mt. Arbel, Herod decided to eject the hostile cave-dwellers nearby, whom Josephus calls ‘brigands’: “he... then started on a campaign against the cave-dwelling brigands, who were infesting a wide area and inflicting on the inhabitants evils no less than those of war” (*JW* 1.304, trans H. Thackeray, Loeb series). Little by little over subsequent months, and not without losses, Herod’s army whittled down his opposition in various ways: in open battle, through aggressive pursuit, by search and destroy, with military siege and by the imposition of heavy fines (*JW* 1.304-316; *Ant* 14.415-433). Shortly before the Civil War ended, the Sea of Galilee at Magdala witnessed the drowning of some of Herod’s leading men by Hasmonean supporters (*JW* 1.326; *Ant* 14.450).

Finally, in 37 BCE, Magdala was on the path of the Roman forces swooping down from Syria to remove Antigonus and install Herod on the throne in Jerusalem (*JW* 1.327.345; *Ant* 14.447, 468-469). From this brief outline, it should be evident that the residents of Arbel, Magdala, and the surrounding region of Eastern Galilee, witnessed precisely the same three pivotal aspects of the Civil War that are described in the vision of the eschatological war, in the Parables of Enoch. The author may indeed have been resident in this area.

Textual correlation can be shown by quoting the text itself, in its three basic parts:

Part 1 (*IEn* 56:5-7):

“In those days, the angels will assemble themselves,  
and hurl themselves toward the East against the Parthians and Medes.  
They will stir up the kings, and a spirit of agitation will come upon them,  
and they will shake them off their thrones.  
They will break out like lions from their lairs,  
and like hungry wolves in the midst of their flocks.  
*They will go up and trample the land of my chosen ones,  
and the land of my chosen ones will be before them like a threshing floor and  
a (beaten) path;*  
but the city of my righteous ones will be a hindrance to their horses.”

Part 2 (*IEn* 56:7-8):

“*They will begin (to make) war among themselves,*

*and their right hand will be strong against them(selves),  
a man will not acknowledge his brother,  
nor a son, his father or his mother.*

Until the number of corpses will be enough due to their slaughter,  
and their punishment will not be in vain.

In those days Sheol will open its mouth,  
and they will sink into it.

And their destruction will be at an end;  
Sheol will devour the sinners from the presence of the chosen.”

Part 3 (*1En 57:1-3*):

*“After that I saw another host of chariots and people riding in them,  
and they came upon the winds from the East and the West toward the South,  
and the noise of the rumbling of their chariots was heard.*

When this commotion took place,  
the holy ones took note from heaven,  
and the pillars of the earth were shaken from their bases.

It was heard from one end of heaven to the other in one moment,  
and they all fell down and worshipped the Lord of Spirits.

This is the end of the second parable.”

On closer examination, certain aspects of the scenes described in this vision, here highlighted in italics, not only evoke the author’s memory of the experience, but would also appear to indicate his location overlooking the Plain of Ginnosar in Eastern Galilee:

In Part 1, the author describes the trampling of the agricultural crops by the Parthian cavalry, crossing the Plain of Ginnosar in 40 BCE, on their way south to take Jerusalem and place the Hasmonean Antigonos on the throne (*JW 1.248-249; Ant 14.330-332*).

In Part 2, he recalls the brutal violence between the local supporters of the Hasmonean Antigonos and the local supporters of Herod, Jews against Jews. Josephus recounts several violent episodes in the area, starting with the attack on Herod and his army near the town of Arbel, Herod’s aggressive pursuit of the attackers up to the Jordan river, his forceful removal of the hostile cave-dwellers occupying the Arbel caves, the ambush and murder of Herod’s general Ptolemy, the quelling of further insurrection, the siege of rebel strongholds, the extraction of heavy fines from rebel communities, and the drowning of Herodian supporters by some pro-Hasmonean loyalists in the Sea of Galilee near Magdala (*JW 1.305-316,326; Ant 14.415-430, 450*).

In Part 3, the author vividly evokes the thundering advance of the Roman army chariots under the command of Sossius, the governor of Syria, racing south across the Plain of Ginnosar to besiege and retake

Jerusalem in 37 BCE, to install Herod on the throne instead of Antigonus (*JW* 1.327-345; *Ant* 14.447, 468-469).

Since these scenes from the eschatological war in the Parables (*IEn* 56-57) read like a personal recollection of the most dramatic and pivotal moments of the Civil War from 40-37 BCE, the text can provide geographical as well as historical details about the author. Most significantly, it reads as if it is being recalled by an observer who was stationed high-up in the Arbel cliffs, overlooking the Plain of Ginnosar, and seeing with his own eyes the most momentous events take place from his lofty vantage-point. In other words, the author's vivid prophecy of the future eschatological war suggests that he witnessed the recent Civil War unfold from his residence high up in the cliffs of Mt. Arbel.

At this location, there is indeed a dense collection of caves in the cliffs of Mt. Arbel, which show evidence of Essene occupation from 100 BCE to around 250 CE, and its situation would certainly match the author's literary viewpoint. The archaeologists have called it a cave-village,<sup>48</sup> but Josephus names it more specifically as the 'village of the cave of Arbel' (*Life* 188, cf. *JW* 2.573). The reason for this term is the existence of a great cave at the site, which was fortified in Hasmonean times and refortified by Josephus before the first Jewish revolt in 66 CE. A detailed historical and archaeological presentation of this site can be found in a previous paper.<sup>49</sup>

In order to strengthen these literary impressions and forestall the charge of overinterpreting the ancient text, supporting evidence can be summoned from a variety of other topographical allusions in the Book of Parables.

It has already been observed that the author of Parables was developing a tradition that began with the Book of the Watchers, and that Mt. Hermon was an important point of reference for both. So, it is probably no coincidence that from the cliffs of Mt. Arbel, the author would also have enjoyed magnificent views of the Hermon massif, which lies 70 kms to the north (Fig 4.2). Although the Book of Parables refers only fleetingly to the descent of the rebel angels on to this mountain, and does not even mention Mt. Hermon by name (*IEn* 39:1-2; 64:1-2), the names of these angels, the consequences of their evil action, their punishment and their imminent judgment are described in such graphic terms and images that

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<sup>48</sup> Ilan, 'Reviving', *Eretz Magazine*, 1988/89; 66-67.

<sup>49</sup> Ben-Daniel, 'The Arbel Cave Village: Remains of an Essene Commune', *Qumran Chronicle*, 30, 1-4, 2022; 43-76; and in this volume.

Enoch's initial vision of their descent on to Mt. Hermon (*IEn* 6:6) is always in mind. Mt. Hermon was not just a powerful symbol for the origin of evil, but also a majestic physical landmark arousing petitions for divine judgment. In this context, the clear view of Mt. Hermon from the cliffs of Mt. Arbel, would have given the author of the Parables a strong sense of continuity with the author of the Book of the Watchers, written in the same region about 250 years before (*IEn* 6:6; 13:7.9). For all these reasons, and more, the cliffs of Mt. Arbel were an optimal location for the author of the Book of Parables, and may explain, at least partly, why his Essene community chose to make their home there.



Fig 4.2: View from the Arbel cave village over the Plain of Ginnosar and the Sea of Galilee. Mt. Hermon can be seen as a blurred white elevation along the horizon, to the left of Route 90 as it heads north across the plain.

A third ‘localizing sign’ in the text is the author’s description of the heavenly dwellings, or resting places, of the righteous (*IEn* 39:4-5; 41:2; 48:1), which appears to have been modelled on the cave-dwellings of the author’s community. In the earlier Book of the Watchers, the righteous were seen awaiting the final judgment as a crowd gathered together, around a bright fountain of water, in a deep, smooth hollow that had been carved out of a “great and high mountain of hard rock” (*IEn* 22:1,9). Although the rocky mountainous setting can be assumed to be the same, the eschatological dwelling-place of the righteous described in the

Parables is no longer a single collective abode as in *1En* 22:1,9, but a collection of many individual dwellings (*1En* 39:4-5), a concept which has been carried over into the Fourth Gospel (cf. Jn 14,2).<sup>50</sup> It is possible that this change in the author's conception of the afterlife was inspired by the arrangement of the caves in his cave-village, in which case it is likely that the residents of the cave-village considered the caves of their community to be an anticipation, or foretaste, of the heavenly dwellings of the righteous mentioned in the Book of Parables. This would be consistent with the fact that they saw themselves, individually and as a community, as the representatives of the righteous on earth. This association of the cave-dwellings with the heavenly dwellings may also partly explain why the community chose to inhabit this rocky location.

The fourth and most intriguing localizing sign in the text is the use of the metaphor 'ropes of the righteous' (*1En* 61:3, cf. 46:8). In the same way as the individual rock-cut cave-dwellings became symbols for the dwellings of the righteous in heaven, it appears that the ropes used by the cave-dwellers became symbols for the strong faith that binds the righteous to the 'name of the Lord of the Spirits'. Ropes would have been a vital accessory in the daily lives of the cave-dwellers, as many of them lived high up in the cliff face, in caves that could have been reached only by means of ropes. The lives of these cave-dwellers relied so heavily upon the strength of the rope that it is easy to see how the rope itself came to be understood as a symbol of faithful dependence on the name of God:

"And the angel who went with me said to me, "These will bring the measurements of the righteous, and the ropes of the righteous to the righteous; so that they may rely on the name of the Lord of Spirits forever and ever" (*1En* 61:3).

Having presented the reasons for linking the Essene author of the Parables of Enoch to the village of the cave of Arbel, it only remains to find archaeological evidence of contemporary writing media or materials in these caves, in order to prove the point. If this search is ever undertaken, it will take time. In the meantime, we can only speculate on the writing media that was used by this and other scribal communities in the area. This is aided by the fact that the largest natural habitat of papyrus outside Egypt was found at Lake Semechonitis (Lake Huleh), a mere 30 kms from the caves. It would be surprising if a scribal community living in the locality,

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<sup>50</sup> "...there are many abodes (μοναὶ πολλαί) in my father's house" (Jn 14,2). In Hebrew, the equivalent words would be *mishkenot* (dwelling places) or *menuhot* (resting places), both of which lie behind the Ge'ez text, in parallel (*1En* 39:4-5).



like that of the Essenes at Arbel, did not exploit this readily available resource for its writing media. On the other hand, if papyrus scrolls were prepared at Arbel in antiquity, it would be the first time that papyrus manufacture has been identified beyond Egyptian borders.<sup>51</sup>

Of relevance to this topic is the following passage in the Book of Parables:

“And the name of the fourth [rebel angel] is *Penemue*. This one showed the sons of men the bitter and the sweet and showed them all the secrets of their wisdom. He gave humans knowledge about writing with ink and papyrus, and therefore many went astray from of old and forever and until this day. For humans were not born for this purpose, to confirm their trustworthiness through pen and ink. For humans were not created to be different from the angels, so that they should remain pure and righteous. And death, which ruins everything, would not have laid its hand on them. But through this, their knowledge, they are perishing, and through this power it devours us” (*IEn* 69:8-11).<sup>52</sup>

The disclosures of this rebel angel refer to the bitter and sweet sides of human wisdom (*Gen* 3,1-7; cf. *IEn* 69,6), with the added bonus of instruction on how to write with ink on papyrus—a surprisingly negative comment in a book (*IEnoch*) whose written character is emphasized (*IEn* 82:1-3; 104:12-13) and whose author is an esteemed scribe (*IEn* 13:4-6; 15:1; 40:8, 92:1; 83:2). One wonders if this damning judgment about the origin of writing is not a specific criticism of the increasingly common use of papyrus in civil and legal matters. Regardless of meaning or motive, however, this curious passage is clear confirmation of the use of papyrus in the place where the book was composed.<sup>53</sup>

### New Light on the Social Setting

Thanks to the writings of Josephus and the findings of a recent archaeological survey of Eastern Galilee, conducted by Prof. Uzi Leibner

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus*, 2000; 25.

<sup>52</sup> See Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 301-2, for full discussion of this passage.

<sup>53</sup> In this context, Josephus relates how easily the higher caves were set on fire by Herod's troops, when, during the Civil War, they attacked the brigands hiding there (*JW* 1.305-315; *Ant* 14.415-17; 421-30), “for there was a great deal of combustible matter (ὄλη) within them” (*Ant* 14.428). What was this ‘combustible matter’? It is unlikely to have been dry wood or hay, for these would have been stored at ground level, for ease of distribution and use. It may not be too far-fetched to suggest that the combustible material in the higher caves was dry papyrus stored by the Essene scribes.

(1999-2004),<sup>54</sup> the identification of the author's location can be pressed to reveal a more comprehensive view of the social setting of the Book of Parables, than the one proposed above (Social Setting: Antagonists). There, behind the expression "the kings, the mighty and those who possess the earth", we outlined a nationwide situation in which the wealthy landowners, acting in league with the kings and mighty, oppressed the righteous and became wealthier by taking possession of the best agricultural land in the country and forcing traditional peasant farmers to work for them as tenant farmers or day-labourers.

In Galilee, however, at the place and at the time the Book of Parables was written, the social situation appears to have been rather more dire and complex. It starts with the Herod's campaign against the hostile occupants of some of the Arbel caves—the people whom Josephus calls 'brigands' (ληστές). The personal involvement of the author of the Parables, as a neighbouring cave-dweller and eye-witness to this violent campaign, may well explain the social tension implicit in his condemnations.

In order to grasp who these 'brigands' were, some local history is needed. Josephus had previously related how Herod, as governor of Galilee in 47 BCE, had captured and summarily executed a leader of these brigands called Hezekiah, along with a band of his men, because they were raiding villages on the other side of the Syrian border (*JW* 1.204-211, *Ant* 15,158-167). For this action, Herod was praised by the Roman governor of Syria, as these men had sorely afflicted his people, but for this same action, Herod found himself under judgment before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem and avoided punishment only through the intervention of the Syrian governor. Clearly the brigands had powerful allies among the authorities in Jerusalem. However, it appears that in every other respect they were outlaws, living in wild locations, surviving by robbing and pillaging the property of others, as the name suggests. Referring to the region of Arbel in 38 BCE, Josephus says "they were infesting a wide area and inflicting on the inhabitants evils no less than those of war" (*JW* 1.304). In fact, these brigands were causing such a problem in Eastern and Northern Galilee that Herod committed a large military force, based at Mt. Arbel over several months, to deal with it (*JW* 1.314-316, 326; *Ant* 14.431-433, 450). Without doubt, 'social brigandage' was the main social problem facing Herod in Galilee during his long reign.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Published in Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 2009.

<sup>55</sup> For a summary of Herod's operations against the brigands, see Richardson and Fisher, *Herod*, 341.

Since ancient times, the deserted areas of Gaulanitis, Trachonitis and Batanaea, to the north and east of the Sea of Galilee, had sheltered brigands, who survived by robbing merchants traveling on the desert routes between Damascus and Arabia. But these brigands were not Jews. The Galilean brigands, on the other hand, were Jews residing within Jewish territory and having allies among the ruling elite in Jerusalem.<sup>56</sup> The profile drawn by Josephus shows they were rebellious, often violent, anti-Herodian, anti-Roman Jews. More significantly, they appear to have been destitute and dispossessed of home and land, and for this reason they had installed themselves and their families in the caves of Mt. Arbel, and probably in many other caves in the region. Apart from identifying them as supporters of the last Hasmonean ruler, Antigonus (40–37 BCE), and as forerunners of the extremist Zealot party, which formed around Judas, the son of Hezekiah, at the turn of the era, scholars have puzzled over their origin. As the problem began several years before Herod's reign, Herod's taxation and land patronage systems cannot be held responsible.<sup>57</sup>

The origin of Jewish brigandry lies elsewhere, evidently, and can be traced through the findings of the comprehensive archaeological survey conducted by Uzi Leibner in this part of Eastern Galilee.<sup>58</sup> Leibner carefully documents a doubling of the estimated population, settlement

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<sup>56</sup> Freyne suggests that the leaders were members of noble Hasmonean families, cf. *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323 BCE to 135 CE*, 1998; 63.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Horsley, an expert on Galilean 'brigandry', or 'banditry' as he calls it, describes it as a symptom "of the difficult economic conditions and the impact of political military violence in the mid-first century BCE and the mid-first century CE... Oppressive economic pressures could leave desperate peasants no alternative but to 'rob the rich' in order to survive". So, referring to the situation during Herod's reign, he writes "repeated military invasion and destruction appear to be what produced the banditry in Galilee that Herod suppressed... such "brigands" were indigenous Galilean villagers waging guerilla warfare" ('Social Movements in Galilee', *Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods*, Vol 1, 167-8). There can be little doubt that difficult economic conditions could have led to desperate conduct such as 'brigandage', but to suggest that Herod's 'repeated military invasion and destruction' intensified the 'brigandry' ignores the fact that Herod's military campaign against the 'brigands' was relatively successful, in Galilee at least. Following his military interventions, there is evidence of a gradual reduction in 'brigandry', cf. Freyne, *Galilee* 66-67; Richardson and Fisher, *Herod*, 340-342.

<sup>58</sup> "The area selected for research is located in the northern part of the Eastern Lower Galilee, between longitude 185–200 and latitude 242–261, an area of some 285 square kilometers. It extends from the Tiberias–Sepphoris route in the south to the foothills of the Upper Galilee in the north, and from the Sea of Galilee basin in the east to the eastern margins of the large Central Galilee valleys in the west", Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 1.

area and number of settlements in the period between 50–1 BCE.<sup>59</sup> Although more accurate dating is difficult, Leibner stresses that small amounts of late Hellenistic pottery were found in the new settlements he surveyed, indicating that they were established right at the start of, or even slightly before, the formal onset of the Early Roman period in 50 BCE.<sup>60</sup> It is doubtful that this sudden rise in the population between 60–50 BCE could be explained by a natural rise in birth rate and/or infant survival, for which a gradual and continual rise over the previous 50 years would be expected, dating from the first Jewish influx and settlement around 100 BCE.

Instead, the dramatic rise in population around 50 BCE is best explained by a second wave of Jewish immigrants from outside the area. The date coincides precisely with the humiliating geopolitical changes imposed after 63 BCE, by Pompey, the Roman governor of Syria, and by Gabinius, his successor, which effectively restored pagan Greek rule and identity to the predominantly pagan cities and lands that had been forcefully conquered and colonized by the Hasmoneans half a century before.

All of a sudden, under the terms of Pompey's 'Judean land settlement', the Jewish state lost two-thirds of its territories. Jerusalem was made to pay tribute, her walls were demolished, and Judaea was confined to her pre-Hasmonean boundaries with the addition of Galilee, and parts of Idumaea and Peraea, thus shrinking to about a third of her former size.<sup>61</sup>

As Seán Freyne observes "Such a settlement of the Jewish question was not likely to be accepted without a struggle and resistance crystallized around the ousted Aristobulus and his sons, Antigonus and Alexander".<sup>62</sup> Some early signs of resistance can be seen in the Roman military invasion

<sup>59</sup> *Settlement and History*, 307-338.

<sup>60</sup> *Settlement and History*, 332. In a personal communication on 04.06.2021, quoted with permission, Uzi Leibner gave further evidence for pre-50 BCE dating: "The reason the rise in the number of new settlements is dated to 50–0 BCE, is because the earliest substacial pottery-types collected in them were Early Roman, which first appears around the mid-1st century. In the past few years there were some developments in the dating of these types, and today we know they first appeared a bit earlier, perhaps around 70 BCE. In any case, the sharp rise in population, and the establishment of many new sites ex-nihilo, point in my opinion to immigrants arriving from outside the region. This, together with the abundant Hasmonean-Jerusalemite coins found in many of these sites and the strong connection to Judea implied by the sources, points in my opinion to a population arriving from Judea."

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Gabba, 'The Social, Economic and Political History of Palestine 63 BCE–CE 70', *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol 3, 1999; 95-98.

<sup>62</sup> Freyne, *Galilee*, 59.

of Magdala (Taricheae as it was called in Greek) in 53 BCE, when the pro-Hasmonean Jewish general, Peitholaus, was executed for plotting with the Parthians and, according to Josephus, 30,000 local people were sold into slavery (*JW* 1:180; *Ant* 14.119-122).

Scholars differ over the immediate social effects of the Judaeen land settlement, but some do speak of widespread expulsion of peasants from the areas that were given back to the newly restored Greek cities.<sup>63</sup> Uzi Lieberman's archaeological survey in Eastern Galilee offers objective evidence of the influx of displaced Jews at precisely this time, 60–1 BCE, when "numerous settlements were established; unsettled or sparsely settled areas, such as the eastern portion of the region or hilly areas with limited agricultural potential, experienced a wave of settlement; and the size of the settled area doubled. During this period the number of sites reached its height. This settlement map remained stable until about the mid-third century when an abandonment of sites and decline in settlement began".<sup>64</sup>

Lieberman's data shows that a peak of settlement was reached from 60–1 BCE, which extended into areas of 'limited agricultural potential' and remained at the same level for the next 250 years. In other words, the data indicate that rural settlement reached a 'saturation level' soon after 60 BCE. If, as we suggest, this was mainly the result of migration from the surrounding areas of Gaulanitis, Ituraea, northern Transjordan and Scythopolis, and from further afield, then it is quite possible that, at the same time, the flow of migrants exceeded the capacity of rural Galilee to absorb them. A social crisis would have developed, with destitute, dispossessed migrant families unable to find shelter, food or income.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> This is the position taken by Shimon Applebaum and Richard Horsley among others. It is summarized by Hørning Jensen as follows "According to Applebaum, Pompey's decision to strip Jerusalem of its many conquered city-states was nothing less than a game-changer that must have meant the creation of a very considerable class of landless Jewish peasants", quoted from 'The Political History in Galilee', *Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods*, vol 1, 2014; 57.

<sup>64</sup> *Settlement and History*, 333.

<sup>65</sup> Although the numbers may be exaggerated, the event mentioned above, of the Roman invasion of Magdala in 53 BCE, and the enslavement of 30,000 inhabitants (*JW* 1.180; *Ant* 14.119-22), followed in 40 BCE by Antigonos' promise of 1000 talents and 500 Galilean women to the Parthians in exchange for their military support against the Romans (*JW* 1.248-249,257; *Ant* 14.331,343), both point to overcrowding at this time and an attempt by both sides to reduce the population by trafficking with lives.

These are precisely the conditions leading to the kind of brigandage that Josephus describes in Galilee, in the period 47-38 BCE and beyond.<sup>66</sup>

After listing Herod's many operations against the 'brigands' in and around Galilee, Richardson and Fisher conclude: "The disparate accounts cohere in viewing Herod's problems as 'social brigandage' at the beginning of his reign, in the unsettled days of the 40s and 30s BCE. The brigands had families, close connections with towns, and religious or upper-class support. The descriptions are mainly of uprooted peasants who maintained connections with neighbors and social superiors, those who suffered social dislocation from economic change and consequent hardship. The dispossessed survived by preying on those who had more, maybe the same persons who had taken the little they had".<sup>67</sup> Richardson and Fisher's conclusion requires only one qualification: that the socio-economic change leading to brigandage was the displacement caused by the land settlement imposed by the Romans during the 50s BCE, and leading to a massive influx of uprooted Jewish landowners and peasants into Eastern Galilee. They rightly continue "Herod was not the cause of the social problems, but it is no surprise that he sided with Judean upper-class needs and Roman political aims".<sup>68</sup> Herod therefore had little sympathy for the plight of these 'social brigands', whose experience of dislocation and religious indignation had turned them against his authority and against Rome, and then into militant supporters of the Hasmonean resistance.<sup>69</sup>

The final piece in this puzzle concerns the negative role of the wealthy landlords. As we described earlier, the caves of Mt. Arbel overlooked the Plain of Ginnosar, 12 square kilometres of well-watered gardens and orchards, renowned for the quantity, quality and rich variety of its produce (cf. *JW* 3.506-521). The water for these fields entered the Ginnosar Plain via two streams: Wadi Amud to the north and Wadi Zalmon in the centre. Irrigation from Wadi Zalmon was controlled from the town of Ginnosar

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<sup>66</sup> Though disputed by some, these conditions appear to have persisted into the next century, forming a backdrop of poverty, ill-health and overcrowding at the time of Jesus' healing and teaching mission, cf. Taylor, 'Jesus as News: Crises of Health and Overpopulation in Galilee', *JSNT*, 2021, 44, 8-30.

<sup>67</sup> Richardson and Fisher, *Herod*, 341.

<sup>68</sup> Richardson and Fisher, *Herod*, 341.

<sup>69</sup> For insight into the spiritual and religious distress provoked by the Judaeen land settlement, see Mendels, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism: Jewish and Christian Ethnicity in Ancient Palestine*, 1997; 246-247. Historical evidence suggests that their resistance developed, around the turn of the era, into the formation of the Zealot party.

(Khirbet Abu-Shusheh), centrally located on a low-lying hill at the western edge of the plain.<sup>70</sup>

More significantly, Leibner's survey shows that this particular township neither sprung up nor increased in size around 50 BCE, like the other settlements in this area (Magdala, Arbel, Khirbet Hamam). In fact, its size remained unchanged from 50 BCE right up to 150 CE, when it did finally expand in the wake of the second Jewish revolt (132-135 CE). Furthermore, in the period following the massive influx of migrants in 60-50 BCE, there were no new settlements in the Plain of Ginnosar, despite the pressing need for new settlements and productive land. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that settlement expansion and construction were blocked because the entire plain was owned by private landlords, who did not live locally and had no interest in sharing their land or its produce with the destitute and dispossessed newcomers. For lack of other options, the new immigrants found shelter in the Arbel caves nearby (Fig 4.3) and resorted to 'brigandage' to feed themselves, seizing what they needed from the orchards of the wealthy and from the caravans of produce on their way to markets in Jerusalem.<sup>71</sup>

For the author of the Book of Parables the contrast must have been too much to bear: in the caves on one side, homeless Jewish families were starving because of the unavailability of land and food, while on the other side wealthy Jewish landowners were transporting the delicious produce of the Plain of Ginnosar to Jerusalem and selling it there for a huge profit.

The plight of the destitute families must have reminded him of the situation of his own community when they returned to the Land of Israel half a century before, and suffered privation on account of the same triad of 'kings, mighty and wealthy landlords'. The author incessantly warns of their impending judgment, for they wilfully ignore the plight of the

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<sup>70</sup> For the identification of the ruins of Abu-Sheshar with Gennesar (Ginnosar), which, in the Hellenistic period, gave its name not only to the surrounding plain but also to the Sea of Galilee, Lake Gennesaret, see Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 180-185.

<sup>71</sup> Evidence of private ownership and trade is indirect, but indisputable, cf. bT Eruvin 7:13; m. Massereth 2:3, respectively. Furthermore, the early Rabbis derived the name Gennesar, or Ginnosar, from *ganei-sar*, translated "gardens of the prince" (*Gen. Rabbah* 99:21), implying 'princely' ownership. Flusser understood this to refer to Hasmonean dynastic control of the area in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, before the official annexation of Galilee around 100 BCE. Leibner is inclined to see the Rabbis' etymology as word play, without any historical basis (*Settlement and History*, 186-189). However, as the first appearance of the name 'Gennesar' in the literature refers to the site of the camp of Jonathan Maccabee and his army "by the waters of Gennesar" (1Macc 11,67), around 145 BCE, Flusser's view should be taken seriously.

Galilean refugees, whose poverty and landlessness were precipitated by the new Roman overlords, but were later perpetuated and exacerbated by the greed and self-interest of these wicked people.



Fig 4.3: A group of caves in the cliffs of Mt. Arbel, about 400m southwest of the Arbel cave village, that may have been occupied by brigands. The inaccessible cave below the summit, now severely eroded, may have been one of the caves attacked by Herod's men, lowered on platforms from the top and observed by Herod from below (*JW* 1.310-313; *Ant* 14.421-430).

As a concerned neighbour to these refugees, whom he would not likely have insulted by calling them 'brigands', and as a critical onlooker over the Plain of Ginnosar, the author of the Book of Parables was so moved by the injustice of the situation around him that the restoration of justice became the main theme of his book. He may have sensed that the scale of this injustice was leading to greater conflict in the future, and with divine insight he may even have foreseen how it would undermine, eventually, the continued Jewish presence in the Land of Israel.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Put simply, the 'brigands' became politically organized into the Zealot party around the turn of the millennium, and, according to Josephus, it was these Zealots who brought about the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in the first Jewish Revolt. Their influence persisted after the first Revolt and may have contributed to the second Jewish Revolt and its even more catastrophic outcome.



## Summary

The findings of our study can be summarized in one sentence: the author of the Book of Parables was a member of a non-Qumranic community of Essenes, writing from his cave in the cliffs of Mt. Arbel, sometime during King Herod's reign. He had just witnessed some of the most brutal events in the Civil War (40-37 BCE), from close quarters, and at the time of writing he found himself in the midst of a social crisis caused by grossly unjust land and food distribution. The result was 'brigandage' on a wide scale. Although these details are not stated openly in the text, they are supported by a stream of circumstantial evidence gathered from the text itself, from the *Damascus Document*, the writings of Josephus and from Leibner's archaeological survey of Eastern Galilee.

Another source of confirmation has been mentioned in passing: the remains of a cave-village carved into the Mt. Arbel cliffs and corresponding precisely to the location of the author of the Book of Parables as determined above. We have described this site in another article and only mention here that it does indeed show distinctive signs of Essene occupation.<sup>73</sup> This Essene cave-village, nestled in the Arbel cliffs, fittingly presents itself as the geographical setting for the findings of our study and provides a firm material foundation for further research on the author's community, their literary activities and their relationship to the early Christian movement.

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<sup>73</sup> Ben-Daniel, 'The Arbel Cave Village: Remains of an Essene Commune', *Qumran Chronicle*, 30, 1-4, 2022; 43-76; and in this volume.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE RISE AND FALL OF THE PARABLES OF ENOCH (*IEn* 37–71): JOHN THE BAPTIST, JESUS OF NAZARETH AND JOHN OF PATMOS

#### Introduction

The last half of the first century BCE was a difficult time for the Jewish population of the disintegrating Hasmonean Kingdom. Following General Pompey's entrance into Jerusalem in 63 BCE, the Romans imposed some humiliating changes on the Jewish State. They captured the popular high priest Aristobulus II and restored his brother Hyrcanus II to that office, they ended the sovereignty of Judaea, which became a client state in the Roman province of Syria, they razed Jerusalem's city walls, demanded a large annual tribute and, last but by no means least, they enforced the 'Judaeian land settlement' on the territories that had been conquered by the Hasmonean armies during the preceding century.

Over the next decade, the enforcement of the 'land settlement' led to the transfer of most of the conquered territories to their pagan populations, causing the Jewish State to contract to Judaea, parts of Idumaea and Peraea, and the Galilee—a mere third of its former size.<sup>1</sup> These administrative changes were put into effect from 63 to 54 BCE, firstly by Pompey and then by his successor as Governor of Syria, Gabinius. The changes involved the official refoundation and rebuilding of the liberated pagan cities and townships, resulting in the return of former exiles and the immigration of Greek Syrians from neighbouring areas. Since the Hasmoneans had imposed Jewish customs on the pagans they had conquered (*Ant* 13.257-258; 13.318-319),<sup>2</sup> the same pagans now had an opportunity to pay back, in kind, by linking citizenship to the pagan religion. As a result, the Jewish residents of these areas were dispossessed and either had to flee, or live as tenants in a pagan environment. Although some of the wealthier Jews could have fled to the diaspora, the majority of displaced Jewish inhabitants migrated internally to the lands retained by the shrunken Jewish entity, in Judaea, Peraea and Galilee. Judaea was already densely populated, Peraea could have absorbed migrants from the region of the Decapolis, but it was Galilee that bore the brunt of the internal migration from elsewhere. The full

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gabba, 'The Social, Economic and Political History of Palestine 63 BCE–CE 70', *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol 3, 1999; 95-98.

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter, *Ant* refers to *Antiquities of the Jews* by Flavius Josephus, and *JW* refers to his *Jewish War*.

scale and impact of the resulting migrations has not yet been fully grasped by historians.<sup>3</sup>

There is evidence of a doubling of the population of Galilee in the mid-century BCE, with an over-saturation of the cultivable land.<sup>4</sup> Dispossessed, destitute and deprived of food, the migrants would have created a massive social crisis in the Jewish territories, sufficient to fuel revolt (57-55 BCE), and then civil war (40-37 BCE). In 53 BCE, Magdala was at the centre of a plot to rebel against Roman rule, provoking a Roman military invasion under General Cassius, who executed the leader in or near that city and enslaved 30,000 local men (*JW* 1.180; *Ant* 14.119-122). Even allowing for Josephus' tendency to overestimate, this reflects a large excess population, which the Romans clearly wished to exploit. We also hear how, for their help in placing the last Hasmonean king, Antigonus II, on the throne in Jerusalem in 40 BCE, the Parthian leaders were offered 500 Jewish women (*JW* 1.248). Rewards like this also point to over-population in the Judaeian lands at the time. In 47 BCE, when Herod became governor of Galilee, he was forced to deal with an organized band of brigands there, for Josephus relates how Herod had them executed and narrowly escaped justice himself (*JW* 204-215; *Ant* 14.158-184). Later, during the Civil War, Herod deployed his army on Mt. Arbel for several months to rid the countryside of these brigands, many of whom lived in the caves and marshes and fought for Herod's rival for the throne, Antigonus II (*JW* 1.304-316; *Ant* 14.413-433). The social distress evidently persisted well into the next century, for the New Testament relates how ill-health and over-crowding were endemic in Galilee at the time of Jesus (c. 30 CE) and formed the background of his healing ministry.<sup>5</sup>

By causing destitution, deprivation and humiliation among the displaced Jewish populations in Galilee and elsewhere, the enactment of

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<sup>3</sup> Except by Shimon Applebaum and Richard Horsley, for Hørning Jensen writes "According to Applebaum, Pompey's decision to strip Jerusalem of its many conquered city-states was nothing less than a game-changer that must have meant the creation of a very considerable class of landless Jewish peasants" ("The Political History in Galilee from the First Century BCE to the End of the Second Century CE", *Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods*, Vol 1, 2014; 57).

<sup>4</sup> According to the findings of an archaeological survey of Eastern Galilee (1999-2004) conducted by Leibner (1999-2004) and published in his *Settlement and History in Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Galilee*, 2009. The doubling of the population is reported on pp. 307-338.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Taylor, 'Jesus as News: Crises of Health and Overpopulation in Galilee', *JNTS*, 2021, 44, 8-30.

the ‘land settlement’ not only generated an enduring, anti-Roman resentment, but also ensured the birth of the violent liberation movement known as the Zealot Party, around the turn of the era. The suffering, both physical and spiritual, caused by the Roman intervention in the mid-first century BCE, contributed mightily towards the rising expectation for an anointed leader, like King David, whose army would expel the Romans, restore Jewish sovereignty in the land and, thereafter, establish God’s sovereignty in the world. For faithful Jews, the hardships of the present were merely the ‘birthpangs’ of the long-awaited, divinely appointed Messiah of God and his reign of righteousness and peace.

### **An Alternative to Violent Rebellion**

So, in this context of intense messianic expectation, King Herod died at the end of the first century BCE. It is no surprise to learn, from Josephus, that within a short time there were at least three violent rebellions led by messianic pretenders: Judas (*Ant* 17.271-272), Simon (*Ant* 17.273-276) and Athronges (*Ant* 17.278-284).<sup>6</sup> Anticipating the mood at this time, a Pharisee writing under the pseudonym of Solomon had written (c. 45-30 BCE) a collection of psalms which not only expressed his disillusion at the nation’s failed leadership, but also included a compelling portrait of the violent warrior messiah that he so ardently awaited (*Pss Sol* 17). However, as with many literary works in this period, it is not known what impact or influence it may have had at the popular level.

John J. Collins has summarized the situation as follows: “Unlike the expectation of a priestly messiah, the notion of a warrior messiah was not peculiar to sectarian circles. This is not to suggest that there was any messianic dogma in Judaism at the turn of the era, to which *everyone* necessarily subscribed. But the concept of a royal messiah was more widespread than any other, and this figure was consistently expected to drive out the Gentiles by force, even if that force had a miraculous quality (e.g. the breath of his lips). The *degree* of messianic expectation probably fluctuated considerably in the first century. There does not, however,

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<sup>6</sup> There appears to have been a general expectation that the Messiah would appear early in the first century, due to the interpretation of Daniel’s 490-year scheme by the Essenes, see Beckwith, ‘The Year of the Messiah: Jewish and Early Christian Chronologies, and their Eschatological Consequences’, *Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian*, 2001; 217-75; especially: “Essene expectation must have reached fever-pitch towards the end of the first century B.C., with the eschatological war already overdue, and the Messiahs of Levi and Israel expected in the last of Daniel’s 70 weeks, between 10 B.C. and A.D. 2”, op. cit. 265.

appear to have been much variation in the *character* of royal messiah that was expected”.<sup>7</sup>

What is surprising, though, is that there was a popular, non-violent and successful alternative, initiated by John the Baptist, headed by Jesus of Nazareth and then announced far and wide, throughout the first century CE, by his loyal band of followers, the apostles. This study aims to present one unifying aspect of this peaceful messianic movement that contributed to its inner consistency and success, against all odds.

The scholarly position is again clearly stated by Collins: “We should not be surprised that most Jews of the time did not recognize Jesus as the Davidic messiah. He simply did not fit the expectations that were most widely associated with that role”.<sup>8</sup> He goes on to suggest that his apostles subsequently acted to fill the gap between expectation and reality: “But his followers were convinced that he was God’s anointed. When he patently did not drive out the Gentiles or restore the kingdom of Israel, they found other ways of affirming his messianic status”.<sup>9</sup>

Collins concludes by describing how these apostles may have affirmed his messianic status: “One such way was to identify him with the Danielic Son of Man who would come as judge on the clouds of heaven. Whether Jesus had spoken of such a Son of Man, or whether he had identified himself with him, is too complex an issue to be broached here. It must suffice to say that the notion that Jesus would come on the clouds of heaven could hardly have made much sense to his followers before his death, when he was present with them on earth. After his death, however, the Son of Man paradigm provided a way of imagining how Jesus could come again and fulfill messianic prophecies that were conspicuously unfulfilled in his lifetime. The book of the New Testament where Jesus most fully fulfills the traditional role of the royal messiah is the Book of Revelation”.<sup>10</sup>

With these words published in 1996, Collins brings us up to the point at which our study departs. Since then, scholarly research has established that prior to Jesus’ mission an operational ‘Son of Man paradigm’ did exist, in which the figure of the Son of Man “shows considerable development over against Daniel’s “one like a son of man”.”<sup>11</sup> This

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<sup>7</sup> Collins, ‘Jesus and the Messiahs of Israel’, *Feitschrift für Martin Hengel*, 1996; 290.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 290.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 290.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 290.

<sup>11</sup> Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2010; 203.

enhanced vision of the Danielic son of man is the central theme of the book called the Parables of Enoch (*1En* 37–71), which is a true ‘apocalypse’ according to the accepted definition of this genre.<sup>12</sup>

### The Parables of Enoch (*1En* 37–71)

George Nickelsburg outlines the Book of Parables<sup>13</sup> in its simplest form, as follows:

“The theme of this form of the Book of Parables is the coming judgment that will punish the kings and the mighty and Azazel and his hosts, both of whom have preyed on humanity. The agent of this judgment will be “the Righteous One” / “Son of Man” / “Chosen One” / “Anointed One”. In creating this book, the author(s) of the Parables draw, first of all, on traditional Enochic material from the Book of the Watchers and, to a degree, on the kind of material attested in the Book of the Luminaries, following to some extent the order of the Book of the Watchers. In addition, he (they) rework non-Enochic material about the Danielic one like a son of man, the Davidic Anointed One, the Servant/Chosen One/Righteous One of Second Isaiah, and preexistent Wisdom.”

“Each of the three parables begins with an oracular introduction and then features scenes that take place in heaven, interwoven with accounts of Enoch’s journeys through the upper and outer regions of the cosmos. The heavenly scenes focus on the developing drama of the judgment over which the Chosen One will preside. Parable 1 announces that “the Righteous One” will appear, and then Enoch sees him in his dwelling place. In Parable 2, Enoch sees him (now identified with Daniel’s one like a son of man) with the deity, hears about his future functions, hears the intercessions of the angels, and witnesses the convocation of the heavenly court and the commissioning of the Son of Man/Chosen One/Anointed One. Finally in Parable 3, Enoch views the enthronement of the Chosen One/Son of Man and the process of judgment that results in the blessedness of the righteous and, especially, the condemnation of the kings and the mighty, but also of Azazel and his hosts. The developing drama is given continuity by a series of anticipatory allusions to the judgment that are added to the descriptions of Enoch’s visions”.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> It is a typical example of the genre ‘apocalypse’, whose modern definition is now well known and widely used, thanks to the work of Collins et al, in ‘Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre’, *Semeia*, 14, 1979.

<sup>13</sup> The ‘Parables of Enoch’, ‘Book of Parables’, ‘Parables’ and ‘Similitudes of Enoch’ are the most commonly used titles for the text of *1Enoch* 37-71. However, the real title, according to ancient Hebrew tradition, corresponds to the first word or words of the text, which are “The Vision of Wisdom that Enoch saw” (*1En* 37:1). The translation used in our study is that of Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 19.

From this brief outline of the book, it becomes clear that the enhanced development of Daniel's 'one like a son of man' forms the main subject of Enoch's visions of salvation and judgment. In these visions, the 'Son of Man' is identified as a heavenly Messiah (*IEn* 48:10; 52:4), who was hidden from before creation, but is now revealed to the righteous (*IEn* 48:6-7), before soon being revealed to the whole world as saviour of the righteous and judge of the wicked. Announcing the pre-existence of the Messiah (*IEn* 48:2-3,6; 62:7), this vision recalls the heavenly origin of Wisdom (Prov 8,22-36; Sir 24,1-3) and her role as revealer. Through his various titles—the Anointed One, the Chosen One and the Righteous One—the Enochic Son of Man embodies and combines the attributes of other biblical pre-figurations, including the divine sonship and dominion of the Davidic ruler (Pss 2; 110; Is 11), the international mission of the chosen one (Is 11; 42; 49) and the exaltation of the righteous servant (Is 52–53; Wis 4,18–5,13). More significantly, whereas the Danielic 'one like a son of man' starts to reign *after* the divine judgment of the wicked rulers (Dn 7,9-28), the Enochic Son of Man personally casts them all down, and takes his seat as the eschatological judge on the throne of glory (*IEn* 62:5; 69:29), where he receives worship (*IEn* 48:5) and is at-one with the Almighty God.

According to the consensus reached at the Camaldoli meeting of the Enoch Seminar in June 2005, the Parables of Enoch was originally composed during the reign of King Herod and was completed around the turn of the era (1 CE). Later, in the first century CE, it appears that additions, rearrangements and interpolations were made by a different hand, or hands. The revised dating increases the probability that the Enochic 'Son of Man' paradigm was known, and even recited, early in the first century CE, when messianic expectation was at its most intense. As noted by David deSilva, "The growing tendency to date the Parables to the turn of the era or slightly before facilitates the posing of the question of influence".<sup>15</sup>

So, in view of the revised dating of the Parables, we can reject Collins' view that the 'Son of Man paradigm' was an afterthought of the apostles of Jesus. Instead, we propose that it was foreknown, accepted and even personally assimilated by John the Baptist, by Jesus himself and by his followers—by the authors of Matthew's Gospel and the Book of Revelation in particular.

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<sup>15</sup> deSilva, *The Jewish Teachers of Jesus, James and Jude: What Earliest Christianity Learned from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, 2012; 134.

### **The Parables of Enoch as a Messianic Prophecy**

We can go further and postulate that it was known as a messianic prophecy by other religious leaders at the time and may account for the dramatic reaction of the High Priest who screamed ‘blasphemy!’ and rent his clothes when Jesus affirmed his messianic identity by referring to this vision at his trial (Mt 26,63-65; Mk 14,61-64). Our aim is to marshal the evidence to show how the ‘Son of Man paradigm’, in its Enochic development as a prophecy of messianic salvation and judgment, could have been familiar to the founders of the Jesus movement and even have influenced their mission. Our argument will involve three steps:

#### ***1. Temporal and geographical confluence of the Parables of Enoch, the founders of the Jesus movement and their area of mission***

Regarding the dating of the Parables of Enoch, scholarly consensus has formed around a date between the end of the first century BCE and the beginning of the first century CE. The interval of at least 25 years between the appearance of this prophecy and the start of the mission of the John the Baptist (c. 29-30 CE) would have allowed enough time for him to become personally familiar with it. A similar argument applies to Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples, including John, the son of Zebedee. The temporal interval was sufficient to enable personal contact between these founders of the Jesus movement and those who composed, kept and recited the Parables. As we will see, recent research on the provenance of the Parables raises the chances of personal contact to highly probable.

It is important at this point to determine the identity of the author of the Parables and the social network in which this work was first read, recited and circulated. There are now several indications that the author of the Parables of Enoch was a member of the Essene Party, known to us mainly through the descriptions of Philo and Josephus.<sup>16</sup> Firstly, the author identifies himself with a group he describes as a ‘congregation of the righteous’ (*1En* 38:1), whose houses are persecuted by the kings and the mighty (*1En* 46:8; 53:6). This description is consistent with the precarious situation of the Essenes during the Hasmonean era, and their predilection for calling themselves a ‘congregation’ (קהל).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Josephus *JW* 2.119-161; *Ant* 13.171-173; 15.373-379; 18.18-22; Philo of Alexandria, *Quod Omnis* 75-91 and *Hypothetica* 11.1-8.

<sup>17</sup> This term ‘congregation’ is found at *1En* 38:1, 46:8, 53:6, 62:8, where it refers to a chosen community of righteous people, in a good sense. This is a more selective application of the term than we find in Scripture, where it usually refers to the House of Israel in general (esp in Ex and Nm). Except in CD 20:2-3, where it is used in a good sense, the *Damascus Document* applies this term specifically, in a bad sense, to a group



Secondly, their religious terminology and dualistic worldview are similar, though not identical to, that of the sectarians at Qumran, who were Essenes according to the prevailing consensus (the Qumran/Essene hypothesis).<sup>18</sup> However, they were not from Qumran because of the absence of that community's characteristic halachic or cultic interests, and the lack of their sectarian concern for separation, a concern that became extreme and 'introversionist' at Qumran. So, although the Book of Parables has much in common with Qumran, and is compatible with what we know of the Essenes, no connection can be asserted because of the non-sectarian and universal character of this book.

Thirdly, literary analysis shows that the Book of Parables (*IEn* 37–71) was not only crafted as a revision of the Book of Watchers (*IEn* 1–36), but also as a sequel that reveals how the final judgment will be conducted. Along with other writings in the Enochic tradition, the Book of Watchers is known to have been preserved from the earliest times by the Essenes.<sup>19</sup>

Fourthly, and most compellingly of all, the text of the Book of Parables includes two lists of the names of the rebel angels (*IEn* 69:2-3, 4-15), the first of which reproduces, with a few modifications, the lists in the Book of Watchers (*IEn* 6:3-8; 8:1-4). Loren Stuckenbruck has noted that “the names of the chief angelic perpetrators of evil are

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of traitors and apostates, past and present, with little distinction between them (CD 1:12; 2:1; 8:9; 8:13=19:26). The term is used only once in the *Community Rule* (1QS 5:20), where it is used in a good sense, also in the *Pesher to the Psalms* (e.g., 4Q171 2:5). In the *Rule of the Congregation* for the messianic age (1QSa) it reverts to a uniformly good sense. So, although the term is generally used in a good sense in Scripture, DSS and Parables, there was a period in which it was used in a good sense in the Book of Parables (in self-identification) and in a very bad sense in the *Damascus Document* (for the traitors and apostates). We suggest this usage reflects the split which took place within the household of the Essenes, in Damascus, after the death of the Teacher (c. 130 CE) and reflects ongoing rivalry and polemics in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Dimant, “In consequence, the *Book of Parables* should be viewed as having been created by circles close but not identical to the Qumran group, or by those who have drawn upon its legacy”, *From Enoch to Tobit*, 2017; 155.

<sup>19</sup> Fragments of the earliest Enoch tradition, including the Book of Watchers, have been found in the scroll collection of the Essenes at Qumran (4Q 201, 202, 204-212), but none so far from the Parables of Enoch. Nickelsburg writes “from one perspective, the Parables are a revision of the Book of Watchers... The parallels between the Parables and the Book of Watchers as we have it include the structure of the book as well as details in its wording”, *1 Enoch* 2, 55. The combination of similar elements with new eschatological material brings Nickelsburg to conclude that “the Book of Parables was composed as an Enochic tractate intended to circulate independently of its primary source”, *ibid.*

conspicuously absent outside the earliest Enoch tradition”,<sup>20</sup> which means that the list of evil angels was confined to the group which transmitted the early Enoch tradition.<sup>21</sup> For whatever reason, this group was uniquely responsible for recording the names of all the rebel angels.<sup>22</sup> By including these lists in the Book of Parables, the author was revealing himself as a member of the same group. The identity of this group would have remained a mystery if Josephus had not revealed that, on entering the Essene community, every member took an oath to “preserve the books of the sect and the names of the angels” (*JW* 2.142). So, by reproducing, and thus “preserving”, the names of the rebel angels, the author of the Book of Parables reveals that he was indeed a full member of the Essene community.<sup>23</sup> It is important to emphasize that the new member was also under an oath of secrecy to not reveal the teachings of the sect to non-members (*JW* 2.141). This could explain why the names of the rebel angels are not found in writings outside this group, and why the author must have been an insider.

Having established the author of Book of Parables was an Essene, it only remains to discover where he and his community were living, for, as we have mentioned, the content of his book distances him from the Essenes of Qumran. Our own research on the provenance of the Book of Parables has recently identified the author as a member of an Essene community living in the Arbel cave village,<sup>24</sup> a village of one hundred or more caves, carved into the cliffs of Mt. Arbel (c. 100 BCE), two kilometres to the west of Magdala, on the north-western shores of the Sea of Galilee.<sup>25</sup> There is mounting evidence that the same group of Essenes established a large community in Jerusalem at the start of King Herod’s reign (c. 37 BCE),<sup>26</sup> and smaller cells in many other villages and towns throughout Galilee and Judaea.<sup>27</sup> The presence of non-Qumranic

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<sup>20</sup> Stuckenbruck, *The Myth of the Rebellious Angels*, 2017; 82.

<sup>21</sup> The name ‘Azazel’ is an exception, as it occurs in many other writings, esp. *Lv* 16.

<sup>22</sup> No attempt will be made here to try to explain why the lists of angels were important, or for what purpose they may have been used.

<sup>23</sup> An Essene is here defined as anyone, at any time or place, who takes the oaths of membership.

<sup>24</sup> Ben-Daniel, ‘The Parables of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 37-71): Provenance and Social Setting’, in this volume.

<sup>25</sup> Id., ‘The Arbel Cave Village: Remains of an Essene Commune’, *Qumran Chronicle*, 30, 1-4, 2022, 43-76, and in this volume.

<sup>26</sup> Id., ‘The Essenes and Jerusalem’, *Qumran Chronicle*, 30, 1-4, 2022, 77-117, and in this volume.

<sup>27</sup> Capper, ‘Essene Community Houses and Jesus’ Early Community’, *Jesus and Archaeology*, 2006; 496-502. Josephus reports that the Essenes occupied more than one

Essene communities at Arbel and in Jerusalem would place the Parables of Enoch in the areas most frequented by the early Jesus movement: John the Baptist's father served as a priest at the Temple, so it is at least plausible that his son John had personal contact with the Essene community in Jerusalem; similarly, Jesus grew up in Nazareth which is a few hours walk from Mt. Arbel, and several of his disciples (Peter, Andrew, Philip and most probably James and John, sons of Zebedee) grew up at Bethsaida, across the lake from Mt. Arbel and would have visited Magdala frequently. There was not just a temporal coincidence between these founders and the source of the Book of Parables, but also a close geographical overlap with the Essene communities that preserved it, at Arbel and in Jerusalem.

Since the prophecy may have contained teachings that were secret, including the names of the rebel angels, its publication would have been limited, initially at least, to the Essene communities, among whom it would have been recited and circulated. Access to the text would therefore have been restricted to Essene members, their postulants and trusted guests (cf. *4Ezra* 14:26,45-48). There is some literary evidence indicating that the text was written for oral recitation, which could have been committed to memory in an abridged form.<sup>28</sup> In this form, and in order to meet the needs of the time, it could also have been recited in the local synagogues, and among families, thereby disseminating it among the public.

Reflections of this kind are speculative and theoretical, but nevertheless serve to show how a prophecy written around the turn of the era, in the heavily populated area of lakeside Galilee could have become widely known in a relatively short time. In an area still suffering from a severe social crisis, created by a rapid doubling of the population around 50 BCE, the prophecy of the Parables of Enoch contained a welcome message: the divinely chosen messiah, the 'Son of Man', is coming soon in judgment, to save the righteous and destroy the wicked. In the meantime, even those who do not deserve it, have time to repent and become righteous.

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town (*JW* 2.124), and Philo says they lived "in many cities of Judaea and in many villages, and in great and populous communities" (*Hypothetica*, 11.1). According to both Josephus (*Ant* 18.20) and Philo (*Quod Omnis*, 75), they numbered more than 4,000 in total.

<sup>28</sup> For a discussion on literary evidence for the oral performance of Parables, see Nickelsburg, *1Enoch* 2, 34-38.

Into this receptive setting, John the Baptist came preaching a baptism of repentance, Jesus as the Son of Man came with the offer of divine forgiveness and healing, and his disciples followed with the good news of the New Covenant, culminating with the return of the Son of Man, in glory and power, to conduct the final judgment and restore creation. From this broad overview, it is theoretically feasible that the messianic prophecy of the Parables of Enoch prepared the public for the missions of the Baptist, Jesus, and the Early Christian Church, offering the lens through which to understand and welcome their activities. Its diffusion and ready acceptance in the lakeside area of Galilee may have been one of the reasons Jesus chose to start his mission there. In practice, however, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the Book of Parables was known and understood by the public. Before discussing its wider reception (see below), we will first attempt to determine to what extent each of the leading figures in the Jesus movement was aware of the prophecy and influenced by it.

## ***2. Influence of the Parables of Enoch on individual founders of the Jesus movement: John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth and John of Patmos.***

The fact that the founders of the Jesus movement were present in the same areas, and at the same time, as the appearance of the Parables of Enoch establishes ‘external plausibility’ for a personal encounter with this messianic prophecy. The next step is to present evidence of influence. In the case of a literary relationship, influence can be confirmed by a high degree of correspondence on several levels: with thematic similarities, the more the better; similarities in narrative (plot/action), especially if the same order is followed; then linguistic/verbal parallels, especially if the parallels involve rare words and phrases. Highest degrees of influence are reflected by direct quotations, followed by recognizable references, allusions, common motifs and expressions showing the least.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, the level of influence can be difficult to assess if, for one reason or another, the parallels are uniformly weak, the wording is not the same, or if we are considering the influence of a document on a

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<sup>29</sup> I am grateful to Leslie Baynes (‘The Parables of Enoch and Luke’s Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus’, *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels: Reminiscences, Allusions and Intertextuality*, 2016; 130-31), for her comments on Thomas L. Brodie’s guidelines for identifying parallels, and avoiding ‘parallelomania’, summarized from *The Birthing of the New Testament: The Intertextual Development of the New Testament Writings*, 2004; 44-46.

person or group, whose discourse relied on human recall and not on direct quotations. In any of these situations, the resemblance may not be direct, but indirect, through a common source document (often lost), or an oral tradition. In these cases, high degrees of influence can be established if, and only if, the original document has at least one unique feature, which appears in the work of a later author, or in the expression of the person who is suspected of having been influenced by it, or both, as in the case of an author describing a person.<sup>30</sup> The recurrence of the unique feature, a singularity against all odds, points to a high level of influence from the one to the other. A common feature that is ‘unique (i.e., not known to have been transmitted by any other source) and explicable only in terms of direct relationship (i.e., first-hand, not second or third hand)’ is highly likely to represent a significant degree of “influence”.<sup>31</sup> Satisfaction of the above conditions establishes high-level influence of a certain document on later authors and hearers, but does not preclude or mutually exclude the “influence” of other documents, biblical or extra-biblical, on the same authors or persons.

#### i. JOHN THE BAPTIST

There is a vast literature on the ministry of the Baptist, focused on explaining the origins, nature and purpose of his actions in a Jewish Second Temple context, as described in the New Testament (Mk 1,1-8; Lk 3,1-20; Mt 3,1-12) and in the *Antiquities* of Josephus (*Ant* 18.116-119). The difficulties begin with the formulaic description of his activity in the synoptic Gospels and, in particular, with the meaning of “John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a *baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*. People of the whole Judaeian countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins” (Mk 1,4-5).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The best analogy is identifying a particular person from a unique feature (a mole or a scar) in a photo, or from the description of a photo.

<sup>31</sup> Unique common feature and direct relationship are the two criteria that need to be met in order to establish high level of influence. They represent the epitome of Brodie’s guidelines, set out previously. In their own ways, the same criteria are used by various scholars, e.g., Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism*, 1997; 16; also Charlesworth, ‘The *Parables of Enoch* and the Apocalypse of John’, *Pseudepigrapha and Christian Origins*, 2008; 230-32.

<sup>32</sup> Biblical quotations in this essay are taken from the New American Bible (1970), with Revised New Testament (1986), Iowa Falls, Iowa: World Bible Publishers, 1986.

On a very basic level, John's baptismal activity was unique and extraordinary, even for Second Temple Judaism, so we should not be looking for an ordinary explanation. By all accounts, it was focused on preparing the Jewish people for the coming of the Lord in judgment (Mt 3,11-12)—an extraordinary event by any standards. It was not a simple immersion to purify the body of ritual impurity, for that did not require a personal 'baptist', nor a trek to the River Jordan, as there were *miqva'ot* in every village, where the same result could be achieved by oneself.

From a Jewish standpoint, the comments of Josephus are invaluable, for he writes that John the Baptist "was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away of some sins, but for the purification of the body, supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness" (*Ant* 18.117).<sup>33</sup>

Although Josephus offers no explanation for the extraordinary aspects of John's ministry, he does lay out the basic internal and external processes that were taking place: to those present, John preached a powerful exhortation to live a pious and righteous life; this was followed by an inner, individual decision to renounce sinful living and pursue righteousness—a decision that purifies the soul; finally, immersion in the river served to remove the bodily residue of past unrighteousness. In brief, Josephus describes John's 'baptism of repentance' as a public mission to influence large numbers of Judaeans to radically change their life from sinfulness to righteousness. At the same time, he stresses that John's immersion would not have been acceptable to God for the remission of sin (*Ant* 18.117), thereby suggesting that some were claiming it was.

Returning to the Gospels, we note that Matthew's Gospel omits to add that John's 'baptism of repentance' was 'for the forgiveness of sins', perhaps because, like Josephus, the author was concerned that John's baptism was being misunderstood in this way. Nevertheless, both Mark (Mk 1,4) and Luke (Lk 3,3) state that John's baptism of repentance was 'for the forgiveness of sins', in the context of 'confession of sin', so this phrase remains to be explained, in order to clarify whether John forgave sins or not.

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<sup>33</sup> Quoted from *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, Flavius Josephus, 1999; 595 (the translator's insertions in parenthesis have been omitted).

The first point is that, in the days of John and Jesus, it was strongly held that only God could forgive sins, so it was considered blasphemous for anyone to proclaim sins forgiven (cf. Mk 2,7). As the penalty for blasphemy was death by stoning, it is highly unlikely that the Pharisees and Sadducees would have remained silent if there was any attempt by John to pronounce ‘forgiveness of sins’. Nevertheless, there clearly was, and continues to be, much confusion on this issue.<sup>34</sup>

Some scholars assert that John did forgive sins, but then claim the Early Church deliberately suppressed this detail, because ‘forgiveness of sin’ was considered the prerogative of Jesus. They claim the author of Matthew’s Gospel omitted the reference to ‘forgiveness of sins’ to diminish John’s status, in line with many other reports in the New Testament that emphasize his subordination to Jesus. Against this argument is the fact that the phrase ‘for the forgiveness of sins’ is reproduced in full, without any embarrassment, in Mark and Luke. If Matthew deliberately omitted the phrase, and Josephus later denied John’s baptism was effective for the remission of sin, it could be because John’s disciples were falsely claiming for John what Jesus had emphatically established for his Church. In other words, it was not John the Baptist who forgave sins, but his later disciples, in their attempts to replicate the success of the Early Church. This argument, however, is largely academic, as it does not solve the meaning of the enigmatic ‘forgiveness’ phrase in Mark and Luke.

The use of the formulaic expression ‘for the forgiveness of sins’, without explanation, not only implies ancient usage, but also a common understanding. The followers of John and Jesus knew what it meant. In other words, John’s ‘baptism of repentance for (εἰς) the forgiveness of sins’ was based upon a known practice.<sup>35</sup> As many have noticed, ‘εἰς’ (with accusative) is the key word in this formula: it is a preposition denoting direction towards a certain aim (physical, temporal, metaphorical, or spiritual). It tells us that John’s actions were performed with the aim of procuring ‘forgiveness of sins’ at some point in the future, through repentance, immersion, confession of sins and, most importantly, through personal contact with the Lord or his Holy Spirit (e.g., Acts 2,33.38; 5,31; 10,43; 13,38; 26,18).

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<sup>34</sup> Clearly documented by Baumgarten, ‘The Baptism of John in a Second Temple Jewish Context’, *Wisdom Poured Out Like Water*, 2018; 399-414.

<sup>35</sup> No textual variations have been found for this formula, cf. *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Nestle Aland, 28<sup>th</sup> ed, Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012.

Like many others, the late Joseph Blenkinsopp recognized the practice which lies behind John's baptism and concludes: "It was a "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" and, as such, resembled the baptismal rite practiced at Qumran in requiring a complete break with the past by means of repentance. It also resembled the Qumran rite by signifying entrance in the eschatological Israel".<sup>36</sup>

This resemblance is especially evident in the covenant ceremony, described in the *Community Rule*, during which new members "willingly offer themselves to observe the statutes of God" (1QS 1:7).<sup>37</sup>

"All those who join the order of the community shall enter into a covenant before God to do all that he has commanded and not to turn back from following him through any fear or terror or trial which takes place during the reign of Belial. When they enter into the covenant the priests and the Levites shall bless the God of salvation and all the deeds of his faithfulness, and all those who are entering into his covenant say after them, 'Amen, Amen!'"

"The priests recount the righteous acts of God manifested in his mighty deeds and proclaim all his gracious acts of love towards Israel. And the Levites recount the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their guilty transgressions, and their sins during the reign of Belial. And those entering into the covenant confess after them and say: 'We have committed iniquity [and transgressed] we have [sin]ned and acted wickedly, we [and] our [fath]ers before us, in that we have walked [contrary to the covenant] of truth and righteous[ness...] his judgement upon us and upon our fathers, but he has bestowed his loving grace upon us from everlasting to everlasting" (1QS 1:6-2:1).<sup>38</sup>

"And it is through the submission of his soul to all the statutes of God that his flesh shall be purified, by being sprinkled with waters for purification and made holy by waters for cleansing. Let him, therefore, order his steps that he may walk perfectly in all the ways of God in accordance with that which he commanded at the times (when he made known) his decrees, without turning to right or left, and without going against any one of the commandments."

"Then he will be accepted through soothing atonement before God, and it will be for him a covenant of the eternal community" (1QS 2:8-12)<sup>39</sup>... "For it is through a spirit of true counsel with regard to the ways of man that all his iniquities shall be wiped out so that he may look on the light of life. It is through a holy spirit uniting him to his truth that he shall be purified from

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<sup>36</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Opening the Sealed Book*, 2006; 141.

<sup>37</sup> All quotations from 1QS are from Knibb's *Qumran Community*, 1987; 78.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 82-83.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 91.



all his iniquities. It is through a spirit of uprightness and humility that his sin shall be wiped out” (1QS 2:6-8).<sup>40</sup>

The following pattern can be distinguished in these extracts from the *Community Rule* (1QS): first, there is a decision to repent, separate completely from injustice, and join the community. Then, there is a ceremony at the annual gathering of the entire community, led by the priests and the Levites. It includes exhortatory preaching followed by a public confession of collective and personal sin. Repentance is then confirmed with an oath to keep the commandments and statutes of God, and it is followed by purification of the body through immersion. Subsequently, by living in the eschatological community, from walking perfectly in all the ways of God, and through union with the holy Spirit, atonement and forgiveness of sins is attained. It is through this lens, we suggest, that John’s ‘baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins’ should be understood. In particular, ‘for’ (εἰς) in the phrase ‘for the forgiveness of sins’, points to a future, unspecified time, in a process that starts with repentance and baptism and leads to a degree of divine union.

Despite the strong sectarian character of this document (1QS), it would be rash to conclude that the Baptist was an Essene from Qumran, as there is another possibility, noted by Blenkinsopp: “If these indications, certainly not exhaustive, justify us in postulating some kind of connection between John the Baptist and Qumran, the most likely explanation would be either that John had previously belonged to a less strict branch of the sect or that he had decided to go his own way, taking the eschatological teaching of the sect and the message of repentance out into the world to anyone who would listen”.<sup>41</sup> Later, Blenkinsopp holds back from identifying the Baptist directly with Qumran, by saying: “John the Baptist and his disciples represented in several respects a link if not directly with Qumran, at least with the broader sectarian phenomenon in late Second Temple Judaism for which the Qumran scrolls provide the best available evidence”.<sup>42</sup>

Tension in John’s relationship with Qumran is revealed by the fact that he was identifiable as an eschatological prophet, announcing divine judgment as imminent, and personally calling his people to prepare themselves through repentance.<sup>43</sup> In many ways, his mission would have

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 91.

<sup>41</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Sealed Book*, 141.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 146

<sup>43</sup> The Baptist’s clothing and location strongly evoke the prophet Elijah whose return was expected at the end of the age (Malachi 3). For a full topographical account of John’s

clashed with the Qumranic worldview, which regarded the fate of the wicked as predetermined and unalterable.<sup>44</sup> The repentance of the common people, *en masse*, was inconceivable to the Essenes of Qumran, whose *Community Rule* (1QS) and *Damascus Document* (CD) are saturated with commands for penitents to separate from the common people and their sinful ways. For the Qumranites, there could be no repentance without separation. In contrast, John took the imperative of repentance directly to the flocks of people who gathered to hear him, a mere 10 kms from Qumran. John's popular mission of repentance was such a direct challenge to the Qumran community's logic of separation in the wilderness, that we should view the Baptist as a rival to their 'introversionist' community.<sup>45</sup> Although there is much common ground on the process of repentance, which John appears to have known and adapted to his public mission, his ministry to the Judaeon crowds was a powerful rebuttal of the extreme sectarian worldview of the Qumranites.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, John's ministry conforms closely to the prophetic visions expressed in the Parables of Enoch, of which no fragment has yet been found at Qumran, even though it appears to have been well-known in the region, throughout the first century CE. The inference, then, is that the Parables was rejected by Qumran, because it was the product of a rival branch, which held incompatible doctrines.

A point-by-point comparison between the Parables and the preaching of John is unrewarding, for the first is not concerned to give 'a running summary of events leading up to and/or including the eschaton',<sup>47</sup> and the second is reported as rhetorical discourse, not in a systematic manner. Nevertheless, there are significant points of contact, as outlined by

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mission, see Taylor, 'John the Baptist on the Jordan River: Localities and their Significance', *ARAM Periodical* 29, 1 & 2 (2017), 365-83.

<sup>44</sup> Boccaccini states it like this: "While the community of the Dead Sea Scrolls engages in enforcing its doctrine of cosmic dualism and individual predestination, Enochic Judaism engages in other matters, such as conversion and deliverance from evil, which do not make good sense if good and evil are preordained by God", *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 1998; 144.

<sup>45</sup> This rivalry is expressed exegetically in their divergent ways of interpreting Isaiah 40,3a; for a thorough analysis, see Taylor, *Immerser*, 25-29.

<sup>46</sup> The rivalry also raises the suspicion of Qumranite involvement in the Baptist's arrest by Herod Antipas, although it remains just a suspicion as there is no evidence of conspiracy, as far as I know.

<sup>47</sup> Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 2, 52-54.

Daniele Minisini at a recent *Enoch Seminar* on John the Baptist.<sup>48</sup> According to Minisini, there are three reasons for affirming that the Baptist's preaching was influenced by the Book of Parables: the first is "the incredible similarity between the Enochic Son of Man and John the Baptist's Coming One", the second is "the theme of repentance", and the third is "the lack of interest in the Temple without any open condemnation". In a society which seemed convinced that war and physical combat was the way God would judge the nations, one could add the unique emphasis on a final and forensic judgment, ending in salvation for the righteous and condemnation for the wicked, as the main message of both the Parables and the Baptist. For the arguments behind this important hypothesis, we must await the publication of Minisini's doctoral thesis, but, in the meantime, Gabriele Boccaccini has already shared his insights on how John's 'baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' fits *uniquely* into the prophetic schema of the Parables of Enoch.

Few can doubt that the theme of repentance and forgiveness is central to the relation of human and divine, man and God. At the time of John the Baptist, repentance was what man could do to draw nearer to God, but forgiveness was in God's hands, granted under special conditions: for the Essenes the necessary conditions were provided by living in a holy and righteous community, separated from worldly injustice and impurity;<sup>49</sup> for the rest, the necessary conditions were provided by the Temple institution, through the priestly performance of expiatory rites. As we saw above, John the Baptist burst into public life with a third, previously unheard-of option, which was branded 'baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins'. In two landmark studies, Boccaccini has shown that this opening to divine forgiveness, although personally announced by John (c. 29 CE), was not invented by him, since it makes its first appearance in the Parables of Enoch (c. 1 CE).<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Daniele Minisini presented the subject of his PhD thesis at the *Enoch Seminar* on John the Baptist, 11-14<sup>th</sup> January, 2021, via Zoom. The quotations are taken from his handout entitled "Was John the Baptist an apocalyptic preacher? Some Enochic remarks," and labelled 'Draft-Work in progress'.

<sup>49</sup> In IQS 8,1-16 and 9:3-11, the separation and holy conduct of the *Yachad* community of Essenes brings atonement for the land and for the sins of the Jewish people, *instead* of the sacrificial institution of the Temple.

<sup>50</sup> Boccaccini, 'What Does the Forgiving Jesus Have to Do with the Unforgiving Enoch: Forgiveness of Sins in the Enochic Tradition?', *Torah, Temple, Land: Constructions of Judaism in Antiquity*, 2021; 157-171; 'Forgiveness of Sins: An Enochic Problem, A Synoptic Answer', *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels*, 153-67.

Without going into detail, *1 Enoch* 50:1-4 mentions, for the first time in the Enochic tradition, “the idea that repentance at the time of the last judgment will cause God to forgive by mercy some sinners”.<sup>51</sup> This is because it prophesies that “the righteous will be victorious in the name of the Lord of Spirits: and He will cause **the others** to witness (this), so that they may repent and abandon the works of their hands. They will have no honor in the presence of the Lord of Spirits, yet through His name they will be saved, and the Lord of Spirits will have mercy on them, for great is His mercy” (*1En* 50:2-3, emphasis mine).<sup>52</sup> It is precisely here, into this window of opportunity for sinners, whom the text calls ‘**the others**’, that John the Baptist proclaimed his baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Boccaccini goes on to conclude, “Contrary to what [is] commonly repeated the concept of forgiveness of sins is not foreign to the Jewish apocalyptic tradition of Enoch. In the Parables of Enoch, the possibility offered to sinners to repent and be forgiven by God’s mercy becomes an essential feature of the apocalyptic judgment.”

“The Christian tradition reads and interprets the experience of John the Baptist and Jesus the Messiah by borrowing its categories from the Book of Parables, or better from the traditions of the Book of Parables, to the point that the Synoptic gospels could be understood almost as a retelling of *1En. 50* in a perspective of realized eschatology—John the Baptist and Jesus have fulfilled the Enochic prophecy. At the center is the destiny of the righteous, the sinners and the others now that the “end is near”. ”<sup>53</sup>

Clearly, we are not talking about a literary dependence, *post factum*, between the Gospel accounts of John the Baptist and the Parables, for literary parallels are not to be found. Instead, Boccaccini’s discovery represents a correspondence that is both “unique and explicable only in terms of direct relationship”.<sup>54</sup> The relationship between John the Baptist and the Parables of Enoch was ‘unique’, because of their shared linkage of repentance to imminent eschatological judgment, unrecorded

<sup>51</sup> Boccaccini, ‘What Does the Forgiving Jesus’, 167.

<sup>52</sup> This is Boccaccini’s translation quoted from his ‘What Does the Forgiving Jesus’, 167. By following a different manuscript tradition for *1En* 50:3a, it differs from the existing versions by choosing “have no honour” instead of “have honour”, implying that those who can be forgiven are sinners without any merit (which includes gentiles), rather than just the righteous who have merit, but may have sinned in passing.

<sup>53</sup> Boccaccini, ‘What Does the Forgiving Jesus’, 172-73.

<sup>54</sup> This is Joan Taylor’s formula for establishing a high degree of influence (*Immerser*, 16. See n. 31).

elsewhere, and it was ‘direct’ in its close adherence to the content of the prophecy, especially *1En* 50,1-4. As implied by Boccaccini, the relationship is no less intimate than that of a prophet to his prophecy—a prophecy that was the product, not of the Qumran community, but of a rival group of Essenes (see above).

Blenkinsopp seems to have been right when he opined that “John had previously belonged to a less strict branch of the sect [than Qumran]... taking the eschatological teaching of the sect and the message of repentance out into the world to anyone who would listen”.<sup>55</sup> On the evidence presented above, John the Baptist can reasonably be identified as a former member of the Essene community in Jerusalem, or of a community nearby. Elsewhere, we have argued that the Jerusalem branch was founded by members of an Essene settlement at Mt. Arbel, which is where the Book of Parables was first composed.<sup>56</sup>

## ii. JESUS OF NAZARETH

In the Book of Parables, the expression ‘son of man’ (17 times) has become, or is well on the way to becoming, the main title of the central character in the Enochian visions. As explained by Lester Grabbe, this figure is denoted by three other titles, the Chosen One (16 times), the Righteous One (2 times), the Anointed One (2 times), and has a unique role to perform “as heavenly judge over both the wicked and the righteous, after being enthroned (1 En. 46:4-6; 54:4; 61:8-9; 62–63; 69:26-29), which is not one of the activities of the “son of man” in Daniel”.<sup>57</sup> A significant development has taken place from its merely descriptive use (‘one like a son of man’) in Daniel’s vision (Dn 7), which is the main source of the Parables’ profile of the ‘Son of Man’ (*1En* 46:1-4; 47:3–48:6; 71:9-14). Few would disagree nowadays with Lester Grabbe when he writes “The question of whether “son of man” is a title in the Parables thus becomes an academic one. There is no doubt that the “son of man” is not just a brief reference as in Daniel: this personage, with his various titles or designations, is a central feature of the Parables and a focus of this section of the (sic) 1 Enoch. He is not just “one like a son of man,” that is, a figure in human form, but “this Son of Man,” “that Son of Man,” or just “Son of Man.””<sup>58</sup> Sabino Chialà states it more

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<sup>55</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Sealed Book*, 141.

<sup>56</sup> Ben-Daniel, ‘The Essenes and Jerusalem’, *Qumran Chronicle*, 30, 1-4, 2022; 77-117, reproduced in the present volume.

<sup>57</sup> Grabbe, ““Son of Man”: Its Origin and Meaning in Second Temple Judaism’, *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels*, 169-197; quote from 185.

<sup>58</sup> Grabbe, “Son of Man”, 188-89.

precisely: “In the Book of Parables, what was only a *symbol* or *metaphor* in the book of Daniel—at least in chap. 7— becomes a *character* to whom precise traits and functions are attributed”.<sup>59</sup>

Apropos the evolution of this title, Nickelsburg takes care to explain that “although the Parables employ “Son of Man” as a designator for the messianic (...) judge and they allude to a figure known from Daniel 7, they do not employ the expression as a formal messianic title nor do they indicate that “Son of Man” was a traditional messianic title”.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, the conjunction of the ‘Son of Man’ with other titles, including the ‘Anointed One’ (i.e., Messiah), in the same heavenly figure, show that the designation is ripe to become a messianic title, a point made by Grabbe in his conclusions, “There seems little doubt that that “son of man” has taken on a messianic identity in the Parables of Enoch”.<sup>61</sup> In short, it appears that when the Parables was composed, it was not yet customary to refer to the messiah as “Son of Man”, but that this particular text was preparing the way for the linkage to occur.

A mere 30 years later, Jesus of Nazareth unambiguously identified himself as the “Son of Man” in ways that show this was his preferred messianic title.<sup>62</sup> Sabino Chialà perceptively notes, “The Synoptic Gospels are the books of the New Testament in which the expression “Son of Man” most frequently appears. In most cases the expression is spoken by Jesus himself, and from the way he uses the title, it seems clear that it was not unknown to his contemporaries. By this era the title “Son of Man” was evidently associated with a series of characteristics that were more or less familiar, and to which Jesus added others”.<sup>63</sup> In the

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<sup>59</sup> Chialà, ‘The Son of Man: The Evolution of an Expression’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 2007; 159.

<sup>60</sup> Nickelsburg, *I Enoch* 2, 116.

<sup>61</sup> Grabbe, “Son of Man”, 196.

<sup>62</sup> Although it is becoming increasingly rare, a number of influential scholars in the second half of the twentieth century (e.g., Rudolf Bultmann, Hans Conzelmann, Norman Perrin, Geza Vermes) disputed the use of the “Son of Man” title by Jesus himself, as reported in the Gospels, claiming that this was an invention of the Early Church. However, on the basis of the criteria of ‘dissimilarity’ (the unique use of this title by Jesus himself, but by none of his followers) and ‘multiple attestation’ (its occurrence in sources of diverse origin), the attribution of this title by Jesus, in reference to himself, is now deemed to be authentic, and as stated above, appears to have been his preferred designation; cf. deSilva, *The Jewish Teachers*, 136-37. Another indication of the adoption of this title by Jesus himself, and not primarily by the Early Church, is demonstrated by the movement away from using this title in the New Testament writings, in favour of other titles; cf. Chialà, ‘Evolution’, 153-78, also Grabbe, “Son of Man”, 189.

<sup>63</sup> Chialà, ‘Evolution’, 163.

Gospels it occurs 85 times, which can be traced to the mouth of Jesus on all but 4 occasions. Lee Martin McDonald observes, “Since this designation is not the typical designation for Jesus in the rest of the New Testament, nor is Jesus usually referred to as Son of Man in early Church literature, it is likely the designation goes back to Jesus himself. The early Christians generally refer to Jesus as “the Son of God,” “Christ,” “Lord,” or “Savior,” and *not* “Son of Man.””<sup>64</sup>

In the literature that survives from the first century CE, the use of “Son of Man” as a messianic title only occurs in the Parables of Enoch and in the sayings of Jesus recorded in the Gospels.<sup>65</sup> To this day, these writings remain a unique historicization of the title, for towards the end of the first century the use of the expression as a messianic title largely disappears from circulation (see later).

Furthermore, general surveys of the eschatological use of the expression “Son of Man” in the Gospels and Acts, such as those conducted by Sabino Chialà and Lester Grabbe,<sup>66</sup> show that the context almost always includes the judicial elements that derive uniquely from the Parables of Enoch. *Whether it is the messianic significance of the “Son of Man” title, or the judicial elements of its context, the Parables of Enoch is the unique background for the eschatological use of “Son of Man” by Jesus of Nazareth.* If there is any suspicion that Jesus arrived at the messianic significance of the “Son of Man” independently of the Parables of Enoch, then the chorus of voices in the New Testament, some indicating literary dependence on the Parables of Enoch (e.g., Mt 25,31-46 vs. 1En 62–63),<sup>67</sup> should be sufficient to dispel any doubt that, inspired by Jesus, the Early Church understood the Parables as the proximate source of his messianic role.<sup>68</sup>

In summary, Jesus’ relationship with the Parables was unique because he also identified the heavenly Son of Man with the Messiah, and it was direct because he identified himself with that unique combination. Just like the Baptist related to the Parables as the prophet to his prophecy of coming judgment, so Jesus related to the Parables as the heavenly

<sup>64</sup> McDonald, ‘The Parables of Enoch in Early Christianity’, *Parables of Enoch: A Paradigm Shift*, 2013; 347.

<sup>65</sup> Charlesworth, ‘The Parables of Enoch and the Apocalypse of John’, *Pseudepigrapha and Christian Origins*, 232.

<sup>66</sup> Chialà, ‘Evolution’ and Grabbe, ‘Son of Man’.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Walck, ‘The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and the Gospels’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 328-31, 336-37.

<sup>68</sup> For a broad survey of the extent of the parallels between the Parables and the New Testament, see McDonald, ‘The Parables of Enoch in Early Christianity’, 338-56.

Messiah to his messianic prophecy. It is the unique and direct relationship between the Parables of Enoch and Jesus of Nazareth that confirms his personal awareness and embrace of this prophecy.

Before closing we should explain why Jesus identified himself with the central character in the Parables, if the text identifies this figure with Enoch in the last chapter (*1En* 71:13-17). In chapter 71, the “Son of Man” is not identified with Jesus, but with Enoch, the ante-diluvian scribe and seer, whose vision of the “Son of Man” as a separate figure in heaven constitutes the core content of the whole work. We have an unexpected merging of identities, between that of the seer and that of the main subject of his vision, with the implication that no further historical realization is required in the future. Here again, most scholars agree that ch. 71 was a later addition, as there are many inconsistencies with the main body of the text.<sup>69</sup> Jesus would not have encountered chapter 71 in the version of the Book of Parables that circulated in his day.

At this point, the objection can be made that Jesus may have applied the title “Son of Man” to himself, as well as the prophecy assigned to this title, but he clearly did not fulfil his role to the end, because he refrained from eliminating the wicked. In a message relayed to Jesus, there is a hint that even his forerunner, John the Baptist, wondered whether Jesus was living up to the task required of him (Mt 11,2-6; cf. Lk 7,18-23). Not only did it appear that Jesus was failing to perform the required actions, but that he was exposed to experiences that were not even mentioned in the Parables, namely his crucifixion, death and resurrection. The reasons for this postponement of fulfillment will be explained in the next section.

In this section, it is not relevant whether Jesus fulfilled the prophecy, or not, because our aim was just to show that he applied it to himself, and with evidence from recent scholarship, we have argued that he certainly

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<sup>69</sup> E.g., Nickelsburg, *1Enoch* 2, 330-32; J. J. Collins, ‘Enoch and the Son of Man: A Response to Sabino Chialà and Helge Kvanvig’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 221-27; also Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 197-203; Chialà, ‘Evolution’, 162 and his n. 13. Peter Schäfer (*Two Gods in Heaven: Jewish Concepts of God in Antiquity*, 2020; 45-53) supports this view by noting the irreconcilable contrast between the God (Son of Man) who is revealed to men in a theophany in *1Enoch* 37-70, and the man (Enoch) who is divinized in an apotheosis in *1Enoch* 71. These are two opposing trajectories, although they are harmonized in the Incarnation and Ascension of Jesus Christ. This has given rise to the theory (ascribed to Daniel Boyarin) that these Christian doctrines are based on the ancient Jewish traditions appearing in the Parables of Enoch. Schäfer disputes the presumption of priority for the apotheosis of Enoch, on which this theory is based. From a literary point of view, it is indeed more probable that the apotheosis of Enoch was modelled on the Christian narrative of Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ, as a way of reclaiming the Parables of Enoch from the Christians (see later).



did. On this basis, we could simply conclude with James Charlesworth, that “The Book of Parables (*IEn* 37-71), appears to be a Jewish work that antedates Jesus, and the author seems to imagine a connection among the Messiah, the Righteous One, and the Son of Man. The work most likely took shape in Galilee, not far from where Jesus centered his ministry. He, thus, could have been influenced by this writing or the traditions preserved in the Parables of Enoch. In this case, his own self-understanding may have been shaped by the relationship between the Son of Man and the Messiah that is found only in the Parables of Enoch. If those in the Enoch group were known as the great scholars who had special and secret knowledge, and if they lived in Galilee, then Jesus would most likely have had an opportunity to learn firsthand about their teachings through discussions and debates”.<sup>70</sup>

In 2013, James Charlesworth and Mordechai Aviam went on to propose ancient Magdala as the home of the author of the Book of Parables, in the light of recent archaeological findings there.<sup>71</sup> In 2019, the author of this study discovered signs of an Essene settlement only 2 kms to the west of Magdala, at the Arbel cave village, a dense collection of 120 caves dating from 100 BCE and carved into the cliffs of Mt. Arbel. Our research on this site combines field observations with relevant historical and archaeological findings, all of which point to an Essene occupation of this cave village in antiquity.<sup>72</sup> In a separate study, we present the literary and topographical evidence locating the author of the Parables of Enoch to the same site.<sup>73</sup>

These findings immediately raise the question of personal contact. Scholars have long suspected a link between Jesus and the Essenes, from the content of his teaching and his style of scriptural exegesis, but there is no compelling evidence that Jesus was ever a member of the Qumran community or that he ever visited Qumran.<sup>74</sup> However, with the

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<sup>70</sup> Charlesworth, ‘Can We Discern the Composition Date of the Parables of Enoch’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 467.

<sup>71</sup> Charlesworth, ‘Did Jesus Know the traditions in the *Parables of Enoch*’, *A Paradigm Shift*, 184-191, and Aviam, ‘The Book of Enoch and the Galilean Archaeology and Landscape’, *A Paradigm Shift*, 159-69.

<sup>72</sup> See n. 25 above.

<sup>73</sup> See n. 24 above.

<sup>74</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the continuities and discontinuities between the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels and the writings from Qumran, see S.J. Joseph, *Jesus, the Essenes, and Christian Origins: New Light on Ancient Texts and Communities*, 2018. On a more popular level, *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Revealing the Jewish Roots of Christianity* by Bergsma, 2019. The Qumran writings provide the best available

discovery of the ruins of another large Essene community at Arbel cave village, only a day's walk from Nazareth, an alternative possibility presents itself.

When he was only twelve years old, Jesus preferred to discuss the Sacred Scriptures with the teachers in the Temple at Jerusalem, than to return home with his parents (Lk 2,41-52). Furthermore, the Essene *Community Rule* (1QS 6:13-23) allows for approved young men to join the Essene communities for two to three years before having to commit, permanently, by taking the oath of membership. Josephus confirms this option not only in writing (*JW* 2.137-142), but also in practice, by staying with an Essene Community when he was 16 years old (c. 53-54 CE), in order to learn more about this movement (*Life* 10-11). It is entirely possible, therefore, that while still an adolescent, the Scripture-loving Jesus may have chosen to visit the Essene community at Mt. Arbel for a limited period of time. This would have the advantage of explaining Jesus' detailed knowledge of Essene interpretation, customs, traditions and worldview, without assuming some kind of relationship with the community at Qumran. It would also explain Jesus' personal contact with the Parables of Enoch, whose author was a member of the community at Mt. Arbel, and his subsequent radical identification with the "Son of Man" described therein.

### iii. JOHN OF PATMOS

As with the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth, the same method of establishing a 'direct and unique relationship' to the Parables of Enoch can be applied to the Book of Revelation. The task is made easier by the fact that this is a literary work and direct literary comparison is possible. It is hardly necessary to add that the Parables antedates the Book of Revelation by almost a century, accepting the date of the first to c. 1 BCE and the date of the second to c. 96 CE.<sup>75</sup> So if there is evidence of influence, it is logical to assume it flows from the Book of Parables to the Book of Revelation, and not vice versa.

R.H. Charles was among the first modern scholars to document numerous and close parallels between the two books.<sup>76</sup> He was followed

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evidence, so far, for the link between the Jesus movement and the rival ('Arbelite') branch of Essenes that produced the Parables of Enoch and other pseudepigraphal/apocryphal works.

<sup>75</sup> The traditional date for the Book of Revelation is given by Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V.30.3; *apud* Eusebius, *Church History (Historia Ecclesiae)* III, 18.3; V, 8.6; also, by Clement of Alexandria, *Quis dives* 42.

<sup>76</sup> Charles, *The Book of Enoch*, 1912, xcv-cii.

by several others, including Richard Bauckham, David Aune, James Charlesworth,<sup>77</sup> and most recently by Loren Stuckenbruck and co-author Mark Mathews.<sup>78</sup> Without doubt, the study by Stuckenbruck and Mathews is the most detailed and systematic review of the verbal and thematic parallels between the Book of Revelation and not only the Book of Parables, but all the other books in *1 Enoch* (the Book of Watchers chs. 1-36, the Astronomical Book chs. 72-82, the Book of Dreams chs. 83-90, the Epistle of Enoch chs. 91-108). It is instructive to summarize their conclusions, which includes an evaluation of the degree of influence. After identifying and reviewing 49 alleged parallels between the Book of Revelation (The Apocalypse of John) and *1 Enoch*, they conclude with the following five points:

A. In 22 passages from the Book of Revelation, they identified parallels to *1 Enoch* representing “general and widely shared traditions (that) demonstrate at least how much Revelation stands generally within the Jewish apocalyptic tradition”.<sup>79</sup>

B. In a further group of 13 parallels, a stronger affinity was evident, “based on a uniquely shared combination of ideas or motifs in Revelation and one of the sections of *1 Enoch*”. Of these, 7 parallels were thought to be sufficiently strong as to indicate Enochic influence on Revelation.<sup>80</sup>

C. In the final group of 14 parallels, the correspondence involves terms with shared significance or closely comparable phrases, and 7 of these parallels were deemed strong enough to “open the possibility of Enochic influence on Revelation”.<sup>81</sup>

D. Out of the 14 strongest parallels listed in B and C above, the “largest number of significant parallels (...) suggesting the possibility of Enochic influence on Revelation has to do with the *Book of Parables* (six). This signifies an affinity that can be explained by the relative contemporaneity of the *Book of Parables* with Revelation or by the use of one by the other, with the direction of influence most likely being from the *Book of Parables* to Revelation.... On the whole, this makes it likely that the writer of Revelation either was directly acquainted (through

<sup>77</sup> Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 1993; 38-91; Aune, ‘The Apocalypse of John and Palestinian Jewish Apocalyptic’, *Pseudepigrapha and Christian Origins*, 169-192; Charlesworth, ‘The Parables of Enoch and the Apocalypse of John’, *Pseudepigrapha and Christian Origins*, 227-42.

<sup>78</sup> Stuckenbruck and Mathews, ‘The Apocalypse of John, I Enoch, and the Question of Influence’, *Die Johannesapokalypse*, 2012; 191-234.

<sup>79</sup> Stuckenbruck and Mathews, ‘Question of Influence’, 231.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* 231.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 232.

literary or oral transmission) with several of the major sections of *I Enoch* or at least had access to traditions that were influenced by these writings”.<sup>82</sup>

E. As with the books in the Hebrew Bible, there are no direct quotations from *I Enoch* in the Book of Revelation. Leaving aside the books of Exodus, Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, whose influence is the greatest on the contents of Revelation, it is fair “to claim that the writings brought together into *I Enoch* are, collectively, at least as important as most other biblical books”.<sup>83</sup>

In short, even though there are several close verbal-thematic parallels between the Book of Parables and the Book of Revelation, which indicate influence from the former to the latter, we cannot judge whether this influence was due to direct contact (oral or written), or to indirect transmission through an intermediate source (oral or written). We appear to have exhausted the ability of the text, at the micro level of words and motifs/themes, to distinguish between direct or indirect influence. So, at this point, the only way to prove direct influence is by demonstrating unique features, common to both works, but absent elsewhere.

The detailed parallels considered above are set in a framework that shows a general affinity between the Book of Parables and the Book of Revelation. It is the framework and the general similarities that deepen the relationship further. On this ‘macro’ level, the observations of George Nickelsburg are relevant and instructive: “The Revelation to John of Patmos, also from the end of the first century C.E., provides the closest parallel to the Book of Parables.... aspects of the content of the book approximate those of the Parables. John ascends to heaven (...), to the divine throne room, where he sees four living creatures and hears the praises of the heavenly choruses (...), including a version of the *Trisagion* (...), as well as the cry of the dead pleading for vindication (...). From the heavenly vantage point, he sees events connected with the end-time and the coming judgment. (.....) Taken together, these features suggest to me some knowledge of the Parables, though certainly not anything resembling quotation. The otherworldly apocalypticism of the Parables is the air that this author (...) breathes”.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* 233.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* 234.

<sup>84</sup> Nickelsburg, *I Enoch* 2, 69; cf. op. cit. 70, 83, and again: “The best analogy to the Johannine Apocalypse is the Enochic Book of Parables. Both texts describe the seer’s ascent to heaven (Rev 4:1-2; 1 Enoch 39:3) and record similar throne visions (Rev 4:2-

The apocalyptic framework and the progression to final judgment, outlined here by Nickelsburg, comprise another significant, and unique, similarity between the Parables and Revelation. Its significance lies in helping to distinguish between direct and indirect influence on the author of Revelation, for only if he had direct and repeated contact with the Parables, orally or written, would he have known how to reproduce its general framework and judgmental content, into which he could then set the detailed parallels identified by Stuckenbruck and Mathews. If John's knowledge of these verbal-thematic parallels was obtained indirectly, orally or written, from an intermediate source—some amorphous collection of traditional apocalyptic motifs, themes and expressions derived from the Parables—then the correspondence between the two works at the macro level, in its literary form and principal content, would be disordered or even absent. This is one aspect of the uniqueness of the relationship between the Parables and Revelation, which points to direct influence. The other is related to it, though more specific and even more unique.

Although the author of Revelation no longer employs 'Son of Man' as a title, as in the Gospels, the phrase 'son of man' does occur twice in the expression "one like a son of man", first in the description of the angel of the risen Christ as a high-priest (Rev 1,10-20), and later as the one who comes on a cloud to separate his people from the world (i.e., to reap the grain harvest in 14,14-16). The same figure can be recognized by his features, but with different names, in at least one other context: the angel previously described as a high priest in the opening vision (1,10-20) reappears, at the final battle, as the messianic warrior on a white horse, who judges and makes war with righteousness, and is followed by the armies of heaven (19,11-16). One of his titles, 'King of kings and Lord of lords', identifies him with the slain Lamb (17,14), who reconciles people to God and saves them by his blood (1,5-6; 5,9-10; 7,16; 12,11). The Lamb is the Messiah (5,5), who stands at the Throne of God, and is worshipped along with Almighty God (5,6-14). He is worthy of receiving the Scroll of Life and break its seven seals (5,1-5; 6,1-17; 8,1). This enables him to open the Scroll and judge the wicked by removing their names (3,5; 13,8; 17,8; 20,15), so at the general resurrection for judgment, when the dead will appear before the divine Throne, those whose name has been removed will be condemned

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11; 1 Enoch 40:1-10), and both are dominated by heavenly and earthly visions of events relating to the judgment" (*1 Enoch 1*, 2001; 85).

eternally. The rest will be judged according to their deeds. In short, the messianic “one like a son of man”, who gave his life as a means of atonement and salvation for mankind is the same as he who will judge and condemn the wicked at the final judgment. His judgment is an integral part of his salvation.

According to this brief outline, the role of the Messiah Son of Man in the Book of Revelation bears a remarkably close resemblance to the Messiah Son of Man in the Book of Parables. Both are heavenly figures, both are at the Throne of God in heaven, both are worshipped, both are revealed to the community of the righteous, both bring salvation, both bring fiery condemnation to the devil, his angels and their unrepentant followers, and both are present in the renewed creation. Although there are important differences in the Book of Revelation, with the identification of this figure as Jesus of Nazareth and his performance of additional tasks, the correspondence is unique in the literature of the first century CE and is more profound and extensive than the correspondence between the Parables and other first century apocalypses, such as *4Ezra*, *2Baruch* and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. Both the Parables and Revelation are unique and outstanding in portraying the Messiah Son of Man as the judge of humankind at the final judgment, a task that all contemporary works reserved for Almighty God alone.

Concerning the Parables of Enoch, Nickelsburg observes “The contrast between the present world and the world to come is marked by another surprising feature. When compared, the Parables’ description of present world is vivid and somewhat detailed, but the book’s portrayal of the future is, with few exceptions, vague and abstract”.<sup>85</sup> In comparison, the Book of Revelation has much to say about the future, thus giving the impression that its author was entrusted with an apocalypse that would update, complete and supersede the Parables of Enoch in its function of informing and enlightening the people of God about the future. This observation will be taken up in the next section.

At the end of his study on the relationship between John’s Book of Revelation, which is here called the Apocalypse of John, and other Palestinian apocalypses, David Aune offers some thoughts about the author, which have since become influential: “Though the Apocalypse was written in the province of Roman Asia, it is permeated with the motifs and literary conventions of Palestinian Jewish apocalyptic. This investigation supports the suggestion that the author was not only an

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<sup>85</sup> Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 40.

immigrant from Palestine, perhaps in the wake of the second Jewish revolt, but that he was a card-carrying Jewish apocalypticist. Since a close analysis of the Apocalypse of John betrays an intimate knowledge of many apocalyptic sources and traditions, it appears likely that the author read, and perhaps even owned, a modest library of Palestinian apocalyptic literature. Whether he began his career as a Christian apocalypticist or whether he began as a Jewish apocalypticist who only later became a follower of Jesus of Nazareth can never be known with certainty, though in my view the latter seems more inherently probable. At any rate, no other Christian author (so far as we know) ever attempted to produce an apocalypse so generically similar to the generally recognized corpus of Palestinian Jewish apocalypses as the Apocalypse of John".<sup>86</sup>

In the next chapter of the same volume, Charlesworth narrows down the influence of known apocalyptic works on the author of the Book of Revelation (Apocalypse of John): "It seems safe to conclude, in light of unknown oral traditions and compositions, that if the author of the Apocalypse of John was not influenced by these unknown factors, he was most likely influenced, perhaps directly, by the images and symbolism found only in the Parables of Enoch".<sup>87</sup>

However, taking the results of Stuckenbruck and Mathew's paper into account, we should widen the area of influence on John to include all the writings in *1Enoch*, although a particularly strong influence is detected from the Parables of Enoch (*1En* 37–71), because of John's direct and unique relationship with this book.

From literary cues alone, then, the author of the Book of Revelation was a Jew called John (Yochanan), born and raised in the Land of Israel, fully acquainted with the Hebrew Scriptures (especially the Targums), with the works that comprise *1Enoch* and with other New Testament writings. Internal evidence (Rev 1–3) indicates he wrote the Revelation towards the end of the first century on the Aegean Island called Patmos, 60 miles south of Ephesus, and had first-hand knowledge of at least seven churches in Asia Minor.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Aune, 'Apocalypse of John and Palestinian Jewish Apocalyptic', 192.

<sup>87</sup> Charlesworth, 'The *Parables of Enoch* and the Apocalypse of John', 242.

<sup>88</sup> Classical historians are able to confirm that the profiles of the churches, as described in the seven messages (Rev 2–3), agree not only with local archaeological findings, historical records and topographical characteristics, but also with the traditional date of writing around the end of the first century CE; cf. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting*, 1989; 2-7. For the traditional dating, see n. 75.

According to our research on the provenance of the Parables of Enoch, John could have encountered this work, in its original written form, at any time during the first century CE, either with the Essenes of Mt. Arbel in Galilee, or with the Essenes of Mt. Zion, in Jerusalem. It may also have been widely disseminated in a shorter oral form, especially around the Sea of Galilee, close to the Essene community of its author at Mt. Arbel.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, the high degree of influence on the author of the Book of Revelation implies close contact with the original written version of the Parables. One could reasonably suggest that his initial contact with this prophecy was linked to the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth, and was later reinforced by study of the written document itself. This proposal leads directly to the issue of John's identity. Who was this Palestinian Jew, the 'card-carrying apocalypticist', who may have heard about the Parables by the Sea of Galilee or in Jerusalem, and was later inspired to read and study it? Expressed in this way, there can be no objection to placing the apostle John, son of Zebedee and younger brother of James, at the top of the list of possibilities. In fact, this profile corresponds well with early Christian tradition regarding John, the longest surviving apostle.<sup>90</sup>

According to this tradition, John migrated to Ephesus from Jerusalem prior to the first Revolt in 70 CE and directed the Church in Ephesus until he died there, at the start of Emperor Trajan's reign, c. 98 CE. The tradition relates that the same John was exiled to the Island of Patmos, at the end of Domitian's reign (c. 95 CE), and that the same John wrote the fourth Gospel.<sup>91</sup> At this point, we should recall that the author of John's Gospel, the beloved disciple, was a disciple of John the Baptist before becoming a disciple of Jesus. It is a small step, in the light of Rev 1,9, to identify John, the apostle exiled from Ephesus to Patmos according to the tradition, as the author of the Book of Revelation as well.

The only alternative would be to postulate two Johns in Ephesus: the elderly apostle at the head of the Church in Ephesus, and an unknown 'apocalypticist' of the same name, or pseudonym.<sup>92</sup> The one who was

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<sup>89</sup> The 'Arbelite' Essenes were active in the local communities (cf. Mk 3,6; 8,15 in p<sup>45</sup>; Mk 12,13; Mt 22,16). For the evidence identifying them with the Herodians of the New Testament, see Taylor, *The Essenes, the Scrolls, and the Dead Sea*, 2012; 109-30.

<sup>90</sup> The tradition has come down to us from various sources, transmitted (c. 325 CE) by Eusebius, *Church History*: III, 18.1; III, 20.11; III, 23.1-6; IV, 18.8; V, 8.4-7; VI, 25.9-10.

<sup>91</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, III, 18.1-5.

<sup>92</sup> This was the suggestion of Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria (c. 250 CE), who denied the apostolic authorship of the Book of Revelation, because of its poor literary



exiled on Patmos would then have to be identified with the unknown ‘apocalypticist’, whom the Asian community mistakenly, or mischievously, identified as the elderly apostle and evangelist. Apart from the extreme unlikelihood of mistaking the identity of a figure so highly respected and well-known as the apostle John, Roman law has something to say about the status of the one who was exiled on Patmos. It is a fact that Roman law allowed the death penalty to be commuted to exile, but only for people of high social standing, *honestiores*, and only with authorization from the Emperor. According to this law, then, the exiled John must have had a high social status, recognized even by the Emperor Domitian. The head of the Church in Asia would certainly have qualified for this privilege, but a person of lesser rank, or somebody whose identity was unknown, could not have avoided the death penalty under this law. The law of exile, therefore, confirms the Church tradition, which states unambiguously that it was John the apostle and evangelist who was exiled on Patmos, and then returned to direct the Church in Ephesus.<sup>93</sup> John was released from exile following the assassination of Domitian in 96 CE, for his successor, Nerva, reversed all of Domitian’s decrees.<sup>94</sup> The enigmatic, ‘semi-anonymity’ of John’s writings (the Book of Revelation, the Fourth Gospel and the Letters of John) can be understood as a scribal ploy to protect the author from further persecution, or prevent damage to his tomb, since members of the Church were forced to keep a low profile at this difficult time, and for a considerable time afterwards.<sup>95</sup>

So, accepting the Church tradition on the apostolic authorship of the Book of Revelation (and the Fourth Gospel), our discovery that it has a direct and uniquely close relationship to the Book of Parables, allows us to be more specific about points of contact and means of influence.

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quality, as reported by Eusebius, *Church History*, III, 39.4-7; VII, 25. His suggestion has had a long life, splitting opinions on the apostolic authorship, therefore acceptance, of the Book of Revelation (ibid. III, 24.18; III, 25.2-4). Despite laborious attempts to corroborate the suggestion of Dionysius, there is no evidence whatsoever for the existence of another John in Asia at that time. Furthermore, it can be argued its poor Greek is a sign of apostolic authenticity (cf. J. and G. Ben-Daniel, *St. John and the Book of Revelation*, 2019; 43-91; also at <https://www.newtorah.org/pdf/Essenes%20ch2.pdf>).

<sup>93</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, III, 18.1-5; 20.11; 23.10.

<sup>94</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, III, 20.10-11; 23.1 (quoting Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* II. 33.2; III. 3.4); Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 68.2.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Bruce, *New Testament History*, New York: Doubleday-Galilee, 1980; 422-28, where the author describes the situation of the Church at the time, quoting the correspondence of Pliny the Younger to the Emperor Trajan, when he was Proconsul to Bithynia and Pontus (111-12 CE).

Growing up as a fisherman's son on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, John may have heard an oral recital of the Parables when he still an adolescent. It inspired him and his older companions to follow John the Baptist, and then Jesus of Nazareth. After the Resurrection, he moved to Jerusalem to serve in the first Christian community there (cf. Gal 2,9), which was established at the site of the 'upper room', on Mt. Zion, where the first Pentecost was celebrated (Acts 2,1-13). The neighbours were Essenes, many of whom were baptized into the Christian Faith (Acts 2,41; 6,7).<sup>96</sup> A close link was established between the Essenes and the early Christian community, giving John the opportunity to read their literature, including the Parables and the other writings in *I Enoch*, and to learn basic scribal skills. He took these skills, and maybe some scrolls, to Ephesus when he moved there, sometime before the first Revolt, c. 63-65 CE. I have argued elsewhere that he later set up a scribal school in Ephesus (the so-called 'Johannine school'), for the copying of biblical manuscripts and their distribution to the rapidly expanding Church of Asia Minor.<sup>97</sup> The main evidence for this comes from the Book of Revelation itself, when the Lord asked John to write down his revelation and send it to the seven churches (Rev 1,11.19). Assuming that the Lord was not burdening John or each of the seven churches with a lot of skilled copying work, this divine command presupposes the existence of John's scribal school.<sup>98</sup> Because of the need to conceal their output, this manuscript copying school may indeed have invented the papyrus codex medium, which was especially suited for the clandestine distribution of the Gospels, Letters and John's own writings.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. Riesner, 'Jesus, the Primitive Community, and the Essene Quarter of Jerusalem', *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1992; 198-234; Pixner, *Paths of the Messiah*, 2010; 192-223; 239-52; 319-59; 360-67.

<sup>97</sup> Ben-Daniel, *St. John and the Book of Revelation*; 82-91; accessible online at <https://www.newtorah.org/pdf/Essenes%20ch2.pdf>.

<sup>98</sup> John's instruction to make 7 copies is similar, but clearly not identical, to the command to the author of *4 Ezra*, to take 5 companions, trained to write quickly, and dictate 94 books over 40 days. They took turns to write what the author dictated, so presumably they produced only one copy of all the books, cf. *4 Ezra* 14:23-26, 37-45.

<sup>99</sup> The papyrus codex could be easily concealed, because it was smaller and more compact than a papyrus or parchment scroll and externally resembled the parchment codices that were used, on a daily basis, by engineers, doctors, and other professionals. For further discussion see Ben-Daniel, *St. John and the Book of Revelation*, 82-91 (for online link, see n. 97).

### ***3. The public reception of the Parables of Enoch and its trajectory through the Jesus movement and Early Christian Church.***

By applying the criterion of ‘a direct and unique relationship’, we have concluded that John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth and John of Patmos all had direct personal contact with the text that has come down to us as the Parables of Enoch, either through hearing or reading, or both. Needless to say, they are foremost among the founders of the Jewish messianic movement that later became known as Christianity. Each in their own way appears to have accepted the Parables of Enoch as a messianic prophecy which addressed the immediate concerns and expectations of the Jewish people.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which this attitude was shared by their fellow countrymen. Joseph Klausner suggests wide acceptance by referring to it as “perhaps the Messianic book par excellence of Judaism in the period of the Second Temple”, whose author was among those apocalyptists rightly called the “popular prophets”.<sup>100</sup> In comparing the Son of Man in the Synoptic Gospels with his prefiguration in the Parables, J. Harold Ellens would seem to agree: “The synoptic gospels paint a picture very much like that of 1 Enoch... Mark, the first to write the story, copied by Matthew and Luke, simply took the story of 1 Enoch, which was afloat everywhere in Judaism at the time”.<sup>101</sup> However, Harold Ellens does not give his reasons for claiming the story of the Parables in *1 Enoch* was ‘afloat everywhere in Judaism at the time’, and his claim is contradicted by accounts in the Gospels. For example, in Jesus’ last public address, the crowd of Greek Jews had heard about the Messiah, but ask “Who is this Son of Man?” (Jn 12,34). If they had been familiar with the Parables of Enoch they would have known the Messiah was also called the Son of Man.

More significantly, not all those who heard Jesus use the title Son of Man linked it to the Messiah. So, although Jesus seems to have used the title Son of Man as if it were known by his local contemporaries,<sup>102</sup> he was also aware that not everyone identified him as the Messiah, but only those, like Peter, to whom it had been revealed by the Father (Mt 16,13-19; Mk 8,27-29; Lk 9,7-9.18-20). Others thought he was John the Baptist, or Elijah, or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets, and Jesus “strictly

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<sup>100</sup> The quotations are from *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, by Klausner, 1955; 301 and 273 in that order.

<sup>101</sup> Harold Ellens, ‘The Johannine Community and the Fourth Gospel: A Polemic Against Enochic Apocalypticism?’, *Wisdom Poured Out Like Water*, 430.

<sup>102</sup> As noted by Chialà, ‘Evolution’, 163, quoted above, in the text linked to n. 63.

ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Messiah” (Mt 16,20; Mk 8,30; 9,21).

Investigation of the reception of the Parables of Enoch should therefore take account of this so-called “messianic secret”, which implies that not everyone who gathered around Jesus Son of Man would have grasped that he was the Messiah.<sup>103</sup> His disciples may have been the only ones who knew (cf. Jn 6,60-71). Nevertheless, John’s Gospel describes a situation in which more and more people suspected he was the Messiah (Jn 6,14-15), and openly debated the matter (Jn 7). Their suspicions were awakened not so much by witnessing the fulfilment of a messianic prophecy, but by the signs and miracles that Jesus performed and, as in the case of Peter, by a revelation from the Father (cf. Mk 9,2-8). The general impression from the Gospels is that the messianic prophecy of the Parables, in which the Son of Man is synonymous with Messiah, was not well known among the majority of the population. It is possible that Jesus preferred to use the title ‘Son of Man’ precisely because its messianic connotation was not widely known—the title itself was an important part of the ‘messianic secret’. If this were the case, then the Parables of Enoch could best be described as ‘esoteric’, which is to say, a messianic prophecy that was known and grasped only by his disciples and among the wise and learned (cf. *1En* 48:6-7; 62:7).

Contributing to the confusion about the Messiah’s identity, was the variety of messianic prophecies circulating at the time. The two that have come down to us relatively intact are the *Psalms of Solomon* (17–18), attributed to the Pharisees of Jerusalem, and the *War Scroll* (1QM) from the Essenes of Qumran. Their visions of divine judgment through combat and warfare clashed and competed with the Parables’ prophecy of salvation for the righteous and repentant, and divine judgment for the wicked and unrepentant. The messianic war paradigm seems to have been more popular in Jerusalem and Judaea, where the Roman occupation was more harshly imposed and sorely felt. It is therefore quite possible that the influence of the Parables of Enoch was greatest in the north and that it had a lesser impact around Jerusalem. There were many other messianic prophecies apart from these two, but they have survived

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<sup>103</sup> Cf. Yarbro Collins, ‘The Secret Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and the Gospel of Mark’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 338-342. The practical reason for this ‘secret’ is not hard to discern from the episode in Jn 6,14-15. If the disciples had told the crowds that Jesus was the Messiah, they would have carried him off to make him king, not understanding his kingdom is heavenly, and not of this world (Jn 18,33-37).

only on fragments of scrolls retrieved from caves near the ruins of the settlement at Qumran, close to the Dead Sea.<sup>104</sup>

So, whatever we may conclude about the reception of the Parables of Enoch among the general public, and it appears to have been more limited than hitherto assumed, there can be little doubt that it was well known and received by a select minority, starting with the Essene community that produced it— ‘the congregation of the righteous’. Not only did this prophecy contain religious secrets, such as the names of the rebel angels, but it also prophesied the imminent condemnation and punishment of the ruling elite: the kings, the mighty and the landowners. Indiscreet publication of this prophecy would have had severe repercussions on the whole community. So, initially at least, the publication of the text would have been limited to the various Essene communities, with access restricted to Essene members, their postulants, and trusted guests (cf. *4Ezra* 14:26,45-48).

In the preceding section, we argued that access to the Essene communities of Mt. Arbel and Mt. Zion would have been available to all three of the founders of the messianic movement, at different times, and we have proposed that it was there, in the privacy of the Essene community, that they were granted direct and prolonged contact with the text of the Parables of Enoch. To say more than this would be pure speculation, except that both the Baptist and Jesus could have encountered this messianic prophecy as guests, postulants, or members of their respective Essene communities, before it became more widely known with the realization of their roles, especially among their disciples.

It can therefore be argued that the Parables of Enoch helped to unify and coordinate the ministries of John the Baptist, Jesus Messiah Son of Man, and the apostle John. It may be premature to talk of unification, however, before explaining the obvious differences in emphasis and interpretation. The objection can be made that, although Jesus applied the title ‘Son of Man’ to himself and set about realizing the prophecy assigned to that title, he clearly did not fulfil his role to the end, because he refrained from its most important aspect, which was the total destruction and elimination of the wicked. Ironically, this continues to be one of main reasons for doubting the messianic status of Jesus.

It is evident from the Gospel report on the Baptist’s preaching that, in accord with the Parables of Enoch (*1En* 62:1–63:12; 69:26-28), John

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<sup>104</sup> See Collins, *Scepter and Star*, 79-190.

expected the Messiah to save his people and judge the wicked in a single operation, like a farmer separating the wheat and the chaff: “I am baptizing you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire” (Mt 3,11-12). So, when John learnt that Messiah Jesus was not taking immediate action against the wicked, he sent him a message from prison asking for clarification: “When John heard in prison of the works of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to him with this question, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?” Jesus said to them in reply, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me” (Mt 11,2-6; cf. Lk 7,18-23). In this reply, Jesus ignores the judgmental aspect of the Son of Man’s role, and instead recalls an ancient tradition regarding the works of future messianic salvation (cf. Isa 61; Ps 146; 4Q521 fr.2), expressed in a form that “affirms that Jesus, despite appearances, is the fulfilment of John’s expectation, although perhaps not in the way he may have hoped”.<sup>105</sup> Between Jesus and John, there seems to have existed a creative tension which is felt throughout the New Testament: while Jesus thought universally and prioritized works of salvation for all peoples, starting with the House of Israel, John thought locally and focussed on the final stage, when the righteous will be vindicated and wicked condemned. As John was in prison at that time, his expectations were surely affected by self-concern and hope for liberation, which would explain the tinge of criticism in Jesus’ response: “among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom is greater than he” (Mt 11,11).

The above exchange permits a glimpse of the uniqueness of Jesus’ self-understanding as the ‘Messiah Son of Man’. In contrast to John, and so many of his contemporaries, Jesus not only embraced the boundlessness and universality of God’s mercy, but also shocked the religious authorities by demonstrating “the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth” (Mk 2,10; Mt 9,6; Lk 5,24; cf. Jn 5,19-30; 8,34-

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<sup>105</sup> Cf. Joseph, *Jesus, the Essenes, and Christian Origins*, 84-95, quotation is from 94. Under the circumstances, it is significant that the actions listed by Jesus, according to Mt 11,4-5 and Lk 7,22, did not include the “liberation of captives”, as in the sources (Is 61,1, Ps 146,7, and 4Q521 2 ii 8).

36). John preached repentance leading to the forgiveness of sins, and Jesus, also at the cost of his life, brought John's mission to completion by offering that promised gift of divine forgiveness. The complementarity of their activities is striking and may have been coordinated in order to be openly perceived as fulfilling the prophecy of the Parables. Coordination at a personal level could be assumed, if they were relatives of about the same age, as indicated by Luke (Lk 1,24-45). It would have been facilitated if both were associated with an Essene community, for members of one community, such as the one at Arbel cave village, would have been received freely as guests at any other community, like the one in Jerusalem (*JW* 2.124-125). They may also have met informally just prior to Jesus' baptism, or at any other time. The extraordinary activities of these two charismatic individuals, publicly actualizing the messianic prophecy in the Book of Parables, must have had a considerable impact on those who were acquainted with that prophecy. There are signs of its impact in the New Testament, not just in the use of Son of Man as a title for the Messiah, but in the other writings too, especially in the Gospel of Matthew (e.g., Mt 13,37-43; 25,31-46),<sup>106</sup> and in the Book of Revelation (see later).<sup>107</sup>

Despite the presumed impact of their separate but interlocking missions, the task of salvation and judgment envisioned in the Book of Parables took an unexpected turn with the advent of Jesus as Messiah Son of Man, and especially with his rejection by the religious and civil authorities of his time. It is evident from the Gospel accounts that Jesus' interaction with these authorities was indeed one of judgment and condemnation (e.g., Mk 12,38-40; Mt 23,1-36; Lk 11,37-54; 20,45-47), analogous, but on a smaller scale, to the scenes of judgment in the Parables of Enoch.<sup>108</sup> Even though the Parables foresaw judgment falling on the rulers, the mighty, the landowners, unrepentant sinners, and fallen angels, it must have been surprising to hear the Messiah's judgment

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<sup>106</sup> "These two passages are unique to Matthew, containing the bulk of traits attributed to the Son of Man. Of all the passages in Matthew containing "Son of Man" these two exhibit the most traits shared with the Parables, which suggests that Matthew's concept of the Son of Man was significantly influenced by the Parables", Walck, 'Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and the Gospels', *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 2007, 330.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. McDonald, 'The *Parables of Enoch* in Early Christianity', 338-352.

<sup>108</sup> Walck interprets Jesus' interactions with the ruling elite to be in line with that of the author of the Parables: "Thus the suffering sayings reflect three similarities between the Gospels and the Parables: identification with the oppressed; the ruling elite being the oppressors; and the divine intention to act on behalf of the oppressed", 'Son of Man in the Parables and Gospels', 321.

falling on the leaders of his own people, and not on the Gentiles or their oppressive armies. However, even more shocking and disconcerting for his followers, was the outcome: the Messiah's judgment of the rulers and religious authorities did not lead to their immediate demise, as described in the Parables, but rather to the brutal rejection of the Messiah himself. Nevertheless, the prophesied judgment on the Jewish polity did ultimately arrive in 70 CE, and again in 135 CE (cf. Mt 23,37-39; 24,1-2 et par.; Lk 13,41-44; 19,41-44; 21,20-24), at the hands of the Roman armies.

It could be argued that the rejection of Jesus, his followers and his message of salvation tipped the societal scales towards the messianic and nationalist 'war paradigm', which is to say, a progressive rise in friction and hostility towards the Romans, the appointment of belligerent leaders and their pursuit of an unwinnable war that ended with the destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple and much of the religious and civil leadership.

Although the acceptance of Jesus as Messiah Son of Man would have brought Jews and Gentiles flocking to Jerusalem for healing and salvation, this outcome was not realistic, given the extreme opposition of the authorities in Jerusalem (cf. Lk 7,29-30). Predictably and inevitably, Jesus' rejection in Jerusalem meant that the messianic 'good news' had to be taken out to the nations, a task that became the primary mission of his followers and the Church. The time for the final judgment and the eradication of evil would arrive when all nations had heard the 'good news' of messianic salvation. In the meantime, the Messiah Son of Man had initiated a process of salvation that, on his rejection by the authorities in Jerusalem, became universal and eternal, and no longer bound by national, tribal or familial bonds.

Although Nickelsburg detects textual pointers (*IEn* 42:1-2, cf. Wis 4,18-5,13) to the righteous but rejected, and then exalted, servant in Isaiah 52,13-53,12,<sup>109</sup> it has to be admitted that the messianic prophecy in the Parables of Enoch does not describe the rejection and subsequent exaltation of the Messiah Son of Man. It presents the messianic tasks of

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<sup>109</sup> In different ways, both Nickelsburg (*IEnoch* 2, 79, 258-259) and Owen ('Aramaic and Greek Representations of the "Son of Man"', *Paradigm Shift*, 121-23) see the Messiah Son of Man's rejection in relation to the rejection of the righteous servant of God (Is 52-53) and the rejection of Wisdom/the wise man. Not unrelated, surely, is the claim of the Qumran *Yachad* community to be a living sacrifice, which, through separation and holy conduct, atones for the land and the sins of the people in 1QS 8,1-16 and 9:3-11 (also 1QS 2:6-12), *instead* of the sacrificial institution of the Temple. This claim is a clear example of vicarious atonement on a temporal plain, which is personally embodied by the Messiah Son of Man and made eternal through his exaltation to heaven.



salvation and judgment as a single operation, in the way interpreted by John the Baptist. There was clearly a discrepancy between the prophetic 'Schema'—salvation and judgment in a single operation—and the pastoral 'Reality'—salvation followed by judgment in a two stage process, separated by the rejection and exaltation of the Son of Man.<sup>110</sup> The reality-adjustment can be attributed to various factors, such as the universal need for messianic salvation and redemption, the inexhaustible mercy of God, the enormity of the inhabited earth, and the variety of human languages and cultures. In brief, the Parables of Enoch, which had guided the faithful to expect a divine messianic saviour and judge, lacked specific details on how this would play out in reality, on the world stage.

In this context, it is perhaps no coincidence that just before the end of the first century CE, John the apostle, exiled on Patmos, received a series of supernatural visions concerning the full implementation of the divine plan. Though rooted in the Parables of Enoch, the plan of salvation and judgment had grown far beyond its roots. John had been a disciple of both the Baptist and of Jesus, and through his contact with the Essenes in Jerusalem, had also acquired the necessary scribal skills, in addition to a direct knowledge of the Parables of Enoch and other Essene writings. The revelation he received on Patmos was transmitted by the angel of the risen Jesus and forms the core of his Book of Revelation (Rev 1,1-2).

In a skillfully united sequence of visions, John's composition describes messianic salvation as a liturgy for Atonement in the heavenly Temple, centred on the Throne of the Almighty. The liturgy started with the sacrifice of the Lamb and concludes with the eradication of evil at the final judgment, followed by the total renewal of creation.<sup>111</sup>

As discussed above, the form and content of John's Revelation resembles the form and content of the Parables, although many new details and motifs have been introduced, evoking passages from other parts of *1Enoch* and from the Biblical books. Most welcome to those who, like John the Baptist, long for the eradication of evil, is the focus on the final judgment, when the Messiah Son of Man returns with his spiritual army to crush his enemies in war and condemn the unrepentant

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<sup>110</sup> The rejection/exaltation of the Messiah Son of Man bridges and unites the two main appearances of his mission: the first, at the start, for salvation /redemption /atonement (the calling of the righteous and repentant, and gathering them 'into one flock') and the second, at the end, for judgment and the eradication of all that is evil and irredeemable.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Ben-Daniel, J. and G., *The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple: A New Approach to the Book of Revelation*, 2003; 27-211.

and the irredeemable. Developing the theme of renewal, briefly touched upon in the Parables (*1En* 45:4-5; 51:1-5; 61:5; 62:14-16), the Book of Revelation ends with an enticing vision of ‘the new heaven and the new earth’, sanctified eternally by the divine Presence at its centre in the new Jerusalem. The overwhelming impression is that John’s Revelation is a wholesale revision, update, and expansion of the Parables of Enoch, and was intended to supersede it.

To summarize, the Parables of Enoch was a messianic prophecy that appeared at the start of the first century CE. Initially it appears to have been known by relatively few people, among whom were the Essenes and the chief protagonists of the new messianic movement. With the realization of the missions of John the Baptist and Jesus Son of Man it may have become better known, especially around the Sea of Galilee and in the Jordan Valley, although it never displaced the more popular, self-fulfilling prophecies of a final battle against the Romans. Since the Parables was not widely known before the mission of John the Baptist and the ensuing ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, it is unlikely to have played a part in the preparation of the Jewish population for the coming of their Messiah. From the Gospel accounts, it appears that Jesus did not wish to be widely recognized as the Messiah during his lifetime, and for this reason he preferred to be known by the more enigmatic title ‘Son of Man’. The Baptist and Jesus appear to have known each other and may have coordinated their activities to a certain extent. When Jesus had attracted a large following, he was opposed by the religious and civic leadership in Jerusalem, and the judgmental aspect of his ministry came to the fore. Within a matter of days, he himself was judged, condemned and put to death, causing many to believe his ministry had come to an end. In a miraculous and surprising way, his closest followers were then spiritually empowered to continue his work, and over the next few decades their ministry spread beyond the borders of the Land of Israel, and throughout the Roman Empire. The last surviving apostle, John by name, had been a disciple of both John the Baptist and Jesus Son of Man. Towards the end of his life, at the end of the first century, he was granted a revelation that brings the messianic prophecy from the Parables of Enoch to fulfilment, in the light of the exalted Messiah Son of Man, along with many other parts of Scripture as well.

It would be fair to say that, throughout the first century CE, the Parables of Enoch acts as a common thread which, allowing for some differences in interpretation, informs and unifies the worldviews of the principal protagonists of the Jesus movement and the Early Christian

Church. The same worldview has prevailed in subsequent centuries, and up to this day, owing to the inclusion of John's Book of Revelation into the Biblical Canon of the Church.

### **The Rapid Disappearance of the Parables of Enoch**

Having argued for a role of such importance in the first century CE, we need to address the reason for the subsequent disappearance of the Parables of Enoch from every surviving manuscript, except those of the Ethiopian Church, where it has been preserved in the Ge'ez language. Although parts of the other writings of *1Enoch* have been discovered in languages other than Ge'ez (Aramaic fragments at Qumran and sections in Greek from various sources, especially Egyptian), the manuscript tradition for the Parables is confined to Ge'ez.<sup>112</sup>

Regarding the sudden disappearance, Sabino Chialà summarizes his findings as follows, "By the end of the first century C.E., it seems that all "Son of Man" language is attentively avoided, and this should weigh as a critical factor in dating the Book of Parables. Once the Christian era had begun, there was no longer any mention of the Son of Man in Judaism, not even among the specific group of Jews who wrote the Second Book of Enoch, and later the Third Book of Enoch. Christian literature also abandoned the title, and Christology developed around the titles of Messiah and Son of God. The term "Son of Man" remained only in those texts quoted by the New Testament—as a question of faithfulness to their source—and in certain apologetics that opposed the Son of Man to the Son of God to show Christ's dual nature... The only cultural context in which the christological title Son of Man continued to be used similarly to how it was used in the New Testament was that of gnosticism. The expression appears frequently in the Gospel of Thomas, and even more so in the Gospel of Philip, perhaps because, being so enigmatic, it opened the door to gnostic speculations".<sup>113</sup> Chialà closes his study by expressing the hope that "The reasons for this loss of interest in the "Son of Man", especially on the part of Christians", will be discussed in future convocations of the *Enoch Seminar*.<sup>114</sup> This discussion has not yet been held, as far as I am aware, so we will attempt, here, to offer the outline of a hypothesis that explains the observations.

We have noted already that no fragments of the Parables were found at Qumran, and we have suggested that this book was excluded on

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<sup>112</sup> Nickelsburg gives the full textual history in *1Enoch* 1, 9-17, and *1Enoch* 2, 4-6.

<sup>113</sup> Chialà, 'Evolution', 177-78.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* 178.

principle, as the product of a rival branch of Essenes. Ever since the work of R.H. Charles, scholars have maintained, with good reason, that “the Book of Parables was composed as an Enochic tractate intended to circulate independently of its primary source”,<sup>115</sup> and there is no clear indication when it was inserted into its present place (*1En* 37–71) in the literary corpus of *1Enoch*. Specialists also agree that a considerable amount of text, including the final chapter (*1En* 71) and the material concerning Noah and the Flood, has been added and arranged by a different hand, always with care to preserve a certain degree of coherence. If one assumes that the Noachide interpolations were inserted into the Book of Parables when it was brought into the Enoch corpus, then the analogy between the days of Noah and the Flood on one hand, and the days of the Son of Man on the other, found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (Mt 24,37-39 || Lk 17,22-20), is an indication that the Parables had already entered the Enoch corpus (*1Enoch*) when these Gospels were composed, around 80-90 CE.<sup>116</sup>

Because of the national crisis caused by the first Revolt and its aftermath, it seems highly unlikely that the new edition of the Enoch corpus was prepared between 66-80 CE, which implies that it was already in circulation before the mid-60’s CE—a *terminus ad quem*. A publication date in the decade before the mid-60’s would indeed correspond to a time of supreme tension, in Jerusalem, between the religious establishment and the new messianic movement, which hailed Jesus as Messiah Son of Man. In 62 CE, the tension led to the martyrdom of James, the brother of Jesus and the leader of the movement.

Attempts to proceed verge on the hypothetical and, at best, set a course for future research and discussion. Firstly, for the Jewish religious authorities, the Parables would have represented one of the main ‘proof texts’ for the messianic movement that developed into Christianity, and was therefore to be rejected, like the founders of that movement.<sup>117</sup> As

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<sup>115</sup> Quoted from Nickelsburg, *1Enoch* 2, 55. See also VanderKam, ‘The Book of Parables within the Enoch Tradition’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 81-84.

<sup>116</sup> Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1Enoch* 2, 20, 71.

<sup>117</sup> This supposition finds some confirmation from Tertullian, in his *De Cultu Feminarum*, 1.3, written in Carthage, North Africa, c. 200 CE: “But since Enoch in the same Scripture has preached likewise concerning the Lord, nothing at all must be rejected by us which pertains to us; and we read that every Scripture suitable for edification is divinely inspired. By the Jews it may now seem to have been rejected for that (very) reason, just like all the other (portions) nearly which tell of Christ. Nor, of course, is this fact wonderful, that they did not receive some Scriptures which spoke of Him whom even in person, speaking in their presence, they were not to receive. To these considerations is

the popularity of the movement grew and tensions rose in the decade before the first Revolt, the original manuscripts of the Parables may even have been actively sought out and destroyed, wherever they were found. Of those that survived this purge, many would not have survived the devastation of the first Revolt.

Secondly, because of a shared animus towards the new movement, the desire to evade the official ‘purge’, or due to their own “high Enochology”, or all of these, the Essenes who had not joined the messianic movement would have been motivated to reclaim the Parables for Enoch, and to ‘de-Christianize’ them, by adding the final chapter (*1En 71*), in which the ‘seer’ merges with what he has ‘seen’ and Enoch suddenly discovers he is ‘that Son of Man’.<sup>118</sup> The new version, originally in Aramaic and now edited into a collection of Enoch’s works (*1Enoch*), was eventually translated into Greek and disseminated in the diaspora as a foil to the Gospels, which unanimously identified Jesus as the Son of Man.

Towards the end of the first century CE, as Jews were reflecting on their future and hoping one day to return to Jerusalem, the new version of *1Enoch* would have helped to inspire a new generation of Jewish apocalypses, such as *4Ezra*, *2Baruch*, *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *2Enoch*.<sup>119</sup> Into this category, we should also place the Gospel and Apocalypse of John (Book of Revelation).

However, as argued above, John had had direct contact with the original unedited Book of Parables during his sojourn in Jerusalem (33-63 CE) and had studied its contents. According to early tradition, he left Jerusalem just before the first Revolt and, for the next 30 years, he directed the Asian Church in Ephesus (65-95 CE). Not only was he at the head of the most actively expanding mission in Christendom at that time, but, as the last surviving apostle, John was effectively the highest authority in the entire Church. As we noted above, he established a scribal school for copying manuscripts in Ephesus, in order to respond to the need for Bibles in the new churches. Sooner or later, he would have come across a copy of the new edition of *1Enoch* containing the

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added the fact that Enoch possesses a testimony in the Apostle Jude”, quoted from: <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0402.htm> (accessed on 30.10.22). In his focus on Enochic writings about the Christ, Tertullian is referring specifically to the Book of Parables, which implies that he was in possession of a copy of Enoch in which it was included.

<sup>118</sup> Nickelsburg, ‘Discerning the Structure(s) of the Enochic Book of Parables’, *Enoch Messiah Son of Man*, 46.

<sup>119</sup> For shared motifs, see Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 38-91.

expanded version of the Parables, which now included the part where Enoch is pronounced Son of Man (*IEn* 71).<sup>120</sup> Although a few subdued traces of John's reaction can be discerned in his Gospel (see below), we propose his initial response would have been more 'thundery' (Mk 3,17).

At first, we imagine, John would have recognized the need for a new vision of salvation and judgment, to replace the Parables, and it cannot be a coincidence that it was revealed to him on the Isle of Patmos about 15-20 years later and subsequently became the canonical Book of Revelation. At the same time, we suggest that he instructed all the churches in Christendom, including his own in Ephesus, to suppress the copying of *I Enoch*, precisely because it included the newly edited version of the Parables. In this way, only the older manuscripts of *I Enoch*, which did not include the Parables, remained in circulation. As a result, the Book of Parables was not copied or translated in the principal Christian churches, and the Enoch tradition started to lose its scriptural status, in spite of Jude's high estimation of it (Jude 6.14-15). Nevertheless, the new edition of *I Enoch* appears to have persisted for several centuries in Egypt and North Africa, where it would have appealed to Gnostic groups, heterodox communities, and remote monasteries. It was here, in the fourth century, that the Ethiopian Church acquired a copy of the Greek version of *I Enoch*, which included the expanded version of the Parables.

Only the exercise of the authority of an apostle like John, we suggest, could have halted the copying of the Parables so rapidly, in the face of widespread approbation in the Church and a clear connection to the ministry of Jesus, Messiah Son of Man and eschatological judge.<sup>121</sup> So

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<sup>120</sup> He could also have been informed by the author of the Q source, who seems to have been reading the new version of the Enoch corpus, even before the Gospel of Matthew was written, see above.

<sup>121</sup> The exercise of the executive authority of the apostle John at the head of the Asian Church would explain another phenomenon in the Christian Church, in the last decade of the first century CE: the sudden and uniform adoption of 1) the papyrus codex simultaneously with 2) the system of *nomina sacra* abbreviations for divine names and words (such as God, Lord, Jesus and Christ), which together distinguish Christian books from those of the Jews and pagans. This observation was first expressed by T.C. Skeat, who was impressed by the remarkable "degree of organization, of conscious planning, and the uniformity of practice among the Christian communities which we have hitherto had little reason to suspect, and which throws a new light on the history of the early Church" (Roberts and Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex*, 1983; 57). Skeat did not make the connection with Ephesus and the scribal school of the apostle John, but instead proposed Antioch, settling on a date just prior to 100 CE (op. cit. 54-61; see also Skeat, 'The Origin of the Christian Codex', *The Collected Writings of T.C. Skeat*, 2004; 79-87; 269-78). This

effective was the campaign that, in his review of Enochic parallels in Early Christian writings with special focus on the Parables, Lee Martin McDonald observes: “There are relatively very few specific citations of the Enochic writings that have survived antiquity, especially after the third century, except for those that reject or condemn them. The relative absence of references to the *Parables of Enoch* in the early churches also makes it difficult to say how much they may have influenced early Christianity. Aside from their clearer influence on the Gospels with regard to the identity and mission of the Son of Man, most of the references to the *Parables of Enoch* are rather vague”.<sup>122</sup>

Some lingering support for Enoch as Son of Man persisted at the end of the first century, for we detect traces of refutation in John’s Gospel, in the passage where Jesus, speaking of heavenly truths and referring to himself as the Son of Man, says to Nicodemus, “no one has ascended into heaven except the one who has descended from heaven, the Son of Man” (Jn 3,15). In a later discourse, Jesus affirms that God has “given all judgment to his Son” (5,22), and “power to exercise judgment, because he is the Son of Man” (5,27). These statements challenge competing claims on behalf of Enoch, most likely based on chapter 71 of the Book of Parables.

It is going too far, however, to assert that John’s Gospel is anti-apocalyptic, as argued by J. Harold Ellens.<sup>123</sup> Although not written in the apocalyptic genre, this Gospel does employ apocalyptic categories: Jesus is the divine revealer (Jn 1,18), much of the discourse is a ‘revelation of heavenly secrets’ taught by Jesus, and the whole Gospel is framed by Jesus’ initial descent from heaven and his later ascent back to heaven, following rejection by the worldly powers, in a way strongly reminiscent of ‘wisdom’ in the Book of Parables (Jn 1,1-10; *1En* 42:1-2). Before his return to heaven, he promises to send the Spirit of Truth, who will lead his followers into the whole truth (Jn 14,26; 16,13), including knowledge of the future (16,13-15). Then, after his resurrection appearance on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, he alludes to his second coming and the continuing presence of John (Jn 21,22-23). According to well-attested tradition, this John is the same John who wrote the Apocalypse, or Book of Revelation. So, John is neither anti-apocalyptic, nor reacting against

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does not, however, explain why the Latin term ‘codex’ was used, or how the use of the *nomina sacra* convention was rapidly and universally accepted. The scribal school at Ephesus, under the direction of the apostle John, provides an explanation for both issues.

<sup>122</sup> McDonald, ‘The *Parables of Enoch* in Early Christianity’, 357.

<sup>123</sup> Harold Ellens, ‘The Johannine Community and the Fourth Gospel’, 429-436.

“the Enoch-flavored synoptics”,<sup>124</sup> but presents a profile of the Messiah Son of Man as the revealer of heavenly mysteries, to strengthen the faith of those who already believe in him (Jn 17). He identifies Jesus as the heavenly Son of Man and takes aim at those who claim it is Enoch. His Gospel is complementary to the synoptics<sup>125</sup> and it explains the origin of the Book of Revelation as a gift of the promised Spirit of Truth (Jn 16,13-15).

John’s ‘damage control measures’ against the claim that Enoch was the Son of Man and eschatological judge, must have been effective, because the title ‘Son of Man’ is studiously avoided by New Testament authors, except as a title that Jesus applied to himself.<sup>126</sup> As the disappearance of the Parables from circulation removed the main source for understanding ‘Son of Man’ as a messianic title, it rapidly assumed a novel meaning when applied to Jesus. As early as the second century CE, it became a way of referring to Jesus’ humanity and when juxtaposed to ‘Son of God’, it referred to the divine and human natures united in his person.<sup>127</sup> To this day, the Son of Man remains a unique title for Jesus the Messiah, and no one seriously associates this title with Enoch, nor the task of final judgment that goes with it.

### Summary and Conclusions

While the Ethiopian Church has treasured the writings of *I Enoch* in its Biblical Canon from antiquity, the rest of the Christian Church calls them ‘pseudepigrapha’, and the Jewish tradition regards them as ‘external books’. The central section of *I Enoch*, the Parables of Enoch (*IEn* 37–71), has been preserved only in the Ethiopian Church. Most scholars agree it was written around the turn of the era (c. 1 BCE), in a separate booklet, and was later edited with additions when it was inserted into the compilation of writings now called *I Enoch* (c. 50-65 CE). There is not yet any agreement over its provenance, although the case has

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid. 436.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Eusebius, *Church History*, III, 24.7-14.

<sup>126</sup> Grabbe, “Son of Man”, *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels*, 190. The Book of Revelation itself is also a case in point. Despite its unique correspondence with the Parables of Enoch, its focus on the Second Coming of Christ in Judgment, and the proliferation of messianic titles, ‘Son of Man’ is never used as a title, as in the Gospels, but only in the original descriptive form “one like a son of man” (Rev 1,13; 14,14), as in Daniel 7. The absence of ‘Son of Man’ as a title is significant and, we propose, necessitated by the newly edited version of the Parables.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Ignatius, *Ephesians* 20:2; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue* 100.3-4; *Letter of Barnabas* 12:10; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.10.2; 16.3; 17.1; 18.3-4; 19.1-2.



recently been made for the region of Magdala, on the north-western shores of the Sea of Galilee.<sup>128</sup> This author's research has now located an ancient cave village, called the Arbel cave village by Josephus (*Life* 188; *JW* 2.573), in the cliffs of Mt. Arbel, 2 kms west of Magdala, for which there is historical, archaeological and observational evidence of settlement by an Essene community from about 100 BCE for at least two centuries, if not more. Separately, we have argued from historical and literary cues that that the author of the Parables of Enoch was a member of the Essene congregation at the Arbel cave village. In a later study, we explain how King Herod invited this community of the Essenes, a rival branch to that of Qumran, to establish a community behind his palace on Mt. Zion, in Jerusalem, in gratitude for their support during the Civil War (38 BCE).<sup>129</sup> With settlements at Mt. Arbel in Galilee, on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, and elsewhere in the land, during the first century CE, these Arbelite Essenes were in a good position to influence Jewish society with their prophecy of the Messiah Son of Man, expressed in the Parables of Enoch. It is difficult to assess what impact it had among the people, but evidence from the Gospels suggests that it was not widely known at the time when John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth were active (c. 30 CE). As a product of the semi-secret congregation of 'Arbelite' Essenes, we suggest that, initially at least, the Parables circulated only among their communities.

Nevertheless, there is evidence to show that direct contact between the Parables of Enoch and John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth and other leaders of the Early Christian Church, including the apostle John, was entirely plausible, as they all coexisted in time and place. In the next section, we assemble evidence to show that each of these founders of the Early Church, taken individually, had "a unique and direct relationship" with the Parables of Enoch, and we postulate how and where their personal contact with this prophecy may have developed. In the case of John, this includes a solid argument for identifying John of Patmos with John the apostle,<sup>130</sup> based on Early Church tradition. In the next part, we follow the trajectory of the Book of Parables through the first century CE and examine some of the opposition that it met in the course of its

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<sup>128</sup> See n. 71.

<sup>129</sup> See nn. 25, 24, 26, in order, for the references and links to this research.

<sup>130</sup> A thorough refutation of the arguments against the traditional position can be found in Ben-Daniel, 'The Author of the Book of Revelation: Apostle or Incognito' at: [www.newtorah.org/pdf/Author%20of%20Revelation%20Apostle%20or%20Incognito%202023.pdf](http://www.newtorah.org/pdf/Author%20of%20Revelation%20Apostle%20or%20Incognito%202023.pdf).

fulfilment by John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth, and its eventual replacement by the Revelation given to John.

In the final section, we speculate on the reasons for the sudden disappearance of the Parables of Enoch from the Synagogue and the Early Church, which was followed by the slower decline in the status of the Enoch writings in most areas, except Egypt and North Africa. From the time of its composition to the time of its replacement by the Book of Revelation, almost a century had passed, in which the Messiah Son of Man appeared, the New Covenant community was established (the Church), and Jerusalem and her Temple were destroyed.

At the end of the collection of scholarly studies in *The Parables of Enoch: A Paradigm Shift* (2013), the editors sign off with the following invitation: “Now, archaeologists, philologists, specialists on the Pseudepigrapha and the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as New Testament specialists, are coming to a consensus: it is possible that the Parables of Enoch helped to shape Jesus’ mind and influenced aspects of the Evangelists’ theologies. The present collection calls specialists to explore how and in what ways this influence should be explained”.<sup>131</sup> In the light of our findings of Essene settlements at the Arbel cave village, and on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, we offer this work as a step in the required direction.

In conclusion, throughout the first century CE, the Parables of Enoch acted as a divine plan which, allowing for some differences in interpretation, informs and unifies the worldviews of the principal protagonists of the Jesus movement and the Early Christian Church. Incredible though it may seem, the same apocalyptic worldview has prevailed in subsequent centuries, and up to this day, by the adoption of John’s Book of Revelation into the Canon of the Church. With its persistent emphasis on salvation and judgment, mediated by Messiah Son of Man and witnessed by the Gospels, it becomes evident that the Parables of Enoch contributed substantially to the inner consistency, motivation and goal-driven advance of the messianic movement that became Christianity.

At each stage in the development of this messianic prophecy, we find greater detail and elaboration. The author of the Parables formed a composite portrait of the long-awaited Messiah Son of Man by bringing together various strands of prophecy from ancient Hebrew prophetic and wisdom literature (Daniel, Isaiah, Psalms, Proverbs, Wisdom). He then

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<sup>131</sup> Charlesworth and Bock, ‘Conclusion’, *A Paradigm Shift*, 372.

united these strands with the early Enochic tradition (Book of Watchers, Epistle of Enoch) and created a literary cord that interconnects the successive ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth, as reported in the Gospels. In the Revelation given to John of Patmos, the cord receives many additional strands from the Scriptures (Torah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Psalms) and becomes a thick rope connecting the Old and the New Covenants, Israel and the Church. More than any other intertestamental writing, the Parables of Enoch forms the link between Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity. It was composed and circulated by the 'Arbelite' Essenes, who flourished during the first century CE, and were rivals of the Essene community of Qumran.

In the latter half of the first century CE, the leading authorities of both Jews and Christians had their own reasons for suppressing the text. Responding to the crisis of 70 CE with monotheistic rigour (cf. Dt 6,4) and exclusivity (the *birkat ha-minim*), the Jews must have regarded the Parables of Enoch as a dangerously heretical text,<sup>132</sup> while the Christians reacted to the addition of the final chapter (*IEn 71*), in which it is claimed that the seer Enoch was that Son of Man. Nevertheless, thanks to the Ethiopian Church and the work of many scholars, the reappearance of the Parables of Enoch has restored its witness to that ancient link, helping to complete the picture of what separates and unites Jews and Christians to this day. For Christians, it is a reminder of the sacred Jewish roots of their faith in the Messiah Son of Man, and for Jews it is a hallowed pathway to accepting the fulfilment of their messianic expectation almost 2,000 years ago.

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<sup>132</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Partings of the Ways*, 1991; 219-222. Similarly, it was Johannine high Christology that led Alan Segal to conclude, "'Two powers" seems to be one of the basic issues over which Judaism and Christianity separated" (*The Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism*, 1977, 262). At the time, Segal did not identify the Parables of Enoch as an early exemplar of the literature the Rabbis eventually labelled as the 'two powers heresy', because of uncertainty regarding its dating and possible Christian influence (op. cit. 191-2; 196-7; 202-5). However, the new consensus on a pre-Christian dating of the Parables of Enoch (c. 1 BCE), and its vision of the enthroned Son of Man presiding over the final judgment, has now placed it squarely in the "two powers" category, and makes it highly 'dangerous' and heretical from a rabbinical Jewish point of view, cf. Schäfer, *Two Gods in Heaven*, 46-49.

## CHAPTER 6

### DAMASCUS IS DAMASCUS: REVISITING THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE ESSENES

#### Introduction

The *Damascus Document* (abbreviated CD) was so called because ‘Damascus’ figures prominently in its first section, the ‘Admonitions’. The name ‘Damascus’ is mentioned twice (7:14-15,18-19) and ‘the land of Damascus’ is mentioned five times with one reference occurring in two parallel texts (6:5,19; 8:21=19:34; 20:12). Two incomplete copies of the original manuscript dating from mediaeval times (A and B) were discovered in the store-room (*genizah*) of an old Cairo Synagogue in 1897 and published as *Fragments of a Zadokite Work* by Solomon Schechter in 1910. Extensive fragments of the same document were later recovered from caves 4,5 and 6 during the explorations at Qumran from 1951-1956. Following this discovery, controversy erupted among scholars of the Dead Sea Scrolls concerning the whereabouts of the place called ‘Damascus’ and ‘land of Damascus’.

In an article he published in 1982, Chaim Milikowsky gave an eloquent and concise summary of this ‘Damascus controversy’: “Damascus is mentioned seven times in the CD; a journey to Damascus is reported and a “New Covenant” was entered into there. Until the discovery of the scrolls from Qumran, students and scholars had no hesitation in accepting the “literal” interpretation of these passages: some sect had travelled to Damascus and its members had made a covenant among themselves there”.<sup>1</sup>

He then relates how “Not long after the discovery and publication of the Qumran documents, however, an “allegorical” or “metaphorical” interpretation of “Damascus” arose. This interpretation is directly tied to the discovery of the Qumran Scrolls....”. Several factors contributed to this move away from the literal meaning, he explains: firstly, as reported by I. Rabinowitz, the validity of the literal interpretation was doubted because there is no corroboration of a Damascus migration-sojourn in any scroll text, other than the *Damascus Document* (CD); secondly, paleographical analysis of the fragments of CD found at Qumran and archaeological investigation of occupation at that site combined to eliminate the possibility of a literal Damascus sojourn at any time between settlement of the site and its destruction in 68 CE.

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<sup>1</sup> Milikowsky, ‘Again: Damascus in Damascus Document and in Rabbinic Literature’, *RQ*, 11 (1982), 97-106, this and subsequent quotations are from 97-98.

Milikowsky continues “There has arisen, consequently, a scholarly consensus against understanding the allusions to “Damascus” in CD as referring to a migration or exile to the city of Damascus, especially anytime after we first get a glimpse of this community from archaeological or literary remains”.

In response, scholars adopted two non-literal interpretations of ‘Damascus’ and ‘land of Damascus’:

1. These are symbolic names for the area of Qumran.
2. The names refer symbolically to the historical exile of the Jewish captives in Babylon, after the destruction of the first Temple. All the variations of this interpretation claim that the “sojourn in Damascus” in CD represents a sectarian re-reading of the Babylonian Exile and Restoration.

Views did not change significantly over the next 30 years, for in 2011 Geza Vermes could describe the situation in exactly the same binary terms: “... the Teacher and his remaining followers fled to a place of refuge called ‘the land of Damascus’: it has been suggested that this is a cryptic designation of Babylonia, the original birthplace of the group, or else that ‘Damascus’ is a symbolical name for Qumran”.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, in 2010, John J. Collins wrote: “Damascus has been interpreted in various ways. Most often, it has been taken as a cipher for Qumran. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor popularized the view that it was a cipher for Babylon...”. However, Collins goes on to paint a slightly broader picture, observing on one hand that “Michael Wise has revived the view that it refers to a literal exile of the Teacher to Damascus”, and on the other hand that “We cannot even conclude safely that a specific place is involved. “Damascus” may simply indicate the state of withdrawal from the rest of Jewish society (the land of Judah)”.<sup>3</sup>

After nearly 60 years of research, experienced scholars were still unable to decide on an issue regarding the foundation of the group that produced the *Damascus Document*. It is not surprising, therefore, that many scholars around that time started to abandon historicizing interpretations of the Dead Sea Scrolls and to replace them with other

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<sup>2</sup> Vermes (ed and trans), *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 2011; 63.

<sup>3</sup> Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community*, 2010; 30. Here Collins references a paper that adopts a ‘metaphysical’ approach to the ‘land of Damascus’: Lied, ‘Another look at the Land of Damascus: The Spaces of the Damascus Document in the Light of Edward Soja’s Thirdspace Approach’, *New Directions in Qumran Studies*, 2005; 101-25.

hermeneutical approaches.<sup>4</sup> In retrospect, one wonders whether stagnation over this particular issue—nothing less than the origin and birthplace of the group—may not have contributed significantly towards the shelving of the historico-critical method and its replacement by other methods.

If this suspicion is even remotely true, a critical review of the competing interpretations, those holding the field for so long, may help to clear the blockage. After rejecting the two non-literal interpretations mentioned above, a third possibility will be introduced, or rather re-introduced. As noted, the scholarly consensus against a literal migration to Damascus developed after “we first get a glimpse of this community from archaeological or literary remains”, uncovered at Khirbet Qumran. However, the recent revision of the date of settlement at Qumran, from c.150 BCE to c.100 BCE,<sup>5</sup> has exposed this interval of around 50 years as a period in which there is not any objection—literary, historical or geographical—against a literal migration-sojourn in the ‘land of Damascus’. As we hope to show, in fact, there is an accumulation of evidence in its favour.

### **Damascus as a Symbolical Name for Qumran**

There is no need to dwell at length on this proposal for it patently contradicts the text of the *Damascus Document*: “The Well is the Law, and those who dug it were the converts of Israel (שבי ישראל) who went out of the land of Judah (היוצאים מארץ יהודה) to sojourn in the land of Damascus (ויגורו בדמשק)” (CD 6:5).<sup>6</sup>

According to grammatical principles, the action of the converts of Israel to ‘dwell in Damascus’ (ויגורו בדמשק) is a temporal or logical sequel to their ‘departure from Judah’ (היוצאים מארץ יהודה), which is a state that is continuing at the time of writing, and whose onset is determined by the context.<sup>7</sup> The context, in this case, is indicated by the temporal

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<sup>4</sup> E.g., Angel, *Otherworldly and Eschatological Priesthood in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2012; 2, 13-16.

<sup>5</sup> The most recent and reliable archaeological evaluation dates the construction of the main communal buildings at Qumran to around 100 BCE; cf. Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 2002; 63-69.

<sup>6</sup> In this paper, all quotations from the Dead Sea Scrolls are from Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> According to Gesenius’ *Hebrew Grammar*, by Kautsch, 1910: “The period of time indicated by (a) a participle active, either as an attribute or predicate, must be inferred from the particular context” (§116, 2a, p.356). Furthermore: “The imperfect with waw consecutive (...) serves to express, actions, events, or states which are to be regarded as

markers in 1:5-11 (v.i.) and by the allusion in CD 8:11 to a hostile Greek ruler who wreaks vengeance on the Princes of Judah.<sup>8</sup>

The ‘converts of Israel’ refer to members of the new-covenant group whose origins are described in this section (cf. CD 4:3), and this passage is telling us that they left the land of Judah in order to go and dwell in the land of Damascus. As Qumran has always remained within the boundaries of the land of Judah, especially during the rule of the Hasmonean dynasty when the *Damascus Document* was originally composed, it cannot logically be identified as the place to which the converts travelled, after they ‘went out from the land of Judah’.

With this in mind, Philip Davies pulls no punches: “Finally, we can dispose of the argument (though it is rather more assertion) that “Damascus” = Qumran, which was never supported by exegesis. Instead, an interpretation, necessitated by a hypothesis about the origin of the “Qumran community” is here imposed on the text regardless of the usual conventions of sense context or consistency”.<sup>9</sup> Considering the name ‘Damascus’ to be symbolical does not mean that the referent can be literally anywhere, and least of all somewhere in the land or wilderness of Judah.

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the temporal or logical sequel of actions, events, or states mentioned immediately before” (§111, p. 326). Finally: “The more precise determination of the range of time to which an imperfect consecutive relates must be inferred in each case from the character of the preceding tense (or tense-equivalent), to which it is attached, in a more or less close relation, as temporal or logical sequence. Thus the imperfect consecutive serves... (§111, 4b, p. 328) “...to represent present actions, &c, in connection with tenses, or their equivalents, which describe actions or states as being either present (continuing in their effect); so especially...” (§111, 4b(2), p. 329), “...In dependence on participles, which represent what at present continues or is being repeated, e.g. Nu 22<sup>11</sup>, 1 S 2<sup>6</sup>, 2 S 19<sup>2</sup> (...), Am 5<sup>8</sup>, 9<sup>5f</sup>, Na 1<sup>4</sup>, ψ 34<sup>8</sup>, Pr 20<sup>26</sup>, Jb 12<sup>22ff</sup>, but cf. e.g. Jb 12<sup>4</sup>...” (§111, 4b(2)(δ), p. 329).

<sup>8</sup> CD 8:11: “And the head of the asps is the chief of the kings of Greece who came to wreak vengeance upon them” (Vermes, 2011), referring to the Hasmonean ‘princes of Judah’. If alluding to a past event, the ‘chief of the kings of Greece’ may refer to Trypho, the ruling Greek general who ‘took vengeance’ on the ethnarch Jonathan Maccabee in 142 BCE (1Macc 12,39–13,30); if to a future event, it may hint at some foreknowledge of the nearly successful conspiracy (c. 90 BCE) between the Pharisees and Demetrius III against Alexander Jannaeus (Josephus, *JW* 1.88-95; *Ant* 13.372-380 and Atkinson, ‘Understanding the Relationship Between the Apocalyptic Worldview and Jewish Sectarian Violence’, *The Seleucid and Hasmonean Periods and the Apocalyptic Worldview*, 2016; 45-57). *JW* is our abbreviation for Josephus’ *Jewish War* and *Ant* for his *Antiquities*.

<sup>9</sup> Davies, ‘The Birthplace of the Essenes: Where is “Damascus”?’, *RQ*, 14, 4 (56) 1990; 509-10.

### Damascus as a Symbolical Name for Babylon

The scholars who argued that ‘Damascus’ and the ‘land of Damascus’ symbolically represent Babylon and Babylonia have constructed an elaborate account of the origins and early history of the new-covenant group, elsewhere called the Essenes.<sup>10</sup> Large parts of it are still accepted to this day. In their exegesis of CD 6:5 (“The *Well* is the Law, and those who dug it were the converts of Israel [שבי ישראל] who went out of the land of Judah [היוצאים מארץ יהודה] to sojourn in the land of Damascus [ויגורו בדמשק]”), the departure from the land of Judah is said to refer to the exile of the Jews following the destruction of the first Temple in 586 BCE. At that time, the exiles were taken north, via the land of Damascus and beyond, to settle in Babylon and its environs. For these scholars, therefore, Damascus symbolically represents Babylon in the text, and the foundational event in this account is the Babylonian exile. Later, at an unknown time, a group of these exiles unite themselves in a ‘new-covenant’ and then return to Judaea on a mission.

Although the reconstruction is impressive, and was promoted by two of the most articulate scholars of their generation, there is a flaw in the foundation sufficiently serious to bring down much of their work. In his exposition, Jerome Murphy-O’Connor stresses the need to understand ‘went out from Judah’ (in CD 4:3 and 6:5) at face value, as meaning a literal exodus from Judaea, because “it is a question of a return from exile with adequate qualifications to gain acceptance in Jerusalem”.<sup>11</sup> As to how ‘a literal exodus from Judaea’ can then be interpreted as ‘a return to Judaea from exile’, Murphy-O’Connor admits that he has adopted the exegesis of Samuel Iwry.<sup>12</sup>

Iwry’s exegesis is carefully explained in two original papers, in which he complains that the accepted translation of CD 6:5 as “The penitents of Israel who left the land of Judaea and went to dwell in Damascus”, does not convey the fullness of the author’s message and “furthermore suggests that these people, being possessed of a spirit of repentance, and calling themselves שבי ישראל, felt compelled to abandon the land of Judea and sojourn in Damascus. This raises more problems than we could ever untangle”.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For the identification of the new-covenant group with the Essenes, see later in ‘Supplementary Evidence for Literal Damascus’: 1. The Name ‘Essene’.

<sup>11</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, ‘The Essenes and Their History’, *RB*, 81, 1974; 221.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> Iwry, ‘Was there a Migration to Damascus? The Problem of the שבי ישראל’, *Eretz-Israel*, 9, 1969; 86.



In a second article, published 20 years later, Iwry admits “In my lecture at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, I stood the entire problem of leaving the land of Judah for Damascus on its head. I stated then, as I do today, that the rendering of the pivotal sentence should be: ‘The priests and the laymen who joined them (הכהנים בני צדוק והגלויים אחריהם), are Israel returnees (הם שבי ישראל) who hail or originate from the (biblical) land of Judah (היוצאים מארץ יהודה) and sojourned (up to now) in the land of Damascus (ויגורו בדמשק).’ Not that they had abandoned, had left or went out from the ‘Yehud’ country, the second Jewish commonwealth.... Just the opposite, this community of diaspora Jews were indeed, the ones to make aliya; they came back as repatriates to the old, liberated Judea under the rule of the enlightened Hasmonean prince-priests...”.<sup>14</sup>

The first step in Iwry’s exegesis is to abandon the traditional, religious translation of שבי ישראל, as the penitents/converts of Israel, and replace it with ‘the returnees of Israel’, i.e., those of Israel who have simply returned to their homes in Judaea. The second step is to translate היוצאים יהודה as ‘who hail from or originate in the pre-exilic land of Judea’, instead of ‘those going out of the land of Judah’, and the third step is to treat ויגורו בדמשק as if it means ‘who had sojourned during their exile in Damascus’, instead of ‘and dwelt in Damascus’. Without any grammatical backing, he changes the time-frame of the sentence into the completed past by reading the present participle (היוצאים) and the imperfect waw consecutive verb (ויגורו) as pluperfects.

The end-result of Iwry’s manipulation of the text is not a reliable translation but a skewed paraphrase. He proceeds to justify this paraphrase on the basis of a parallel in Ezra (2,1), repeated verbatim in Nehemiah (7,7), which was likely to have been in the author’s mind: “These are the people of the province who came up from the diaspora, whom Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon had carried captive to Babylonia, and they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town”.<sup>15</sup> Excluding the explanatory relative clause about Nebuchadnezzar, the basic grammatical elements of this statement are

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<sup>14</sup> Iwry, ‘Further Notes on the Damascus Document’, *Proc. World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division A: The Bible and its World*, 1989; 207 [www.jstor.org/stable/23530826]. NB: In his quotation from the *Damascus Document*, Iwry has combined CD 4:3 and 6:5 in a single composite statement.

<sup>15</sup> אלה בני המדינה העולים משיבי הגולה אשר הגלה נבוכדנצר מלך בבל לבבל וישבו לירושלים וליהודה איש לעירו.

indeed parallel to those in our passage in CD 6:5, and could have been deliberately used as a model by its author:

- 1) the subject: the penitents of Israel [שְׁבִי יִשְׂרָאֵל] // the people of the province [בְּנֵי הַמְּדִינָה];
- 2) present participle: those going out [הַיּוֹצֵאִים] of the land of Judah // those going up [הַעוֹלִים] from the diaspora;
- 3) imperfect waw consecutive verb: and dwelt [וַיִּגְוֹרוּ] in Damascus // and returned [וַיָּשׁוּבוּ] to Jerusalem and Judaea.

What Iwry would not want to recognize, however, is that the meaning has been reversed and is now the opposite of the situation under Ezra-Nehemiah. Far from confirming a return to the land of Judaea from the exile, this is an ‘ironic reversal’ of the statement from Ezra-Nehemiah, and now signifies a departure from the land of Judah and a sojourn in the diaspora. It cannot, therefore, be used to justify overturning the former interpretation of this passage as a migration from Judaea to Damascus, as Samuel Iwry has attempted to do.

Iwry’s subjective exegesis of CD 6:5 can be understood as an expression of Zionist enthusiasm, conceived in the wake of the Six-Day War, at a time when it was inconceivable that Jewish penitents would have departed from the land of Judah to live in the diaspora. Although Iwry later rebuffs any attempt to substitute Damascus with Babylon,<sup>16</sup> it is upon his tendentious ‘transformation’ of this passage that Murphy-O’Connor established the “Damascus is Babylon” hypothesis, as it provides a way to turn the Essenes’ sojourn in Damascus into a replay of Ezra’s mission to Judaea. However, by adopting Iwry’s exegetical sleight of hand, Murphy O’Connor’s hypothesis loses credibility.

According to Joseph Blenkinsopp, William Albright was the first to claim a direct Babylonian origin for the Essenes, the putative addressees of the *Damascus Document*, on the basis of their apparent interests in divination, astrology, the virtues of plants and stones, their frequent lustrations, as well as their prayer to God for sunrise, performed daily before dawn, facing eastward. Albright proposed that they migrated to Judaea around 160-140 BCE, inspired by the Maccabean victories or threatened by Parthian invasions.<sup>17</sup>

In a similar way, Jerome Murphy-O’Connor envisaged an Essene migration from Babylon in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, to

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<sup>16</sup> Iwry, ‘Further Notes on the Damascus Document’, 88.

<sup>17</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Judaism: The First Phase, The Place of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Origins of Judaism*, 2009; 214-15.

engage on a mission to reform Jewish religious life in Judaea, motivated, perhaps, by eschatological calculations circulating at the time. Accepting Samuel Iwry's tendentious exegesis of CD 4:3 and 6:5, Murphy-O'Connor claimed the *Damascus Document* supported his hypothesis and he was eventually vigorously endorsed by Philip Davies.<sup>18</sup> For the reasons set out above, however, we must now reject the specific claim to identify the birthplace of the new-covenant group as Babylon, while recognizing some connection between the new-covenant group, whose origins are referred to in the *Damascus Document*, and the Jewish communities who remained in the Babylonian diaspora. Before moving on, this connection calls for further explanation.

In a chapter on 'The Sectarian Element in Early Judaism' in his book *Judaism: The First Phase*, Joseph Blenkinsopp traces the roots of sectarianism back, through Scripture, to the times of Ezra and Nehemiah (5<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> cent. BCE)—the model leaders whose recolonizing missions from Babylonia to Jerusalem and Judaea already reveal distinctive sectarian characteristics.<sup>19</sup> Looking at the *Damascus Document*, Blenkinsopp notes the author's concentration on the Babylonian exile and his identification with the first to return from Babylon, the "founding fathers" (CD 4:6,8): "A prominent feature of late Second Temple sectarianism, most explicitly enunciated in the *Damascus Document*, is the concern to link up with the survivors of the Babylonian exile regarded as the prophetic remnant and the founders of a new community with whom the sectarians felt themselves to be in continuity. As they saw it, linkage with the generation of the exile and return had the effect of devaluing or simply cancelling out the history from the exile to the emergence of the sect in question. This retrospective tendency is already in evidence in the traditions about Ezra and Nehemiah".<sup>20</sup>

So, while hesitant on the immediate origins of the new-covenant group, Blenkinsopp agrees that their parent body may have existed in Babylon from the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, and that there must have been much coming and going between Babylonia and Judaea during the Persian and Hellenistic periods. Summing up, Blenkinsopp writes: "The idea of Babylon as the principal, though perhaps not the only, source of sectarian ideology may therefore be correct for the later Second Temple

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<sup>18</sup> Davies, 'The Birthplace of the Essenes', 503-19.

<sup>19</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Judaism: The First Phase*, 189-222.

<sup>20</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Judaism: The First Phase*, 216.

period, as it certainly is for the Neo-Babylonian and early Persian period”.<sup>21</sup>

### The Literal Interpretation of Damascus

There is only one realistic alternative to the two non-literal proposals rejected above, and that is the literal interpretation of ‘Damascus’ and ‘land of Damascus’. Before the discoveries at Qumran, this was the consensus view of the scholars and it has never completely disappeared from the horizon. Because the city and land of Damascus is the most natural reading of the text, when interpreted according to grammatical principles (v.s.), it does not need an elaborate exegesis to explain or defend it. Here are the relevant passages:

“The *Well* is the Law, and those who dug it were the converts of Israel who went out of the land of Judah to sojourn in the **land of Damascus**” (6:5).

“They shall keep the Sabbath day according to its exact interpretation, and the feasts and the Day of Fasting according to the finding of the members of the New Covenant in the **land of Damascus**” (6:19).

“When the two houses of Israel were divided, Ephraim departed from Judah. And all the apostates were given up to the sword, but those who held fast escaped to the land of the north; as God said, *I will exile the tabernacle of your king and the bases of your statues from my tent to **Damascus***” (7:14-15).

“The *star* is the Interpreter of the Law who shall come to **Damascus**; as it is written, *A star shall come forth out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel...*” (7:18-19).

“None of the men who enter the New Covenant in the **land of Damascus** and who again betray it and depart from the fountain of living waters, shall be reckoned with the Council of the people or inscribed in its Book from the day of the gathering in of the Teacher of the Community until the coming of the Messiah out of Aaron and Israel” (8:21=19:34).

“They shall be judged in the same manner as their companions were judged who deserted to the Scoffer. For they have spoken wrongly against the precepts of righteousness, and have despised the Covenant and the Pact—the New Covenant—which they made in the **land of Damascus**. Neither they nor their kin shall have any part in the house of the Law” (20:10-13).

Firstly, the context is important: these passages are embedded in the part of the text that is tellingly called the ‘Admonition’ or ‘Exhortation’,

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<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

which is to say that it is primarily addressed to the members of the group that is mentioned, to encourage them to remain faithful to the new-covenant they made in the 'land of Damascus'. The last few lines seem concerned to heal a split that has taken place within the group (CD 8:21; 19:33–20:34). Some of the hearers or readers may have been present at the making of that covenant, or they may have known others who were present. If writing allegorically, the author usually gives the necessary interpretation, so unless specifically indicated in the text, we would do well to assume that the author, as another member of the group, is communicating directly and honestly to his fellow covenanters. Therefore, our reading of the relevant passages should at least begin with a 'presumption of historical reliability'.

The 'land of Damascus' occurs five times in these passages and is evidently the author's preferred way of describing his group's location. 'Damascus' alone occurs only twice and, on both occasions, it refers to the same quotation from the prophet Amos (5,26-27). From the repeated and consistent use of the term 'land of Damascus' for the group's location when the covenant was made, we can infer that 1) the author is certain that this information represents the location of the new-covenant group, which is to say, at a place in the country near the city of Damascus; 2) the author wants his readers to accept this information as factual: the Teacher and his followers really did make a new covenant in the land of Damascus, and the reader should accept it literally as a *fait accompli*.

In contrast to the author's factual use of the term 'land of Damascus', his double reference to 'Damascus' alone is purely literary, and stems from Bible prophecy. It occurs only twice, both times in reference to a single biblical passage (Amos 5,26-27), which is quoted to justify and explain, from a scriptural point of view, why the Teacher and his followers came to the region of Damascus. A close look at the author's treatment of this passage reveals an unexpected source of confirmation for the literal interpretation of the location. It is described clearly by Geza Vermes, as follows: "In the Bible these verses convey a divine threat: the Israelites were to take themselves and their idols into exile. 'You shall take up Sikkuth your king and Kaiwan your star-god, your images which you made for yourselves, for I will take you into exile beyond Damascus'. But the Damascus Document transforms this threat into a promise of salvation; by changing certain words in the biblical text and

omitting others its version reads: 'I will exile the tabernacle of your king and the bases of your statues from my tent to Damascus'.<sup>22</sup>

Confirmation of the literal interpretation lies in the change from 'beyond Damascus' (מֵהַלְאָה לְדַמְשֶׁק), in the prophecy of Amos, to the expression 'from my tent to Damascus' (מֵאֵהֶלִי דְמַשְׁק) in the *Damascus Document*. The deliberate removal of 'beyond' from 'beyond Damascus', through metathesis, has the effect of circumscribing Damascus as the stated location. It is perhaps the clearest single piece of evidence showing that our author intended Damascus literally, and not somewhere far 'beyond', like Babylon or Mesopotamia.

Other important inferences can be made from the extraordinary transformation of the text from a divine threat of exile and into a promise of refuge and salvation. The change is so drastic, so radical, that only a person of great authority could have conceived and applied it to his situation, and that of the new-covenant group. This person was most probably the Teacher himself. His precise situation can only be surmised, but it does appear that he found himself in a certain location by way of necessity, without a suitable biblical justification for being there. His response was to rewrite a biblical passage to provide the necessary justification. It is doubtful that he would have gone to these lengths if the place names, 'Damascus' and 'land of Damascus', were code-names for his real location elsewhere. In that case, he could just have changed the name to match the Scripture, rather than changing Scripture to match the name.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 128. His explanation continues: "In this new text, the three key phrases are interpreted symbolically as follows: 'tabernacle' = 'Books of the Law'; 'king' = 'congregation'; 'bases of statues' = 'Books of the Prophets'. Thus: 'The Books of the Law are the *tabernacle* of the king; as God said, *I will raise up the tabernacle of David which is fallen* (Amos ix,11). The *king* is the congregation; and the *bases of the statues* are the Books of the Prophets whose sayings Israel despised.

The omission of any reference to the 'star-god' is made good by introducing a very different 'Star', the messianic 'Interpreter of the Law' with his companion the 'Prince of the congregation'. 'The star is the Interpreter of the Law who shall come to Damascus; as it is written, *A star shall come forth out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel* (Num. xxiv, 17). The sceptre is the Prince of the whole congregation...'

<sup>23</sup> Since the above text (CD 7:10–8:1) occurs in only one of the two surviving manuscripts of the *Damascus Document* (A), it clearly enters into the discussion of which of the two texts (A or B) is closest to the original. The inferences drawn here clearly favour A, which also happens to be the *lectio difficilior*. In his commentary, Michael Knibb argues for the priority of B here (i.e., CD 19:7-13; cf. *Qumran Community*, 1987; 58-61), while positing the priority of A in CD 8:2-21 (op. cit. 66). As this is not the place

### Social and Historical Setting

Apart from the exegetical and literary features presented above, the argument for the literal interpretation of (land of) Damascus in the *Damascus Document* must also grapple with contemporary social, geographical and historical contexts, in so far as they are known, as well as recent archaeological and palaeographical findings.

Damascus is one of the oldest cities in the world, with evidence of city life dating back the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE. For a short period at the start of the first millennium, the city was conquered by King David (2 Sam 8,5-6), but freed itself from Israelite control during the reign of King Solomon, and remained the capital of the kingdom of Aram until it was destroyed by the Assyrians in 732 BCE. During the Persian period it was an important administrative centre, and was likely the capital of the satrapy of Trans-Euphrates. Following the invasion of the Near East by Alexander the Great in 333 BCE, Damascus became a Macedonian colony that frequently changed hands between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties. It later became the capital of southern Syria (i.e. Coele-Syria) and Phoenicia (111 BCE) until its conquest by Pompey in 64 BCE, when it was absorbed into the Roman Province of Syria.

Due to internal disputes among the later Seleucid rulers, the Hasmonean rulers of Judaea frequently became involved in conflicts in Southern Syria and Damascus, but for most of the time Damascus remained out of their reach. Though only 220 kms from Jerusalem, and only 50 kms from the frontiers of the territory controlled by the Hasmonean dynasty, it was a convenient refuge for those who had fallen out of their favour. Nevertheless, it is significant for this study that the ethnarch Jonathan Maccabee became commander-in-chief of Coele-Syria (1Macc 11,57-62) and visited Damascus at least twice towards the end of his reign (c.145-143 BCE): “The city is mentioned several times in the Hasmonean era in connection with the conquests of Jonathan (1Macc 11:62), who appointed his brother Simeon commander-in-chief at the Ladder of Tyre and after his conquest of Gaza in the south returned to Damascus. The army of Demetrius came to Kedesh in Galilee to thwart him but was defeated. Subsequently (ibid. 12:24-32) there is mention of another battle with the army of Demetrius in the land of

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to challenge his reasoning, let us simply conclude that these passages display a development that may reflect a later edit, or a change in location (removing the need for a justification), or even an exegetical difference between the two parties, after their final separation.

Hamath, when Jonathan again was victorious and returned to Damascus".<sup>24</sup>

On his way back from Hamath to Damascus, "Jonathan turned aside against the Arabs who are called Zabadeans, overwhelming and plundering them" (1Macc 12,31). As noted by Schürer, some scholars have attempted to link this vengeful act with a passage in Megillath Taanith §33: "On 17 Adar, as the Gentiles rose against the remnant of the scribes in the districts of Chalcis and Zabadaea, deliverance came to the House of Israel", although nothing else is known of this event or the scribes involved.<sup>25</sup> One other relevant fact should be noted: it is precisely at this point in his *Antiquities*, between the reports of Jonathan's battles at Kedesh and Hamath, that Josephus writes: "**At this time** there were three sects among the Jews ... the one was called the sect of the Pharisees, another the sect of the Sadducees, and the other the sect of the Essenes" (*Ant* 13.171-173, cf. *JW* 2.119-161; *Ant* 18.11,18-22).

The Essene 'hunter' could be forgiven for thinking he had picked up the trail here. Unfortunately, however, archaeology in Damascus begins with the Romans: "Very little archaeological data is known about the pre-Classical city of Damascus, except for a few chance finds".<sup>26</sup> Palaeography is more helpful, telling us that the earliest extant manuscripts of the *Damascus Document* date from about 100 BCE: 4Q266 is estimated to have been written from 100-50 BCE, and 4Q267 has the similar range of 100-80 BCE. Radiocarbon dating is even less precise. According to Michael Knibb, the earliest fragments of the *Damascus Document* "date back to the first half of the first century BC, but the work may well be older than this. Some of the sources used in its composition probably date from the second century BC".<sup>27</sup> In summary, palaeographic evidence for the *Damascus Document* is consistent with its composition in the last quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, the final part of the group's sojourn in Damascus.

Damascus was the oldest Jewish settlement outside of Judaea and "It may be assumed that this thickly populated commercial city situated at a

<sup>24</sup> Lebanon, 'Damascus', *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, vol 5, 2007; 391.

<sup>25</sup> Schürer, *History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, rev. and ed. by Vermes, Millar, and Black, in 3 vols, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973; vol 1, 185, n. 34.

<sup>26</sup> Malamat/ Gibson, 'Damascus', *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, vol 5, 2007; 391.

<sup>27</sup> Knibb, *Qumran Community*, 15. If the last part of the Admonition is the final attempt to heal the internal split that began to divide the new-covenant community several years before, then it can be dated by its content to the time between the death of the Teacher (c.130 BCE, v.i.) and the settlement of the Essenes at Qumran according to the latest archaeological estimates (c.100 BCE).



major crossroads attracted Jews from various places... In the course of time a large and important Jewish community was established in Damascus".<sup>28</sup> The numbers in the first century BCE are not known, but by 66 CE, when the entire Jewish community in Damascus was massacred by the Romans, there were about 10,000-20,000 Jews living there (Josephus, *JW* 2.561; 7.368).

Lying on the busy road between Jerusalem and the Babylon Diaspora, there would have been a continuous traffic of Jews passing through Damascus in both directions. Recalling the observations of Joseph Blenkinsopp, it is probable, though still in the realm of speculation, that a large proportion of the Jewish population of Damascus was of Babylonian origin, who had settled in Damascus for sectarian reasons, which is to say, they either opposed the religious institution in Jerusalem or had been prevented from serving in the Jerusalem Temple for lack of genealogical proof (cf. Ezra 2,59-63; Neh 7,61-65). In short, from the time of the return from exile, there would have been a large community of Judeo-Babylonians in Damascus, many of whom would have been dissident priests, Levites and scribes.

From this review of the socio-historical landscape, there was certainly no obstacle to the migration of group of Jews from Judaea to Damascus and its environs, at some time during the second century BCE. There would have been a large and thriving community of Judeo-Babylonians there, who for the most part would have been receptive to a group of pious and ultra-observant Jews arriving from Judaea.

### **The Visit of the Wicked Priest to the Teacher's 'House of Exile'**

One consequence of adopting the literal interpretation of the 'land of Damascus' and 'land of Judaea' is that it becomes logical and consistent to attribute some degree of historical reliability to the stated time periods as well. To this must be added the group's interest in astronomy and calendrical calculations, fueled by their concern to observe correctly the Sabbaths, feasts, Sabbaticals and Jubilees, for which they kept the book called the *Book of the Divisions of the Times into their Jubilees and Weeks* (CD 3:13-17; 16:1-4). In brief, it is difficult to imagine this particular group erring significantly with their recording of dates and times, or intentionally using them inaccurately, even if they do form part of a chronological scheme or eschatological timetable.

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<sup>28</sup> 'Damascus' *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, vol 5, 2007; 391.

In the opening section of the *Damascus Document*, it is related how the community began “in the age of wrath, three hundred and ninety years after God had given the Israelites into the hand of the King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon”. At this time, God called a group of pious Jews, priests and laymen to a holy life of repentance, and twenty years later sent them a leader called the ‘Teacher of Righteousness’ (CD 1:5-12). After a while, this ‘Teacher’ was deserted by a substantial faction of these pious Jews, who are then described as ‘seekers of smooth things’ and accused of religious laxity and infidelity to the law. In fact, it appears they turned away in order to follow another leader variously called the ‘Scoffer’, ‘Liar’ or ‘Spouter of Lies’. The increase of tensions between the two groups caused the ‘Teacher’ and his faithful followers to go into exile ‘in the land of Damascus’ where they entered into a ‘new covenant’, and where the Teacher eventually died. Following the death of the ‘Teacher’ in Damascus, about 40 years would pass before the demise of all those who originally deserted the ‘Teacher’ and became violent enemies of his followers (CD 20:13-15).

It is certainly true that the number of 390 is mentioned by Ezekiel (Ezek 4,5), for the number of days he must lie on his left side, representing the number years of Israel’s sin, but it does not include the 40 days he must lie on his right side for the 40 years of Judah’s sin, both amounting to 430 days for the siege of Jerusalem that the prophet is required to symbolically enact. In brief, the reference to 390 days/years in Ezekiel has very little significance, symbolical, prophetic or otherwise, for the mention of 390 years in the *Damascus Document*. For this reason, many scholars are willing to accept it as an attempt to give the literal span of the stated period, allowing for inaccuracies due to the method of calculation used at the time.<sup>29</sup>

So, the first sign of the Essenes appears during the ‘Hellenistic crisis’, 390 years after the exile in 586 BCE, which takes us to 196 BCE. Allowing for the slight inaccuracy, a fair estimate would be around 185-180 BCE. These penitent forerunners of the Essenes were then leaderless for 20 years until they were joined by the Teacher of Righteousness, which would be around 160 BCE. The date of the Teacher’s death can be estimated approximately from the curious information that ‘after the death of the Teacher, about 40 years will pass before the demise of all those violent men who originally deserted him’ (CD 20:13-15).

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<sup>29</sup> For an alternative view of the 390 years, see Collins, *Beyond the Essene Community*, 92-94.

Elsewhere ‘the period of the 40 years’ is identified as the time remaining until final judgment (4Q171 2:10). Evidently, the Teacher’s community recognized a timetable of events up to the judgment, seemingly based on the prophet Daniel’s period of 490 years (Dn 9,24), putting the earliest calculated date of the judgment and messianic age around 90 BCE.<sup>30</sup> 40 years before this date would place the death of the Teacher at around 130 BCE.<sup>31</sup>

Sometime before the death of the Teacher, *Pesher Habakkuk* describes a fateful meeting between him and his chief antagonist, who is here called the ‘Wicked Priest’.<sup>32</sup> The dramatic encounter took place when the Wicked Priest “pursued the Teacher of Righteousness to the house of his exile that he might confuse him with his venomous fury”, confusing his community and causing them to stumble while they fasted on the Essene Day of Atonement (1QpHab 11:4-15). On that occasion, it is recalled that “the House of Absalom and the members of its council were silent at the time of the chastisement of the Teacher of Righteousness and gave him no help against the Liar who flouted the Law in the midst of their whole congregation” (1QpHab 5:9-12). Because of his wickedness against the Teacher and his elect, the Wicked Priest was later delivered into the hands of his enemies “to be humbled by means of a destroying scourge, in bitterness of soul” (1QpHab 9:9-12), by “inflicting horrors of evil diseases and taking vengeance upon his body of flesh” (1QpHab 9:2-8). “As he himself plotted the destruction of the Poor, so will God condemn him to destruction” (1QpHab 12:5). Two important historical details are added by the Commentary on Psalms (Ps 37): firstly, that the Wicked Priest planned to slay the Teacher of Righteousness, “because of the ordinance and the Law (Torah) which he sent to him” (possibly 4QMMT), and secondly that he was himself

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<sup>30</sup> I was alerted to this ‘eschatological timetable’ and its baneful effects by Kenneth Atkinson’s article in *The Seleucid and Hasmonean Periods and the Apocalyptic Worldview*, 45-57. Cf. Werman, ‘Epochs and the End-Time: The 490-Year Scheme in Second Temple Literature’, *DSD* 13, 2 (2006); 229-55; Beckwith, *Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian*, 2001; 260-75.

<sup>31</sup> According to the Damascus Document (CD), the history of the Teacher’s community is tidily summarized as a final 100 years before the final judgment: 390 years after the start of the Babylonian exile, they wander without a leader for 20 years, then for 40 years the Teacher is with them, before he is ‘gathered in’ 40 years before the final judgment.

<sup>32</sup> The ‘Wicked Priest’ is a translation of ‘hacohen harasha’ (הכהן הרשע) which is a pun on ‘hacohen harashi’ (הכהן הראשי), meaning the ‘head priest’.

delivered “into the hands of the nations, that they may execute upon him judgment” (4Q171 4:5-11).

Since the meeting between the Wicked Priest and the Teacher takes place in the latter’s ‘house of exile’, an opportunity arises to test our conclusion that the Teacher’s house of exile was in the ‘land of Damascus’. It is therefore significant that towards the end of his rule, Jonathan’s military campaigns against King Demetrius (II Nicator) took him twice to Damascus (1Macc 11,62; 12,31), around 144-143 BCE.<sup>33</sup> One of these visits could have been the occasion for the infamous meeting between high priest Jonathan, identified as the Wicked Priest, and the Teacher (cf. 1QpHab 11:4-15), which seems to have marked the beginning of the division among the members of the new covenant, as described in the *Damascus Document* (CD 8:21; 19:33–20:34). The death of Jonathan soon after (142 BCE) is alluded to with recognizable fidelity to the facts recounted in the first book of Maccabees, describing how he was indeed captured, imprisoned and finally murdered by the Greek general called Trypho (1Macc 12,39–13,30). We can safely conclude that the literal interpretation of the ‘land of Damascus’ and the chronology given in the *Damascus Document* matches historical events known from other, more reliable, sources.

## Supplementary Evidence for Literal Damascus

### i. *The Name ‘Essene’*

The finding of extensive fragments of ten manuscripts of the *Damascus Document*, in caves 4, 5 and 6 at Qumran,<sup>34</sup> has cemented the association of this document with the Essene sect, who were the occupants of Qumran according to scholarly consensus (Qumran-Essene Hypothesis), and are readily identifiable, from the contents of the document, as the new-covenant group referred to therein. However, neither in the *Damascus Document*, nor in any other manuscript among the Dead Sea Scrolls, is the name ‘Essene’ attested. Since this name is only mentioned in Greek and Latin sources,<sup>35</sup> it is likely that it was given to the sect by outsiders and was not a self-designation used by themselves. Much scholarly ink has been spilled trying explain the derivation of this name.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, vol 1, 181-88.

<sup>34</sup> 4Q265-73; 5Q12; 6Q15. Cf. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 127.

<sup>35</sup> Josephus, *JW* 2.119-161; *Ant* 18.18-22; Philo of Alexandria, *Quod Omnis* 75-91; *Hypothetica* 11,1-8; Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 9.13-22.

Both Philo and Josephus report that the Essenes numbered more than 4,000 and lived in communities, some all-male, others mixed, in towns and villages throughout the land of Judaea. Philo adds the intriguing information that they were also to be found in Syria and that they “derive their name from their piety (*hosios*), though not according to any accurate form of the Grecian dialect”.<sup>36</sup> Along with many others, we therefore take the view that the name ‘Essene’ comes from the Greek transliterations, *essēnoi* and *essaioi*, of the Aramaic words *ḥasin* and *ḥasayya*’ respectively, which are cognates of *ḥasidim* in Hebrew and mean the ‘pious’, or ‘holy ones’ (plural). This theory about the derivation of the name ‘Essene’ supports the ‘Hasidic hypothesis’, which views the Essenes as the successors of the Hasidim, or *Asidaioi*, who were the Judaeans supporters of the Maccabean revolt mentioned in the books of Maccabees (1Macc 2,42; 7,13; 2Macc 14,6). It was, in fact, the most broadly accepted theory until Geza Vermes and others pointed out that the Aramaic forms *ḥasin* and *ḥasayya*’ are attested primarily in a central Syrian dialect of Aramaic (Palmyrene), but not in Judaeans Aramaic, which was the common language in Judaea.<sup>37</sup> However, far from disproving the link between the Essene movement and the Hasidim, this observation resonates with Philo’s comment that the Essenes were also found in Syria, and indicates the name may indeed have originated there. The etymology of the name ‘Essene’ can therefore be added to other evidence for the group’s sojourn in Syria, or more specifically in the ‘land of Damascus’.

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<sup>36</sup> Philo, *Quod Omnis*, 75. Philo usually uses the term Judaea when speaking of the Jewish homeland, but here he uses the term Syria-Palestine. Louis H. Feldman observes: “The one passage that is difficult to explain is the one (...) in which he declares that Palestinian Syria has not failed to produce high moral excellence. He also states that a considerable part of the Jews live there, and cites as an example the Essenes. Perhaps the explanation is that Philo is trying to indicate that the Jews inhabited an area that transcended Judaea proper and that he sought a term that would indicate the larger area”, ‘Some Observations on the Name of Palestine’, *HUC Annual*, 61 (1990); 1-23. Another explanation would be that the sect originated in Damascus, were first given a name there, and continued to live in the surrounding areas, even after other members had migrated back to Galilee and Judaea.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Kampen, ‘A Reconsideration of the Name “Essene” in Greco-Jewish Literature in Light of Recent Perceptions of the Qumran Sect’, *HUC Annual*, vol 57, (1986); 64-66. For an update see Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community*, 156-60; and Simon J. Joseph, *Jesus, the Essenes and Christian Origins*, 2018; 32-34.

*ii. The Thanksgiving Hymns Interpreted by Michael Wise*

On the basis of his research on the Thanksgiving Hymns, the Scroll scholar Michael Wise has concluded that at least nine of the twenty-three surviving Thanksgiving Hymns, or parts of them, were authored by the Teacher of Righteousness himself and “Together they constitute his spiritual testament—the Testament of the Teacher”.<sup>38</sup> Wise interprets the sixth hymn (1QH 13:5-19) as the Teacher’s personal reflection on exile in the ‘land of Damascus’:

“I thank you, O Lord, that You have not abandoned me while I sojourn among a grim-[faced] people... [nor] have you judged me as my guilt might have required. You have not deserted me when, as is my nature, I acted wickedly. Instead, You have protected my life from destruction and [made Your servant a fugiti]ve among lions who are appointed for the children of guilt—lions who are about to break the bones of powerful men, about to drink the blo[od] of warriors. You have made me a sojourner among many fishermen who cast their nets upon the water; among hunters of the children of perversity. As a judgment You have established me there. Yet You have actually fortified the secret truth within my mind—the water of the covenant for those who seek it...

...So that You may publicly manifest Your mighty power through me, You have done miracles on behalf of the poor one. You have brought him into the crucible, like gold to be wrought by the flame, as silver is refined in the furnace of the smith, becoming sevenfold more pure. Just so the wicked of the Gentiles rush against me with their afflictions, seeking every day to crush me. Yet You, O my God, have settled the storm to a whisper! You have rescued the poor one like a bir[d from a trap], like prey from the mouth of lions”.<sup>39</sup>

In attempting to answer the question about where the author was sojourning, Wise goes first to the *Damascus Document*: “Scholars often have been unwilling to take its testimony at face value (although, in my view, without good reason)”.<sup>40</sup> On more shaky ground, however, he argues that the Teacher’s exile must have been between 95-64 BCE, while Damascus was the capital of Coele-Syria. It is debatable whether the Teacher was still alive at this time (v.s) and, in the absence of textual evidence, his reasoning seems unnecessarily speculative. From echoes and verbal associations, Wise links the Hymn with passages in

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<sup>38</sup> Wise, *The First Messiah: Investigating the Savior Before Christ*, 1999; 44-46, quote from 46.

<sup>39</sup> 1QH 13:5-9; 15-19 translated by Wise, *The First Messiah*, 134-5.

<sup>40</sup> Wise, *The First Messiah*, 135.

Deuteronomy, Daniel, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, arriving at the conclusion that the Teacher is dwelling in the north, from where the invaders will come to punish the wicked in Judaea. Perhaps less convincing are his speculations on how the Teacher was able to survive in that place (as a ‘brigand’ in the steppes of Trachonitis) and in what way his predictions may have come true (with the invasion of the Romans in 63 BCE). Except for giving us a paradoxical ‘Brigand of Righteousness’, the basic premise of Wise’s work seems sound: this particular composition of the Teacher (1QH 13:5-19) has the appearance of being his personal reflection on the experience of exile in a hostile country, somewhere to the north, and quite possibly ‘in the land of Damascus’.

### *iii. A Plausible Venue for a ‘New Covenant’*

In four of the five references to the ‘land of Damascus’ in the *Damascus Document* (6:19; 8:21=19:34; 20:10-13), the ‘land of Damascus’ is mentioned in conjunction with the ‘new covenant’. As a result of this association, the new covenant comes to be identified with Damascus and is, indeed, often called the ‘Damascus Covenant’. So, further confirmation of the literal interpretation of Damascus can be obtained by finding, in or near Damascus, evidence for the existence of the ‘Covenanters’, which is to say a group of like-minded Jews who would have welcomed the Teacher and his Judaeans followers, aided them in their exile, and united with them in a new covenant.

In our review of the historical background above, we suggested that there would have been, in Damascus, a large community of Jews of Babylonian origin, whose practice of Judaism was strictly sectarian, carefully conserved since the exile and similar to that of Ezra and Nehemiah. Among them were those who, for one reason or another, opposed the religious leadership in Jerusalem, and some would have been educated scribes, of priestly and Levitical descent. This is a reasonable assumption.

What is more certain is that part of the Book of the Watchers (*1En* 6–16) was written by a Jewish scribe sitting “by the waters of Dan”, at the foot of Mt. Hermon (*1En* 13:7-9; cf. 6:6), not far from Damascus, in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE.<sup>41</sup> According to historical and archaeological records, King Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt extended and rebuilt the

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<sup>41</sup> Nickelsburg’s dating for this section (*1En* 12-16) is 300-250 BCE (*1 Enoch* 1, 2001; 230).

ancient Israelite temple at Dan around 260 BCE,<sup>42</sup> and it has been proposed that the author of the Book of the Watchers was engaged as a priest in that temple.<sup>43</sup> It was situated on the northern border of Ptolemy's kingdom, next to the territory of his Seleucid rivals, in a fertile, well-watered region of the upper Jordan Valley. The Dan temple project would have been anathema to the authorities in Jerusalem, for whom there could be only one legitimate temple, so, as Damascus also fell within King Ptolemy's territory at that time, it is quite probable that the priests for the temple of Dan came from Damascus, where the nearest Jewish community resided.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the Book of the Luminaries (*1En 72-82*), another book in the collection that became *1 Enoch*, was not only known to the authors of *1 Enoch 1-36*,<sup>45</sup> but was written at about the same time (300-250 BCE) and shows a working knowledge of Babylonian cosmology and astronomy.<sup>46</sup> On this evidence alone, we can confirm the existence of a rival dissident group of Judeo-Babylonian priests and scribes, based in or near Damascus from at least the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. As the authors of the Enoch books, they can rightly be identified by the modern name of 'Enochic Jews', although there is no

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<sup>42</sup> For the historical background: Hengel, *Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol 2, eds. Davies, Finkelstein, Cambridge, UK: CUP, 1989; 53-57; and regarding the relevant archaeological findings of Avraham Biran at Tell Dan (*Biblical Dan*, Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994; 215-33), Nickelsburg observes: "Biran's excavations indicate further construction and use of the sacred area during the Hellenistic period. Of particular interest is a bilingual Greek and Aramaic inscription, dating from around 200 BCE... "to the god who is in Dan, Zoilos made a vow" ... Whatever the identity of this god, the inscription makes clear that the sacred area on Tell Dan was in use around the time that *1 Enoch 12-16* was written", Excursus, *1 Enoch 1*, 244.

<sup>43</sup> For a far-reaching and comprehensive presentation of this thesis, see Suter, 'Why Galilee? Galilean Regionalism in the Interpretation of *1 Enoch 6-16*', *Henoch*, XXV, 2003; 167-212. Suter also examines the connections of the text with local mythology and spiritual practices in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, and is the first to propose this section of *1 Enoch* could have been a foundational text for the newly restored Israelite temple at Dan, established by priests who were critical of the Temple institution in Jerusalem.

<sup>44</sup> Referring to the temple established by Onias IV at Leontopolis in Egypt, Suter notes: "The one-sanctuary rule established by Josiah and maintained during the Restoration by the Zadokites was certainly open to violation, even by the Zadokites themselves after their fall from power. It should therefore not be surprising to find a non-Zadokite priest serving a renovated sanctuary in Dan in cooperation with the Ptolemaic government's effort to revive an ancient sanctuary as an instrument of political and social control in an unstable region", 'Why Galilee?', 204-5.

<sup>45</sup> *1 Enoch 17-19* and *33-36* are especially well informed by the Book of Luminaries, see VanderKam, in Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 2021; 390-94. For Babylonian influence in general, on *1 Enoch*, see Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 61-62.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 371-83.



evidence they were known as such in ancient times. Returning to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, we must now ask what could have brought the 'Enochic Jews' of Damascus together, in a new covenant, with the Teacher and his followers from Judaea.<sup>47</sup>

In answer to this point, it is evident that the Judeo-Babylonians, whose concerns are reflected in the earliest writings of *1 Enoch*, were especially devoted to Ezekiel, the exilic prophet-priest whose vision of post-exilic restoration (Ezek 40–48) clashed, in some respects, with the Torah of Moses, which was considered more authoritative by the priests in Jerusalem.<sup>48</sup> It appears that this discordance was the basis for their dissent, which focused mainly on the modalities of restoration of city and Temple.<sup>49</sup> It was a dispute that first arose with Ezra-Nehemiah, but returned with vigour following the victory of the Maccabees (c.160-150 BCE), when there was a real opportunity for the reform and rebuilding of the Temple institution in Jerusalem. The *Temple Scroll* (11QT) fits perfectly into this context, not only as a creative harmonization of the vision of Ezekiel with the Torah of Moses, but as the plan of a temple worthy of the upcoming messianic age.<sup>50</sup> It evidently formed an important role in the making of the new covenant, since there is good reason, according to Yigael Yadin, to identify the *Temple Scroll* with the Scroll of Meditation (*Hagu* or *Hagi*), mentioned thrice in the *Damascus Document* as compulsory reading for the leadership of the new covenant group (CD 10:4-6; 13:2-3; 14:6-7).<sup>51</sup> In view of the divine and canonical status evinced by this document, it is reasonable to regard it, and its

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<sup>47</sup> Nickelsburg has already made the connection: "The suggested place of origin of *1 Enoch* 12-16 may, however, offer a new datum for the discussion of the origin of the Damascus Document. Two texts making reference to events to the west and to the east of Mount Hermon employ similar language to criticize the priesthood", *1 Enoch* 1, 232.

<sup>48</sup> For a summary of the influence of Ezekiel on *1 Enoch*, see Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 30, 57-58. For the radical influence of Ezekiel on the Judeo-Babylonian mission of Ezra-Nehemiah, cf. Blenkinsopp, *Judaism: The First Phase*, 125-159.

<sup>49</sup> Boccaccini states it as follows: "The disagreement and therefore the emergence of two distinctive parties would occur only later, after the return from exile, and would concern the modalities of the restoration. While the Zadokites claimed that God's order had been fully restored with the construction of the second temple, the Enochians still viewed restoration as a future event and gave cosmic dimensions to a crisis that for the Zadokites had momentarily affected only the historical relationships between God and Israel", *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 1998; 76.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Yadin, *The Temple Scroll: The Hidden Law of the Dead Sea Sect*, 1985.

<sup>51</sup> Yadin, *The Temple Scroll*, 225-6, 229. In addition, "In several cases, laws in the *Temple Scroll* parallel laws in the *Damascus Rule*", as noted by Collins, who goes on to summarize the points of contact in *Beyond the Qumran Community*, 43-46, quote from 44.

temple-restoration program, as central to the new covenant made between the Teacher and his followers from the 'land of Judah' on the one hand, and the dissident scribal community of 'Enochian Jews' in the 'land of Damascus', on the other. The presence of this receptive dissident community in or near Damascus, unanimous on reforming the Jerusalem Temple, helps to confirm the literal interpretation of the 'land of Damascus' and of the sojourn of the Teacher and his followers there.

### Conclusion

The main difficulty in giving a historical interpretation to the apparently 'historical' references and allusions in the Dead Sea Scrolls, including those in the *Damascus Document*, is the inability to identify actual geographical places and factual historical events with some degree of certainty. Apart from one specific text, mentioning Kings Demetrius and Antiochus and unmistakably describing King Alexander Jannaeus (*Peshar Nahum*, 4Q169 1:1-8), it has not been possible, up to now, to anchor the corpus of texts to fixed historical and geographical coordinates and to unravel the story from that point, filling in the gaps with what is known from other sources. As the *Damascus Document* refers to the origin and early history of the community at the centre of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the identification of its historical and geographical references would appear to be crucial for this task.

Until the publication of the discoveries of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls, the literal interpretation of exile in the 'land of Damascus' was widely accepted. However, the lack of archaeological and literary findings corroborating a literal period of exile, from the supposed date of occupation c.150-140 BCE up to its destruction in 68 CE, rapidly led to the search for a non-literal interpretation (e.g., Qumran, Babylon). In turn, the non-literal interpretation of the 'land of Damascus' led to speculation on the non-literal meaning of the 'land of Judaea' (e.g., Jerusalem, the Temple priesthood). Along with the loss of geographical specificity, temporal indications were also abandoned, such that the 390-year period (CD 1:5-12) was claimed to be purely symbolic, allowing the central dispute between the 'Teacher' and 'Wicked Priest' to shift from the second to the first century BCE (e.g., Jannaeus, Hyrcanus II). However, the gradual rejection of the literal sense of these coordinates was based on the assumption that Qumran was settled around 150-140 BCE. This assumption collapsed when the original date of settlement was corrected to c.100 BCE, creating an interval from 150-100 BCE, in which the Damascus exile could have taken place without leaving any trace in

the archaeological record at Qumran. Added to the fact that the resulting proliferation of non-literal interpretations have failed to convince, or produce a consensus, a return to the original literal interpretation is long overdue.

So, in this paper, evidence has been presented that is in favour of a literal interpretation of the 'land of Damascus' and against the recognized alternatives. It points to a literal exile in the land of Damascus, during the last half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. If accepted, it is hoped that the group's sojourn in the 'land of Damascus' will become a much-needed point of reference, so that confidence in the historical interpretation of the Dead Sea Scrolls can be restored and the story of the elusive Essenes can be fully unravelled and widely known.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> My attempt to do precisely this was inspired by the discovery of a cave-village in the cliffs of Mt. Arbel, Galilee, which shows convincing evidence of Essene occupation in the first century BCE and beyond. This finding is set forth in 'The Arbel Cave Village: The Remains of an Essene Commune', *Qumran Chronicle*, 30, 1-4, 2022; 17-41; and reproduced in this volume.

## CHAPTER 7

# THE ORIGINS AND HISTORY OF THE ESSENES: IMPLICATIONS OF THE ESSENE SETTLEMENT AT MT. ARBEL IN GALILEE

### Introduction

The background to this study is our discovery that an ancient cave-village, carved into the cliffs of Mt. Arbel in Galilee, displays features of occupation by an Essene community. After presenting the historical, archaeological and observational evidence, we concluded that this site was occupied by Essenes for several centuries, from approximately 100 BCE.<sup>1</sup> There is therefore no need to repeat the findings and inferences here, because our aim now is to consider the implications.

The identification of the Arbel cave village as an Essene settlement has already inspired two separate studies: one looks back to the birth of the Essene movement in ‘the land of the Damascus’ and presents the evidence and arguments for interpreting this expression, mentioned numerous times in the *Damascus Document*, as a literal geographical reference to Damascus and its environs.<sup>2</sup> The other study looks forward and concludes that the Essenes who originally settled in Jerusalem towards the end of the first century BCE, were not originally from Qumran, but from the community that lived at Mt. Arbel.<sup>3</sup> However, the implications of discovering evidence of a large community of Essenes adjacent to the Sea of Galilee, distant from Qumran, are not limited to the local situation in Damascus, Mt. Arbel or in Jerusalem, but allow us to piece together, from various historical, biblical and extra-biblical sources, a broad outline of the origins and history of the Essene movement as a whole. This essay is an attempt to do precisely that, knowing the result will be tentative and in need of further refinement.

A word about sources: every historical reconstruction of the Essene movement must take account of the Essene sources that were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, in the caves near Qumran, and are often called “sectarian”; they include the *Damascus Document* (CD), the *Community Rule* (1QS) and the *Pesharim* (especially those of Habakkuk,

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<sup>1</sup> Ben-Daniel, ‘The Arbel Cave Village: Remains of an Essene Commune’, *Qumran Chronicle*, 30, 1-4, 2022; 43-76, reproduced in this volume.

<sup>2</sup> Id., ‘Damascus is Damascus: Revisiting the Birthplace of the Essenes’, *Qumran Chronicle*, 30, 1-4, 2022; 17-41; also in this volume.

<sup>3</sup> Id., ‘The Essenes and Jerusalem’, *Qumran Chronicle*, 30, 1-4, 2022; 77-118, also in this volume.

Nahum and Psalms). It is well known that these works contain historical allusions, but since historiography was not the primary objective of the authors, their comments on contemporary events are often opaque, making them difficult to compare with more realistic historical sources.

Over the last decade, scholars have been reluctant to speculate on the historical significance of these documents,<sup>4</sup> although there are signs that this reluctance is now giving way to renewed confidence in identifying historical referents in some texts.<sup>5</sup> This therefore seems an opportune moment to attempt an outline of the origins and history of the Essene movement, always cognizant of the fact that the Essene sources we examine are not primarily historical accounts, but highly polemical and slanted points of view that match the author's contemporizing interpretation of a particular biblical text. In what follows we will therefore consider the Dead Sea Scrolls separately, in a category of their own, in order to highlight their uniquely polemical character.

The reconstruction presented here is not in any way novel. It is founded upon scholarly work that has long been published, adding new insights and information where they have emerged. Upon the groundwork laid by ancient sources, such as the two books of Maccabees, the writings of Josephus, Philo and Pliny the Elder, our historical reconstruction is based on the works of three modern scholars in particular: one of the pioneers of the traditional Qumran/Essene hypothesis, Geza Vermes, who dated the conflict that led to the Teacher's exile 'in the land of Damascus' to the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE;<sup>6</sup> the architect of the Enochic/Essene hypothesis, Gabriele Boccaccini, who discerned the 'pre-Qumranic' division within the Essene household,<sup>7</sup> and Yigael

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<sup>4</sup> E.g., Angel, *Otherworldly and Eschatological Priesthood in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2010; 2, 13-16; Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community*, 2010; 30.

<sup>5</sup> This was observed by John J. Collins in his response to the "field changing" delivery of Carol Newsom on 'The Significance of 1QH<sup>a</sup> 9:33-41 for understanding the *Hodayot* of the Teacher', at the 17<sup>th</sup> International Orion Symposium (via Zoom), on March 1st, 2022. Collins described it as "a signal of a return to the historical study of the Scrolls", prompting him to ask: "Are we moving into a more confident period where we can assert certain claims?" Carol Newsom concurred, noting that some hypotheses have a 'comparative advantage' and explain the evidence better than others.

<sup>6</sup> Vermes, trans. and ed., *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 2011. If the Teacher's exile in 'the land of Damascus' is understood literally, before the settlement of Qumran and Arbel around 100 BCE, as we have argued elsewhere (see n. 2), the conflict between the Teacher of Righteousness and the Scoffer/Liar/Wicked Priest is pushed back into the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, as asserted by Vermes.

<sup>7</sup> Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 1998. Our demonstration of the starkly contrasting attitudes to Jerusalem and the Temple, between the Qumran Essenes and the

Yadin, the first to realize the great religious significance of the *Temple Scroll* (11QT).<sup>8</sup> On the framework erected by these three scholars, the work of other scholars has been added where appropriate, especially that of Kenneth Atkinson,<sup>9</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp,<sup>10</sup> Joan Taylor,<sup>11</sup> and within this increasingly complex structure our Arbel/Essene hypothesis has also found its place.

In a recent book, John Bergsma reminds us that: “Oftentimes the best proof of a theory is its explanatory power, and when in scholarship one can advance a single theory that suddenly unites and makes sense of a lot of data that otherwise seemed unrelated and inexplicable, it’s often an indication that one has hit upon the truth”.<sup>12</sup> If our theory of a significant Essene presence at Mt. Arbel is correct, one would expect this conclusion to shed more light on the origin and history of the Essene movement as a whole. So, rather than “zooming in” on the detailed evidence base of our hypothesis, which only the archaeologists can do, we here propose to “zoom out” and examine whether it fits into the larger historical narrative of those times, noting especially whether it has explanatory power and can shed more light on the history of the Essene movement.

After an account of the historical and chronological framework produced from the primary and secondary sources (‘Known Religio-Historical Background’), we then give a brief survey of the historical references in the Dead Sea Scrolls (‘Evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls’) and finish by interpreting them within the given historical outline (‘Postulated Reconstruction of Essene History’).

### **Known Religio-Historical Background**

Following the return of the Jews to Judaea from their exile in Babylon and Mesopotamia (c. 520 BCE), there were many literate priests and

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Essenes who later settled in Jerusalem (see n. 3), confirms that there had been a profound split in the Essene household, thus linking our findings to Boccaccini’s Enochic/Essene hypothesis (*Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*), and the earlier work of Florentino García Martínez, in ‘Qumran Origins and Early History: A Groningen Hypothesis’, *Folia Orientalia*, XXV, 1988; 113-36.

<sup>8</sup> Yadin, *The Temple Scroll: The Hidden Law of the Dead Sea Sect*, 1985.

<sup>9</sup> Atkinson, “Understanding the Relationship Between the Apocalyptic Worldview and Jewish Sectarian Violence”, *The Seleucid and Hasmonean Periods and the Apocalyptic Worldview*, 2016; 45-57.

<sup>10</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Judaism: The First Phase*, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Taylor, *The Essenes, the Scrolls and the Dead Sea*, 2012, especially her work on the identification of the Herodians with the Essenes, ch. 4, 109-130.

<sup>12</sup> Bergsma, *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Revealing the Jewish Roots of Christianity*, 2019; 108.

scribes who did not acknowledge that the exile had come to an end.<sup>13</sup> They were strongly inspired by the eschatological visions of divine redemption prophesied by Ezekiel (Ezek chs. 40–48) and could not see the realization of these visions in the return of the Jews to their homeland under Persian governance. The history of this period is sketchy, but historians discern a profound and long-lasting conflict between the Jewish exiles returning from Mesopotamia and the indigenous Jewish population, who had remained in Judaea, intermarried with gentiles, and established their administrative centre at Mitzpeh, in Samaria. Since one of the main issues was the marriage of Jews with gentiles, the two sides in this struggle have been labelled the ‘separatists’ and the ‘assimilationists’. The separatists claimed assimilation was corrupting God’s people and defiling the land and Temple, and the assimilationists were unconvinced that God’s Law demanded the segregation of the population, or the separation of partners in mixed marriages. Repeated missions to segregate Jews and prevent intermarriage were conducted by the separatists, who hailed mainly from Judeo-Babylonian communities in exile, like the missions related in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. However, they all resulted in failure, or only partial success, for by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE the ruling priesthood had made compromises that were unacceptable to the separatists.<sup>14</sup>

Consequently, many of the Judaeo-Babylonian priests and Levites did not return to the homeland, but remained in Mesopotamia, at the head of their communities, or they made the journey as far as Damascus and settled there, swelling the Judeo-Babylonian community in and around that city. They would have been deterred from returning to Jerusalem, not only by the compromises that, in their view, defiled priestly purity, but also by the shameful poverty of the newly rebuilt Second Temple on Mt. Zion. To make matters worse, the leading body of priests in Jerusalem ruled that only those priests who could prove their priestly lineage could serve there (Ezra 2,59-63; Neh 7,61-65).<sup>15</sup> Apart from unfairly excluding legitimate, but genealogically undocumented priests, this gave the authorities a way of including whomever they wished, on

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Knibb, ‘The Exile in the Literature of the Intertestamental Period’, *Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Early Jewish Texts and Traditions*, 2009; 191-212.

<sup>14</sup> Morton Smith, ‘Jewish Religious Life in the Persian Period’, *Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol 1, 1984; 243-276; *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament*, 1971; 148-192.

<sup>15</sup> Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism: An Intellectual History from Ezekiel to Daniel*, 2002; 64.

the basis of fabricated genealogies.<sup>16</sup> So, unable to gain the approval of the authorities, the undocumented priests remained in the diaspora and, from afar, they disputed the purity and legitimacy of the Second Temple and its priesthood.

Over subsequent years, they were joined in their dissent by other priests who had, for one reason or another, been rejected by the ruling authorities at the Temple in Jerusalem. Wherever they were, in Damascus or in Mesopotamia, they meditated over the Scriptures and looked forward to the ideal restoration of the Jewish commonwealth, as they believed it *should* be. During this time, it is quite possible that Damascus, due to its strategic position between Jerusalem and Babylon, became a centre for the ‘separatist’ movement, whose origins lay in the eastern diaspora.<sup>17</sup>

In the late 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the Ptolemaic Greeks replaced the Persians as overlords of the Temple state of the Jews. In about 260 BCE, King Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt extended and rebuilt the ancient Israelite temple at Dan, which was at the foot of Mt. Hermon and at the northern limits of his territory.<sup>18</sup> Damascus and all the land to the south were under Ptolemy’s control at this time, but in order to prevent the territorial encroachments of the Seleucids from the north, he needed to increase his control in this fertile northern border area, probably in the form of a military garrison. By restoring the temple at Dan, he may have had in mind something like the former frontier settlement of the Jews at Elephantine/Jeb, in Upper Egypt. As this would have been anathema to

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<sup>16</sup> Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics*, 171,173.

<sup>17</sup> Except in one point, the historical outline given here agrees with that of Boccaccini in *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 70-79: in our view, it is unrealistic to suppose that the priestly dissent group, later identified as Enochian Jews, lived in Jerusalem along with the ruling priestly group, the Zadokites (op. cit. 77-78). Religious tensions would have been high enough to cause bloodshed, not forgetting that criticism of the Temple and God’s holy things was blasphemy—a capital offence. If there were no signs of conflict in Jerusalem at that time, it is because the dissenting group continued to live in exile, in Damascus or in Mesopotamia.

<sup>18</sup> For the historical background: Hengel, *Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol 2, 1989; 53-57; and regarding the relevant archaeological findings of Avraham Biran at Tell Dan (*Biblical Dan*, Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994; 215-33), Nickelsburg observes: “Biran’s excavations indicate further construction and use of the sacred area during the Hellenistic period. Of particular interest is a bilingual Greek and Aramaic inscription, dating from around 200 BCE... “to the god who is in Dan, Zoilos made a vow” ... Whatever the identity of this god, the inscription makes clear that the sacred area on Tell Dan was in use around the time that 1 Enoch 12-16 was written”, *1 Enoch* 1, 2001; 244.



the Temple priests of Jerusalem, he naturally turned to the members of the dissenting priestly community in the diaspora. Proximity to Dan and Mt. Hermon makes it entirely possible that these priests came from the environs of Damascus, which was under Ptolemy's control at the time.<sup>19</sup>

What is more certain is that part of the Book of the Watchers (*IEn* 6–16) was written by a Jewish scribe sitting “by the waters of Dan”, at the foot of Mt. Hermon (*IEn* 13:7-9; cf. 6:6), not far from Damascus, in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE.<sup>20</sup> It was an explanation for the origin of evil that bore some relation to a passage in the Book of Genesis (Gen 6,1-4), and together with the Astronomical Book written earlier in Mesopotamia, it forms the most ancient part of a collection that, over the next 250 years, grew into the collection of writings that is nowadays called *IEnoch*. Composed around the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, the Parables of Enoch (*IEnoch* 37-71) was the last of these writings to be included. In retrospect, it appears that the earliest writings of *IEnoch* were kept together and preserved by a loosely affiliated scribal movement that is known today as ‘Enochian Judaism’, aptly described as giving voice to “groups of priests and scribes who feel marginalized and even disenfranchised vis-à-vis the ruling priests in Jerusalem”.<sup>21</sup>

As already indicated, the main issue dividing this dissenting group—the ‘Enochians’—from its rival priestly group in Jerusalem—the ‘Zadokites’—was the dispute over the details of Temple restoration.<sup>22</sup> It was a dispute that dated back to the Babylonian exile, and in particular to the prophet Ezekiel's plan of restoration (Ezek 40–48), which the dissenters wanted to realize as written, but the Jerusalem priests did not or could not do, claiming it contradicted the Torah of Moses and should

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<sup>19</sup> For the geographical sites and their significance, see Nickelsburg, “Enoch, Levi, and Peter: Recipients of Revelation in Upper Galilee”, *JBL*, 100/4 (1981), 575-600. For a far-reaching and comprehensive presentation of this thesis, see Suter, ‘Why Galilee? Galilean Regionalism in the Interpretation of *I Enoch* 6-16’, *Henoch*, XXV, 2003; 167-212.

<sup>20</sup> The description corresponds exactly, in time and place, with the restoration of the temple of Dan. Nickelsburg's dating for this section (*IEn* 12-16) is 300-250 BCE (*I Enoch* 1, 230).

<sup>21</sup> Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism*, 99, quoting Benjamin G. Wright III.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 76: “The disagreement and therefore the emergence of two distinctive parties would occur only later, after the return from exile, and would concern the modalities of the restoration. While the Zadokites claimed that God's order had been fully restored with the construction of the second temple, the Enochians still viewed restoration as a future event and gave cosmic dimensions to a crisis that for the Zadokites had momentarily affected only the historical relationships between God and Israel.”

await divinely inspired interpretation.<sup>23</sup> Mindful of the continued absence of God's glory in the earthly Temple (cf. Ezek 43,1-7), not to mention the corruption of the ruling priests in Jerusalem, the dissenters focused their attention on the heavenly Temple, which had been revealed to some members along with the gift of divine knowledge and instruction received directly from God's throne. In this way, the Enochic movement came to embody the ancient Israelite prophetic tradition at precisely the time when the ruling priestly authorities had declared prophecy to have ceased and been replaced by priestly and scribal functions.<sup>24</sup> These differences in relating to God, the source of all authority, lay at the root of the tense rivalry that developed between the visionary Enochian and the pragmatic Zadokite movements.

A century later, after Seleucid rule had replaced that of the Ptolemies in all of Judaea (198 BCE), the Seleucid kings gradually implemented a policy to Hellenize Jerusalem along with its priesthood and Temple. This activity reached its peak during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes IV (167 BCE), when the ruling priesthood gave way and the Temple was used for pagan worship for three years, from 167-164 BCE. Not surprisingly, the pagan desecration of the Temple met with widespread opposition among the Jewish population and provoked the Maccabean revolt led by Judas Maccabee (a nickname meaning the 'Hammer'). With the departure of the traditional family of priests (the Oniads), other religiously observant groups, broadly called the Pious, or *Hasidim* (1Macc 2,42-43; 7,13; 2Macc 14,6), joined forces with Judas Maccabee and successfully fought to remove the pagan incursions. *For those who had been critical of the Temple institution, there was now a rare opportunity for reform.* The main leadership positions were taken, in turn, by the surviving leaders of the revolt, all members of the priestly, but not *high*-priestly Hasmonean family, nicknamed the Maccabees. Over the next 50 years, using a combination of diplomacy and warfare, they succeeded in establishing Judaea as a strong and independent theocratic state, extending its borders towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE by conquering new territories, including Idumaea in the south, Samaria in the centre and Galilee in the north.

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<sup>23</sup> See Blenkinsopp, *The Torat Habayit of Ezekiel*, *Judaism: The First Phase*, 2009; 133-159

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Hengel, "The Scriptures and Their Interpretation in Second Temple Judaism", *The Aramaic Bible: Targums in their Historical Context*, 1994; 161-64; Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, 1996; 222-26.

After the deaths of King Antiochus Epiphanes IV (164 BCE) and his appointed high-priest, Alcimus (159 BCE), but before the subsequent appointment of Jonathan Maccabee as the high-priest and leader of the Jews (152 BCE), there is a hiatus in the list of high priests that has not been adequately explained (159-152 BCE). According to the wording of the last letter of King Demetrius to Jonathan at this time, it appears there was a high priest in office during this period (1Macc 10,32.38), but his name has since been lost or scrubbed. While recounting the campaigns of Jonathan in Syria (144-143 BCE), Josephus introduces, into his chronological history of the Jews, the three main ‘factions’ in Judaism: the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the Essenes, and then proceeds to write much more about the Essenes than all the others.<sup>25</sup> Philo of Alexandria also writes about them,<sup>26</sup> but neither Josephus nor Philo describe their historical origins. These are the only ancient authors to speak about the Essenes in any detail and apart from four exceptional Essenes profiled by Josephus,<sup>27</sup> they are rarely mentioned again in the historical records. However, in their accounts of the Essenes, both Josephus and Philo describe their beliefs and communal way of life in the present tense, thus testifying that they continued to exist until at least the end of the first century CE.<sup>28</sup>

Both Philo and Josephus report that the Essenes numbered more than 4,000 and lived in communities, some all-male, others mixed, in towns and villages throughout the land of Judaea. Philo adds the intriguing information that they were also to be found in Syria and that they “derive their name from their piety (*hosios*), though not according to any accurate

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<sup>25</sup> Josephus, *Ant* 18.18-22; *JW* 2.119-161 (*Ant* is our abbreviation for *Antiquities* and *JW* for *Jewish War*).

<sup>26</sup> Philo of Alexandria, *Quod Omnis* 75-91 and *Hypothetica* 11,1-8.

<sup>27</sup> Judas (*Ant* 13.311-313), Menahem (*Ant* 15.373-378), Simon (*Ant* 17.345-348) and John (*JW* 2.567).

<sup>28</sup> On the question of Essene survival after 70 CE, ‘lack of evidence is not evidence of non-existence’ is the stance of Martin Goodman, who then writes: “If the hypothesis is correct that the sages after 70 just chose to ignore other Jewish groups, Sadducees and Essenes after 70 may have flourished just as much as the sages did, each group turning in on itself, unconcerned about the others. I do not see that anything that prevented such groups from continuing to exist in the land of Israel or elsewhere until the end of the second century, or even the third, until the time when Epiphanius in the fourth century explicitly declared them a phenomenon of the past. In the intervening centuries, Sadducees and Essenes will have cropped up in the world of the rabbis only intermittently, to be classified under the general heading of *minim* (as I suggested above may have been the case of *b. Sanh.* 91a)”, ‘Sadducees and Essenes After 70 CE’, *Crossing the Boundaries*, 1994; 354.

form of the Grecian dialect”.<sup>29</sup> Along with many others, we therefore take the view that the name ‘Essene’ comes from the Greek transliterations, *essēnoi* and *essaioi*, of the Aramaic words *ḥasin* and *ḥasayya’* respectively, which are cognates of *ḥasidim* in Hebrew and mean the ‘pious’, or ‘holy ones’ (plural). This theory about the derivation of the name ‘Essene’ supports the ‘Hasidic hypothesis’, which views the Essenes as the successors of the *Hasidim*, or *Asidaioi* (in Greek), who were the Judaeans supporters of the Maccabean revolt mentioned in the books of Maccabees (1Macc 2,42; 7,13; 2Macc 14,6). It was, in fact, the most broadly accepted theory until Vermes and others pointed out that the Aramaic forms *ḥasin* and *ḥasayya’* are attested in Palmyrian Aramaic, but not in Western Aramaic, which was the common language in Judaea.<sup>30</sup> However, far from disproving the link between the Essene movement and the *Hasidim*, this observation resonates with Philo’s comment that the Essenes were also found in Syria, and indicates the name may indeed have originated there. There is therefore no need to discard the ‘Hasidic hypothesis’, which explains the Hasidic origins of the Essenes, simply because the Aramaic roots *ḥasin* and *ḥasayya’* were not current in Judaea. On the contrary, it should prepare us to accept this group was first named ‘Essene’ during their sojourn in Syria.

The only other source of information about the Essenes, and about their history, comes from the often-cryptic writings found, between 1948 and 1956, in caves near Qumran and named the Dead Sea Scrolls. Most scholars now concur with the Qumran/Essene hypothesis, which identifies the ruined buildings at Qumran as the home of a community of 75–100 male Essenes, from about 100 BCE until 68 CE, when they were killed or dispersed by the Romans during the first Jewish Revolt.<sup>31</sup> This identification is heavily based on the short but unmistakable description of an Essene community living along the north-western shores of the

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<sup>29</sup> Philo, *Quod Omnis*, 75.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Kampen, “A Reconsideration of the Name “Essene” in Greco-Jewish Literature in Light of Recent Perceptions of the Qumran Sect”, *HUCA*, 57 (1986), 61-81. For an update see Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community*, 157; and S.J. Joseph, *Jesus, the Essenes and Christian Origins*, 2018; 32-34.

<sup>31</sup> The most recent and reliable archaeological evaluation dates the construction of the main communal buildings at Qumran to around 100 BCE (Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1st ed., 2002; 63-69; this dating is upheld in the 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., published in 2021); for a fulsome account of the archaeological work at the site and the history of its interpretation, see Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community*, 166-208.

Dead Sea in Pliny the Elder's first-century (c.77 CE) description of Judaeian geography.<sup>32</sup>

Hidden away in some of the caves in the cliffs near the Qumran buildings, the Dead Sea Scrolls are thought to have been community's working library, containing not only a variety of biblical and para-biblical works, but also their own writings and those composed in their formative period, before their arrival at Qumran. Close study of the diverse contents of the library and the character of the scrolls, especially those of the Qumran community itself, has given rise to the remarkable observation that the Qumran community had not only separated from the Temple and Jerusalem, but also from the rest of the Essene movement. Despite the outstanding similarities between the Essenes at large and the Qumran community, there are also significant differences impeding the identification of the two. From the many attempts to explain these differences, two stand out among the rest: the Groningen hypothesis of Florentino García Martínez (1988) and its later variant called the Enochic/Essene hypothesis of Gabriele Boccaccini (1998).<sup>33</sup>

Boccaccini has focussed his investigation of the differences in the literary output of the Qumran and the non-Qumran Essenes.<sup>34</sup> After the establishment of the Qumran community in about 100 BCE, there appears to have been no exchange of writings between themselves and the other Essene communities, whose existence throughout Judaea and southern Syria was reported by both Philo and Josephus. This total absence of any exchange of literature, in either direction, is strong evidence of schism: the Qumran community appears to have separated from the other Essene communities and was charting its own course in intellectual and physical isolation. This evidence is reinforced by the uniquely rigid determinism and extreme dualism expressed in the literature from Qumran, marking a clear and irreversible divergence from the teaching of God-given human freedom and responsibility expressed in the writings of non-Qumran Essenes.

Archaeological investigation of the site has shown that it was devastated by fire and abandoned for at least one winter season, and

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<sup>32</sup> Pliny the Elder, *Nat. Hist.* 5.73.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Van Peursen, 'Qumran Origins: Some Remarks on the Enochic/Essene Hypothesis', *RQ*, 20, 2, 2001; 241-253, who also explains the small difference between these two hypotheses (pp. 248-49).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 129-149 (for the books missing from Qumran); 156-159 (for the non-appearance elsewhere).

probably longer, sometime between 8 and 1 BCE.<sup>35</sup> The most likely occasion for this disaster was the upheaval following the death of King Herod in 4 BCE, and the most likely agent was an ex-slave of Herod called Simon. He claimed to be messiah, assembled an army and, before his capture and execution by a Roman army detachment, he had managed to destroy numerous estates in the Jordan Valley, including the Herodian Winter Palace in Jericho.<sup>36</sup> Findings at Qumran indicate rebuilding and reoccupation took place during the reign of Herod's heir, Herod Archelaus, but was probably slow. In fact, judging from the severity of the destruction, and the likely loss of life, it is doubtful whether the Qumran community ever managed to return to its former spiritual and literary heights. It appears that no new writings were composed after the turn of the era, and scribal activity was limited to copying old manuscripts only.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> For the revised chronology of the Qumran settlement, see Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 2002; 63-69; and now ch. 4 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2021. In this 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Magness backtracks on the destruction and abandonment of the site between 8-1 BCE, but I do not find her reasons compelling. To my mind, the thick layers of ash reported by de Vaux could only have been generated by an extensive fire, irrespective of whether these were later mixed with bones and ceramics. Although de Vaux states that there were also traces of ash inside the buildings, after the clean-up operation by returning occupants, Magness does not wish to take this into account. A large fire, causing loss of roofing and burning of doorframes, alone suggests a violent cause and points to abandonment, as does the accumulation of sediment in an area that should have been cleared quickly, if it had remained fully functional. Further evidence of violence and destruction is the coin hoard in L120, which was likely buried in a hurry, and never reclaimed, because the person who buried it lost his life before he could tell anyone else. Finally, this was indeed a period of political instability and, as we go on to explain in the text, Josephus has described the likely culprit, and his trail of destruction, in this precise area, at exactly this time (cf. n. 36).

<sup>36</sup> Josephus, *JW* 2.57-59; *Ant* 17.273-276.

<sup>37</sup> The evidence put forward by Gregory Doudna in 'Dating the Scroll Deposits of the Qumran Caves: A Question of Evidence' (*The Caves of Qumran: Proc. Int. Conf., Lugano, 2014*, 2017; 234-46) overwhelmingly supports the view that the Period II occupation of Qumran (1 BCE–68 CE) was very much diminished compared to that of Period 1b (100–4 BCE). There were no new writings in 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, and literary activity was limited to copying existing texts. There was a change in the occupants towards the end of Period II. Together with the silence of Josephus and Philo on the community of Qumran, the evidence presented by Doudna points to the first century CE as a period of decline in numbers, and in influence, ending in a take-over by the Zealots. Meanwhile, other Essene communities seem to have been flourishing, in Jerusalem and around the country, attracting those new recruits who might once have joined the community at Qumran.

Although the destruction of the Second Temple and the Qumran community by the Romans in 68-70 CE was devastating, most of the non-Qumran Essene communities would have survived, with the notable exception of the 'Essene quarter' in Jerusalem, which was taken over by the garrison of the Roman army's Tenth Legion. A great many of the Jerusalem Essenes had become Christians (Acts 2,41; 6,7) and those who did not join the early Church continued to await messianic restoration and reconstruction, judging from their later writings (*4Ezra, Apocalypse of Abraham*). What is clear, though, is that none of the surviving Essenes returned to rebuild and inhabit Qumran, or reclaim its vast library, showing again that their ties with Qumran had been broken long before. Qumran had been a marginal, minority sect, isolated by their own extreme ideology and cut off not only from the Jewish people and their Temple, but also from the main body of their own Essene movement.<sup>38</sup>

Returning to the literary works not found at Qumran, Boccaccini observes: "But no evidence has been found in the Qumran library of the three most important documents of Enochic Judaism written in the first century BCE (the main body of the Epistle of Enoch, the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, and the Similitudes of Enoch)".<sup>39</sup> Commenting on this, George Nickelsburg writes "The absence of the Book of Parables in the Qumran library suggests that the [Enochic] corpus was transmitted and developed in at least one context other than Qumran".<sup>40</sup> This 'one other context', we have proposed, is the Essene scribal community residing at the Arbel cave village, carved into the cliffs of Mt. Arbel, in Eastern Galilee.<sup>41</sup>

Not surprisingly, the historical outline presented above does not explain how the Essenes came to be at Mt. Arbel. Our main sources from this period are the two books of Maccabees and the writings of Josephus, whose authors who were patriotically loyal to the ruling powers, whether the Maccabees, the ruling Hasmonean dynasty or indeed the Romans. The Essenes were not only a semi-secret religious movement, largely detached from the ruling powers, but at times they even became victims of those rulers, condemned to execution, execration or expulsion. We should expect, therefore, a somewhat different picture to emerge from their own writings, especially those of the Dead Sea Scrolls. With help

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 150-156.

<sup>39</sup> Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 131. The 'Similitudes of Enoch' is a synonym for the 'Parables of Enoch'.

<sup>40</sup> Nickelsburg, "Enoch, First Book of", *ABD*, 1992; vol 2, 515.

<sup>41</sup> See n. 1.

from the scholars, we will proceed to identify the main historical allusions in the Scrolls before going on to reconstruct, with some reading between the lines, what happened to the Essenes before and after the Maccabean revolt.

### **Evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls**

The *Damascus Document* (CD) provides the starting point for this enquiry, because the greater part of this rule-book was written before the final break in the Essene movement, as it regulates for members in monastic communities as well as for those 'lay-members' living in contemporary society.<sup>42</sup> In the opening section it is related how the community began 'in the age of wrath, three hundred and ninety years after God had given the Israelites into the hand of the King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon'. At this time, God called a group of pious Jews, priests and laymen to a holy life of repentance, and 20 years later sent them a leader called the 'Teacher of Righteousness' (CD [A] I,5-12 = 1:5-12). After a while, this 'Teacher' was deserted by a substantial faction of these pious Jews, who are then described as 'seekers of smooth things' and accused of religious laxity and infidelity to the law. In fact, it appears they turned away in order to follow another leader variously called the 'Scoffer', 'Liar' or 'Spouter of Lies'. The increase of tensions between the two groups caused the 'Teacher' and his faithful followers to go into exile 'in the land of Damascus' where they entered into a 'new covenant', and where the Teacher eventually died. His justification for going to Damascus was the counter-intuitive interpretation of a prophecy of Amos (5,26-27; CD [A] VII,12-15 = 7:12-15), in which God promises to send Israel into exile 'beyond Damascus', as a punishment for their idolatry (i.e. to exile in Nineveh/Babylon/Mesopotamia).<sup>43</sup> The deliberate alteration of 'beyond Damascus', in the citation (Am 5,27), to

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<sup>42</sup> All the references, translations and much of the historical commentary in this section are from *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls* by Vermes. The evidence so far suggests that the Essene community that finally settled in Qumran engaged only very minimally with Essene lay-members (*pace* Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 43-45).

<sup>43</sup> The interpretation is counter-intuitive because the previous paragraph makes it clear that the prophecy is not understood here as a punishment, as in the original context (Amos 5,26-27), but as a 'protection' from 'the sword': "When the two houses of Israel were divided, Ephraim departed from Judah. And all the apostates were given up to the sword, but those who held fast escaped to the land of the north" (CD [A] VII,12-13 = 7:12-13). The extreme manipulation (reversal) of the sense of these citations from the prophets indicates that they came from someone in authority in the community, most likely from the Teacher himself.



‘Damascus’, explaining why they came to be there, persuades us that Damascus should be interpreted literally in this context, and not figuratively as a reference to Babylon or any other exilic location.<sup>44</sup> This literal interpretation resonates with Philo’s observation that, a century and a half later, the Essenes lived not only in Judaea, but also in Syria, where it appears that the name ‘Essene’ was first applied to them.<sup>45</sup>

Meantime, the group that followed the other leader, the ‘Scoffer’, are said to have ‘kindled the anger of God, led Israel astray and profaned the Temple in Jerusalem’. The text then expresses several stern warnings to those who abandon the new covenant, ‘who again betray it and depart from the fountain of living waters’ (CD [B] I,1 = 8:21; 19:33-35), before giving the impression that a further departure of the Teacher’s followers had already occurred: “they shall be judged in the same manner as their companions were judged who deserted to the Scoffer. For they have spoken wrongly against the precepts of righteousness, and have despised the Covenant and the Pact—the New Covenant—which they made in the land of Damascus” (CD [B] II,10-13 = 20:10-13). These ‘apostates’ are called the ‘the House of *Peleg*’ and, among other things, they are denounced because ‘they returned again to the way of the people in small (or ‘a few’) matters’. Here, the departure of the parting members is still fresh, for these individuals are invited to appear before the council and be reconciled or judged, before the Glory of God returns to Israel and it will be too late (CD [B] II,23-27 = 20:23-27, cf. 4Q 169 IV,1). The stated reasons for the recent internal division are various: rejecting or criticizing the precepts, having idolatrous desires and ‘walking in stubbornness’.

However, in the context of so much regulation to disengage from society,<sup>46</sup> the charge against those who ‘returned again to the way of the

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<sup>44</sup> For a full presentation of our arguments in favour of the literal interpretation of ‘the land of Damascus’, see the article cited in n. 2. This interpretation is not new, but dates back to the time when the *Damascus Document* was the only literary evidence of the sect (cf. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1972; vol 5, cols. 1238, 1248 and 1249). It has been revived recently by Michael Wise in *The First Messiah: Investigating the Savior Before Christ*, 1999, 135-138. Nevertheless, most scholars nowadays continue to take it as a code word for either Qumran or Babylon. For a brief overview, see Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community*, 29-30. The importance of Damascus as a base for the ‘anti-Zionist’, ‘anti-second Temple’ Enochian tradition is mentioned above. The Teacher’s decision to settle ‘in the land Damascus’ suggests an intention to get closer to this Enochian Jewish community and unite with them in a ‘new covenant’.

<sup>45</sup> Philo, *Quod Omnis*, 75; for the discussion on the name, see the previous section ‘Known Religio-Historical Background’.

<sup>46</sup> Colourfully expressed in the text in various ways, such as ‘departing from the people’, ‘separating from the sons of the Pit’, ‘distinguishing between the clean and

people' indicates their refusal to separate sufficiently from fellow Israelites (the people).<sup>47</sup> Ironically, in the light of their refusal to separate from the people, this group are called 'the House of *Peleg*', which means 'House of Separation' or 'Division', while their critics, who rigidly insisted on complete separation, and include the final author of the *Damascus Document*, will later call themselves 'the House of *Yachad*', which means 'House of Togetherness'. The naming of these two communities into polar opposites, 'Division' and 'Togetherness', betrays a polemical posture and points to enduring rivalry between them.

Following the death of the Teacher in Damascus, 40 years would pass before the demise of all those who originally deserted the 'Teacher' and became violent enemies of his followers (CD [B] II,14-15 = 20:14-15). Significantly, the period of 40 years appears again in the Commentary on Psalm 37, as the time remaining until final judgment: 'Interpreted, this concerns the wicked. At the end of the 40 years they shall be blotted out and no evil man shall be found on the earth' (4Q171 II,10).

More detailed allusions to the same events and characters are given in *Pesher Habakkuk*, where specific mention is made of three groups of people who show unfaithfulness to the 'Teacher': those who 'were unfaithful together with the Liar' in Jerusalem, those 'unfaithful of the new covenant' made in 'the land of Damascus', and those who will be unfaithful at the end of days, 'who will not believe what will happen to the final generation, when they hear from the Priest, to whom God has given the understanding to interpret all the words of his servants the Prophets' (1QpHab I,1-10). As this divine gift of interpretation identifies the 'Teacher of Righteousness' elsewhere (1QpHab VII,5), it helpfully informs us that the 'Teacher' was also a priest, a fact that is stated even more explicitly in the Commentary on Psalm 37 (4Q171 III,15).

*Pesher Habakkuk* has much to say about the Priest's (i.e., the Teacher's) chief antagonist, who is here called the 'Wicked Priest', in addition to his other epithets ('Scoffer', 'Liar' and 'Spouter of Lies').<sup>48</sup> Implying that he was at first friendly to the Teacher and his followers, the *Pesher* states the Wicked Priest 'was called by the name of truth when

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unclean, the holy and profane', 'keeping apart from every uncleanness according to the statutes relating to each one'.

<sup>47</sup> Boccaccini states it thus: "The Damascus Document also reveals that the catalyst of the schism between the parent movement and the teacher of righteousness was his decision to call for stricter segregation from the rest of Israel, whom he considered under the dominion of Belial" *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 150.

<sup>48</sup> The 'Wicked Priest' is a translation of 'hacohen harasha' (הכהן הרשע) which is a pun on 'hacohen harashi' (הכהן הראשי), meaning the 'head priest'.

he first arose' to rule over Israel, but then 'his heart became proud and he forsook God and betrayed the precepts for the sake of riches', robbing everyone and 'heaping sinful iniquity upon himself' (1QpHab VIII,8-13). The finding of some fragments of a poem eulogizing 'King Jonathan' among the Scrolls (4Q448) identifies the ruler of Israel called the 'Wicked Priest' as Jonathan Maccabee, who led the revolt after the death of his brother Judas in 160 BCE, and was appointed high priest by the Greek ruler Alexander Balas in 152 BCE.

A dramatic encounter in the 'land of Damascus' is described in *Pesher Habakkuk*, when the Wicked Priest 'pursued the Teacher of Righteousness to the house of his exile that he might confuse him with his venomous fury', confusing his community and causing them to stumble while they fasted on the Essene Day of Atonement (1QpHab XI,6-8). On that occasion, it is recalled that 'the House of Absalom and the members of its council were silent at the time of the chastisement of the Teacher of Righteousness and gave him no help against the Liar who flouted the Law in the midst of their whole congregation' (1QpHab V,9-12). Because of his wickedness against the Teacher and his elect, the Wicked Priest was later delivered into the hands of his enemies 'to be humbled by means of a destroying scourge, in bitterness of soul' (1QpHab IX,9-12), by 'inflicting horrors of evil diseases and taking vengeance upon his body of flesh' (1QpHab IX,2-8). 'As he himself plotted the destruction of the Poor, so will God condemn him to destruction' (1QpHab XII,5). Two important historical details are added by the Commentary on Psalm 37: firstly, that the Wicked Priest planned to slay the Teacher of Righteousness, 'because of the ordinance and the Law (Torah) which he sent to him', and secondly that he was himself delivered 'into the hands of the nations, that they may execute upon him judgment' (4Q171 IV,5-11). The same work refers to the opponents of the Priest (the Teacher) and his Council as the 'wicked of Ephraim and Manasseh', who appear in a later work, *Pesher Nahum*, in contexts that identify the House of Ephraim as the Pharisees and the House of Manasseh as the Sadducees. The Qumran Essenes frequently identify themselves as the glorious House of Judah.

In the later work, *Pesher Nahum*, neither the Teacher nor the Wicked Priest are mentioned, for attention shifts to the 'furious young lion', a leader of the Jews who took revenge and hanged alive (crucified) the Pharisees who conspired to invite King Demetrius of Greece to be the ruler in Jerusalem (4Q169 I,1-8). However, 'from the time of Antiochus until the coming of the rulers of Kittim, God did not permit the city to be

taken by the Kings of Greece' (4Q169 I,3-4). Both here and in *Pesher Habakkuk*, the Kittim refer to the Romans as the agents appointed by God to despoil and punish the 'last Priests of Jerusalem' (1QpHab IX,5-7; II,10-14; III,1-13; 4Q169 I,3-4). Towards the end of the first century BCE, when the *War Scroll* was written, attitudes at Qumran towards the Kittim had reversed: far from being God's agents of revenge and retribution, they were allies of the devil, Beliar; they were the Sons of Darkness who would be defeated in the final battle by the armies of the Sons of Light (1QM).<sup>49</sup>

Mention should finally be made of the *Temple Scroll* (11QT), which displays several features signifying it had a special or 'canonical' status in the community of the Teacher, who was probably its original author. Above all, it presents itself as a compendium of Law concerning the Temple, given by God to Moses, thereby providing a much-needed reference for the building and regulation of a new man-made Temple for the messianic age. With near certainty it can be identified as the 'Book of Meditation (*Hagu*)' to be studied by the priests and judges in this age (CD X,4-6; XIII,2-3; XIV,6-8) and by all the community in the messianic age (1QSa I,6-8). It may also have been the Law, or Torah, that the Teacher sent to the Wicked Priest, prompting him to plan the Teacher's murder (4Q171 IV,5-11). As a work of major religious significance and provocative impact, the *Temple Scroll* should be considered a document of some historical importance.<sup>50</sup>

### Postulated Reconstruction of Essene History

Most will agree that there are many historical allusions in the Dead Sea Scrolls, especially in the *Damascus Document* (CD) and in some Commentaries and *Pesharim*. At first glance, these expressions do not appear as fictional, but rather as being charged with emotion and rancour. In fact, the *Pesharim* appear to be more of a commentary on contemporary affairs, from the Qumran Essene point of view, than on the

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<sup>49</sup> Pointed out by Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 56.

<sup>50</sup> Its role in the events described in this essay has been seriously underestimated, I suggest. For a re-evaluation of its religious significance, Yadin is an excellent guide in *The Temple Scroll: The Hidden Law of the Dead Sea Sect*, 1985; esp. 112-117, 218-232. "Whatever the origin and the prompting, the fact remains that we have here in the scroll an extraordinary Temple Torah in which God the law-giver speaks as a master-architect, providing precise instructions on the design of each unit and article", op. cit. 117. See also Zahn, "New Voices, Ancient Words: The *Temple Scroll*'s Reuse of the Bible", *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. Day, London and New York: T & T Clark International, 2005; 435-54.

original Scripture. Having said this, though, the allusions are often opaque and need to be deciphered. With the help of the late Geza Vermes in particular, we will attempt to reconstruct the history of the Essenes with an interpretation of events and characters that, although based on facts in some respects, is quite speculative in others.

The origin of the Essenes is traced to an 'age of wrath', 390 years after the exile in 586 BCE, which points to 196 BCE (cf. Ezek 4,5). All the scholars agree that this is inaccurate, but only by a few years. The 'age of wrath' places the origins squarely during the 'Hellenistic crisis' when the Greek rulers, in concert with the high priests, were imposing their Hellenizing policy on the Jews. A fair estimate would be around 185-180 BCE. The Pious (*Hasidim*) predecessors of the Essenes were leaderless for 20 years until they were joined by the Teacher of Righteousness around 160 BCE. This date corresponds well with the period (159-152 BCE) for which there is a gap in the record of high priests, suggesting the Teacher may have been the serving high priest when he became the leader of the Pious. As observed above, '*for those who had been critical of the Temple institution, there was now a rare opportunity for reform*', following the successes of the Maccabean revolt. The Teacher attracted a large number of *Hasidim* around him, because he appears to have had an ambitious plan for religious reform. It is likely, in my view, that this plan is represented by the contents of the *Temple Scroll* (11QT), which would have created a Temple institution worthy of Ezekiel's vision of restoration yet, at the same time, observant of the Mosaic Torah. Not only would this have reconciled the dissenting 'Enochian' group, who remained in exile, with the central 'Zadokite' authority in charge of the Temple institution, but on completion it would also have led to the appointment of a high priestly 'Messiah of Aaron' and a princely 'Messiah of Israel'. In brief it was a plan for the messianic age, which Daniel had prophesied for 490 years (seventy weeks of years) after the exile, i.e., around 90 BCE. If implemented in 160-150 BCE, when the 'Teacher of Righteousness' presented it to the *Hasidim*, it could have been completed in time for Daniel's prophetic date to become true (i.e., 60-70 years later).

With such an ambitious plan for Temple restoration, it is highly probable that the Teacher presented it also to the leader of the revolt at that time, Jonathan Maccabee. In view of the opening praise for the Wicked Priest (1QpHab VIII, 9) and the poetic eulogy mentioning his name (4Q448), it appears that Jonathan initially responded positively towards the Teacher's plan. But sometime before Jonathan was

appointed high priest by the Greek ruler in 152 BCE, he evidently changed his mind (1QpHab VIII, 10-13) and subsequently became the Teacher's most virulent enemy, no doubt because the latter was now a serious rival for the office of high priest.<sup>51</sup> Jonathan's hostility is then reflected in the Scrolls with the ubiquitous and derogatory titles 'Wicked Priest', 'Scoffer', 'Liar' and 'Spouter of Lies'. But Jonathan's change of mind, and his acceptance of the high priesthood from the Greek ruler Alexander Balas, is entirely comprehensible as a response to the details of the Teacher's plan, especially the extreme purity regulations it proposed<sup>52</sup> and the Essene solar calendar it endorsed, which conflicted irreconcilably with the luni-solar calendar imposed by the Greek king.<sup>53</sup> Jonathan's rejection of the Teacher's plan then brought about the first division among the Pious, or *Hasidim*, into those who 'separated' in order to be loyal to the high-priest and were called Pharisees (פרושיין from פָּרַשׁ, to separate), and those who remained faithful to the 'Teacher of Righteousness' and continued to be called *Hasidim* in Hebrew, *Ḥasin* in Aramaic, or *Essenoi/Essaioi* in Greek.<sup>54</sup> This is indeed the time indicated by Josephus for the formation of the three main factions amongst the Jews (Essenes, Pharisees and Sadducees).

As Jonathan's prime competitor for office of high priest, and with a large following of those retaining the name of *Hasidim*, the Teacher's life was in danger. He had to flee to a place that was outside Jonathan's realm at that time, but not so far that he could not return if the situation were to change. Damascus was ideal, not only because there was a sizeable Jewish community there already, but also because many of those Jews were enthusiastic about his cause. Looking forward to the true post-exilic restoration of their people, they were the original dissenters of the Temple institution, the founders of Enochian Judaism. The loss of the Pharisee party to Jonathan's side was suddenly more than compensated

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<sup>51</sup> If the Teacher had been deposed from the office of high priest, in order to make way for Jonathan (152 BCE), then Jonathan would have acted effectively to prevent his return. The exile of the Teacher, and the cancellation of his name from the list of high priests, can be best understood in this context.

<sup>52</sup> For the extreme purity laws it embraced, see Yadin, *The Temple Scroll*, 170-91.

<sup>53</sup> For a full explanation of the calendar conflict, see VanderKam, *Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Measuring Time*, 1998; 113-116.

<sup>54</sup> The etymology of the names of these groups appears to be a reflection of the split: the Pharisees are those who 'separated' from the Essenes, which is a Greek transliteration of the word for 'Pious' in Aramaic (*ḥasin*), itself cognate with the same word in Hebrew (*ḥasidim*). This implies that the Teacher took with him to Damascus the original group of *Hasidim* minus the Pharisees.

by the entry of the Enochians of Damascus. Accompanied by his followers, the Teacher settled in 'the land of Damascus', in the vicinity of this city, in the period immediately after Jonathan's appointment as high priest, around 152-151 BCE, and he remained there until his death.

The date of the Teacher's death can be estimated approximately from the curious information that 'after the death of the Teacher, about 40 years will pass before the demise of all those violent men who originally deserted him' (CD [B] II,14-15 = 20:14-15). Elsewhere 'the period of the 40 years' is identified as the time remaining until final judgment (4Q171 II,10). Evidently, the Teacher's community recognized a timetable, seemingly based on the Danielic 490 years, which ended in judgment around the year 90 BCE.<sup>55</sup> Forty years before this date would place the death of the Teacher to around 130 BCE.<sup>56</sup>

It is significant, then, that towards the end of his high priesthood, Jonathan's military campaigns against King Demetrius (II Nicator) took him twice to Damascus (1Macc 11,62; 12,31), around 144-143 BCE. One of these visits could have been the occasion for the infamous meeting between high priest Jonathan and the Teacher (1QpHab), which seems to have marked the beginning of the division among the members of the new covenant, as described in the Damascus Code (CD). Again, as stated above, the main cause seems to have been the extreme purity regulations, which must have been especially impractical and burdensome for those members of the new covenant, the original Enochians, who had joined the Teacher's community during its sojourn in the land of Damascus. The death of Jonathan soon after is mentioned with *schadenfreude*, but also with recognizable fidelity to the facts recounted in the first book of Maccabees, describing how he was indeed captured, imprisoned and killed by a foreigner, the Greek general called Trypho (1Macc 12,39-13,30).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> I was alerted to this 'eschatological timetable' and its baneful effects by Atkinson's article "Understanding the Relationship Between the Apocalyptic Worldview and Jewish Sectarian Violence", *The Seleucid and Hasmonian Periods and the Apocalyptic Worldview*, 2016; 45-57.

<sup>56</sup> According to the *Damascus Document* (CD), the history of the Teacher's community is tidily summarized as a final 100 years before the final judgment: 390 years after the start of the Babylonian exile, they wander without a leader for 20 years, then for 40 years the Teacher is with them, before he is 'gathered in' 40 years before the final judgment.

<sup>57</sup> A comparison between this version and that of the Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrates the hostility that had grown between the two figures and their respective followers. Seeing that the Hasmonian legacy was so great and admired, it is not surprising that, if

Following the Teacher's death around 130 BCE, it appears that internal strains and divisions within his community increased until a profound and enduring schism became inevitable.<sup>58</sup> The breakaway group may have started to make moves, at this stage, towards a rapprochement with the Pharisees, who were by now being expelled from Jerusalem and expunged from the high-priest's administration, because of an accusation that he, John Hyrcanus, was conceived in rape while his mother was imprisoned by the Greeks.<sup>59</sup> Despite their popularity, Hyrcanus never reconciled with the Pharisees, leaving us to imagine they would have welcomed the restoration of ties with the more moderate Essenes, who in the 130-120's were about to break away from the hard-line followers of the Teacher, and were looking for a place to settle.<sup>60</sup>

At exactly this time (c.130-120), most probably as a direct result of the ruler's expulsions, we hear that the vice-president of the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee named Nitai (or Matei) the Arbelite, takes up residence at Arbel in Galilee.<sup>61</sup> Undoubtedly many Pharisees accompanied him, prompting him to establish a *Beit Midrash* in that village. We suggest that within a few years the breakaway Essenes arrived from their place of exile near Damascus. Establishing a community in the same town, they started to prepare the nearby caves for the rest of their scribal community. In the meantime, around 100 BCE, Galilee was conquered by Aristobulus I (104-103), the successor of John Hyrcanus, enabling the immigration of the entire Essene scribal community and their settlement of the Arbel cave village. Here, they could have become more contemplative, abandoning the Teacher's plan of Temple restoration (11QT) and seeking God in his heavenly Temple instead, as the ancient Enochians 250 years before.<sup>62</sup> Their magnificent views of Mt. Hermon must have helped them to connect with these spiritual predecessors. Their rapprochement with the local Pharisees would have helped to

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the Teacher was the high priest from 159-152 BCE, his name was scrubbed from the official list of office holders.

<sup>58</sup> Again, see Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 150-156 for a penetrating analysis of this 'Parting of the Ways'.

<sup>59</sup> Josephus, *Ant*, 13.288-296.

<sup>60</sup> Only 25-30 years earlier, before 152 BCE, they had lived and fought together in Judaea. There may have been personal ties and friendships between the two movements.

<sup>61</sup> M. Pirke Avot 1:6-7.

<sup>62</sup> It is possible that their contact with the Enochian Jews of Damascus, and their literature, gave the Arbel Essenes a very satisfactory 'way out' of their failed attempt to bring about a worthy restoration of the Temple institution, based upon the Teacher's *Temple Scroll* (11QT). They flourished as a result.



moderate the extreme purity regulations and isolationist policies of the Teacher of Righteousness, but without changing the internal discipline and ceremonial regulations that served to maintain their Essene identity. In this way, over time, and through lack of contact, it appears their doctrines diverged in important ways from those of the rival Essene community, who settled in Qumran around the same time (c. 100 BCE), after their definitive separation.

At Mt. Arbel, Essene creativity and literary output appears to have flourished, due to the spiritual fecundity of their new conditions, nurtured no doubt by their newly restored relationship with the neighbouring Pharisees, and with whom they may have cooperated to produce the *Targumim*, the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Aramaic. During the first century BCE, the Arbel cave-village became the birthplace of many extrabiblical writings, including the important Essene works that never entered the Qumran library. Towards the end of that century, contemplation of Daniel's Son of Man prophecy in the Enochian tradition produced the Parables of Enoch, the work that did most to prepare the ground for the missions of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. It was certainly no coincidence that Jesus' messianic mission began right here, within sight of the Essene community's cave-village of Mt. Arbel.<sup>63</sup>

Although we have closed the circle and arrived at a factually consistent, though very speculative, reconstruction of the presence of the Essene scribal community at Arbel, we have not yet considered the fate of the group they left behind in the 'land of Damascus', the group that remained faithful to the program and extreme purity regulations of the Teacher.

As a group with a mission and a plan to bring about the radical restoration of the Temple institution (11QT), the Teacher's loyalists in exile would have had a particular focus on the dating of the final judgment to about 90 BCE, according to Daniel's 490-year prophecy. They had to be ready and close to Jerusalem to seize any opportunity to enact their messianic plan. Quoting Isaiah's proclamation "to prepare in the wilderness the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a path for our God" (Isa 40,3; 1QS VIII,15), they built their community at Qumran around 100 BCE and settled there, within one day's journey of

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<sup>63</sup> The influence of the Parables of Enoch is discussed at length in an earlier chapter (ch.5), under the title: 'The Rise and Fall of the Parables of Enoch (*1En* 37-71): John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth and John of Patmos.'

Jerusalem.<sup>64</sup> Their writings show a detached awareness of the bloody civil war stirred up by the Pharisees in Jerusalem, during the reign of Alexander Jannaeus, king and high-priest, which included their conspiracy with Demetrius III, the king of Syria, to attack and depose King Alexander Jannaeus. As planned, the invasion went ahead in 90/89 BCE and the armies of Demetrius, which included a few thousand renegade Jewish troops (according to Josephus), completely defeated the forces of Jannaeus at Shechem (Nablus), but instead of entering Jerusalem to take power, he went back to Syria. Josephus explains this curious denouement by saying that the Jews who were fighting with him felt pity for their defeated King Alexander and changed sides, making it risky for Demetrius to proceed.

However, in his important study on this invasion, Kenneth Atkinson argues that this is an implausible explanation. In the light of numismatic finds and other sources, he suggests that Demetrius got news of the death of Antiochus X Eusebes (89/88 BCE) and returned to fight his brother Philip over possession of the late king's territories.<sup>65</sup> More importantly, Atkinson proposes a connection between this devastating civil war, which is said to have started at the water-pouring ritual on a feast of Tabernacles,<sup>66</sup> and the apocalyptic worldview of the Pharisees, especially their adherence to the Danielic 490 years with its expectation for messianic intervention at precisely that time (90/89 BCE). Clearly the apocalyptic component has been airbrushed out of the story by later historians, including Josephus. Whatever the truth of the matter, the Pharisaic conspiracy with Demetrius to bring about a regime change in Jerusalem, not to mention the chaotic conditions that may have allowed a fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy, were unsuccessful. The messianic age had to be postponed yet again. Instead, the furious judgment of the humiliated King Jannaeus fell upon the hundreds of Pharisees and their families accused of treason, as narrated by Josephus and snidely mentioned in the *Peshar Nahum* of the Qumran community.

Reading the Qumran commentaries, or *Pesharim*, one finds a community that has become entirely self-referential and surrounded by enemies, one that looks into the ancient prophecies and sees only its own

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<sup>64</sup> Perhaps it is no coincidence that they seem to have settled in Qumran more or less at the same time (100 BCE) as the breakaway community settled in the Arbel cave village.

<sup>65</sup> Atkinson, "Understanding the Relationship Between the Apocalyptic Worldview and Jewish Sectarian Violence", 45-57.

<sup>66</sup> Josephus, *JW* 1.88-95; *Ant* 13.372-9; M. Sukkah 4:9.

reflection there, its own stark, dualistic reality.<sup>67</sup> When the Romans took control in 63 BCE, there was still a glimmer hope that God had sent them to judge those Jewish leaders who had opposed their Teacher's plan for Temple restoration. Only later, towards the end of the century, did the Qumranic commentators realize the Romans were not the solution, but the problem. Far from being God's agents of revenge and retribution, they were allies of the devil, Beliar; they were the Sons of Darkness who would be defeated in the final battle by the armies of the Sons of Light, according to the *War Scroll*.

Then, towards the end of the first century BCE, the Qumran community was devastated by marauders, who caused such severe destruction and loss of life that their desert 'camp' had to be temporarily abandoned. According to some scholars, the community never completely recovered from this attack, nor did they ever regain their former literary excellence.<sup>68</sup> In the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, neither Josephus nor Philo mention them in their lengthy descriptions of the Essenes, implying that even if the survivors had returned and repaired the damage, they remained isolated and ignored. Alternatively, it is conceivable, simply because it would have been wise, that, sometime during the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, the humiliated Qumran community swallowed their pride and reconciled themselves with their old rivals, those Essene communities who were flourishing by then, in the Arbel cave village,<sup>69</sup> in Jerusalem<sup>70</sup> and in other smaller communities throughout the land.<sup>71</sup>

Finally, in 68 CE during the first Jewish revolt, the Qumran community were an easy prey for the Roman army; it is not known whether they were killed or just dispersed. It has been suggested that they joined forces with the Zealots. A few fragments of their writings were

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<sup>67</sup> Boccaccini captures the mood well: "At the root of the Qumran community was a double frustration. In the aftermath of the Maccabean revolt, the Qumranites' parent movement failed in its political attempt to replace the Zadokite leadership. Internally the followers of the teacher of righteousness failed to gain the leadership of their movement. The double experience of failure brought about, along with a sense of impotence, an outburst of fanaticism", *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 155-6.

<sup>68</sup> See n. 37.

<sup>69</sup> See reference in n. 1.

<sup>70</sup> See reference in n. 3.

<sup>71</sup> Josephus reports that the Essenes occupied more than one town (*JW* 2.124), and Philo says they lived "in many cities of Judaea and in many villages, and in great and populous communities" (*Hypothetica*, 11.1). According to both Josephus and Philo, they numbered more than 4,000 in total (*Ant* 18,20; *Quod Omnis Probus liber sit*, 75); see also Capper, 'Essene Community Houses and Jesus' Early Community', *Jesus and Archaeology*, 2006; 496-502.

discovered at Masada, making it likely that some of the community managed to escape to the Zealot stronghold there. Perhaps others managed to cross to the other side of the Dead Sea and later move south into Arabia, for the ear that is tuned to their writings will hear more than a few echoes of their doctrines in the Quran, the Sacred Book of Islam.

## Conclusions

It would be premature to attempt to come to any conclusions about the Arbel/Essene hypothesis, presented by this author in a previous study.<sup>72</sup> While a final assessment of that hypothesis awaits the results of further archaeological investigation, we have attempted in this essay to see whether it fits into a historical reconstruction based on available historical information to date. By identifying Mt. Arbel as the geographical location of the Essene community that broke away from the Teacher and his most loyal followers, few would deny that this hypothesis materially endorses and further develops the Enochic/Essene hypothesis of Boccaccini. After the final split c. 100 BCE, contact between the two estranged groups was minimal. Although Essene identity was maintained in both groups by common ritual, customs and regulations, their respective doctrines and literary output inevitably diverged, with the northern, Arbelite branch remaining more moderate and mainstream and the southern, Qumranite branch becoming extreme and sectarian when compared with contemporary norms. A discussion of the character of this relationship has been opened in a previous chapter,<sup>73</sup> and invites future research.

However, the support of our Arbel/Essene hypothesis for the Enochic/Essene hypothesis is only a by-product of the historical reconstruction that emerges from this review. Just as the Enochic/Essene hypothesis expanded upon the Qumran/Essene hypothesis and gave it a broader view of Essene origins and history, we suggest that the Arbel/Essene hypothesis opens the possibility of a further extension of the horizon. It achieves this by identifying a large Essene community at Arbel, within reach of Damascus, thus tipping the scales in favour of a literal interpretation of the 'land of Damascus', as the refuge of the nascent Essene movement in the period before the separation.

So, combining the insights of Geza Vermes with those of Gabriele Boccaccini, we have been able to locate the formative period of the

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<sup>72</sup> See n. 1.

<sup>73</sup> See n. 2.

Essene movement to the environs of Damascus. This has the virtue of explaining the union of the Judaeen exiles with the Enochian Jews, who had been based in Damascus since Persian times, and then sealing it in a 'new covenant'. More significantly, the exile of the Essenes near Damascus fills the chronological gap of about 50 years between the central conflict of the 'Teacher' and 'Wicked Priest' (around 152 BCE) and the return from exile and settlement of both Qumran and the Arbel cave village (around 100 BCE, according to archaeological data). Lasting from c. 150–100 BCE, the Damascus exile was indeed a formative period for the Essenes, when the Judaeans merged with the Enochians, adopted their literature, shared their love of the Mosaic Torah and other biblical works, and developed a healthy openness to direct religious experience. However, the period ended with a schism into two factions, moderate (Arbel) and radical (Qumran), which was complete and permanent to all intents and purposes.

The other main contribution to the expansion of our view of Essene origins comes from Yigael Yadin, whose work compels us to recognize the central role of the *Temple Scroll* in the conflict between the Wicked Priest and the Teacher of Righteousness, its likely author. This leads directly into a subject that has only recently come to the attention of scholars, including Kenneth Atkinson: the role of religion, biblical texts and messianic prophecies (Apocalypses) in the events of this and subsequent periods.

I will conclude simply by saying that the Arbel/Essene hypothesis appears to have significantly enhanced our understanding of Essene origins and history. Readers can judge for themselves whether it meets the standard set by John Bergsma, and mentioned above in the introduction, for a theory that has explanatory power. Whatever the verdict, it places the Arbel cave village, along with Qumran, at the centre of the most creative and prolific religious movement in Israel, and possibly in the world, at that time—the first century BCE. If confirmed by further archaeological findings, this conclusion will have repercussions in many fields, extending well beyond the history of the Essenes and into Second Temple Judaism and the foundations of Christianity, not to mention its contribution to contemporary Galilean history and the origins and social setting of the Pseudepigrapha and Apocalypses. We can venture to assert that lakeside Galilee in those days would have been alive with biblical discussion and religious ferment, and was certainly not the backwater of uneducated peasants it is often pictured to have been.

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## QUMRANICA MOGILANENSIA

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**QM-1:** *Hans BURGMANN, Der "Sitz im Leben" in den Josuafluchtexten, in 4Q379 22 II und 4QTestimonia*, Kraków 1990, pp. 61. Paper. Euro 5.00

“Burgmann’s booklet contains a ten-part discussion of the Joshua-curses in two fragmentary texts of Qumran Cave 4, i.e. the ending of 4QTestimonia [...], and later as 4Q175 [...] and the text 4Q379 [...]. Burgmann identifies Simon Maccabee as the “Men of the Lie.” (J. A. Fitzmyer in OTA 16,1993, p. 190, item 696).

**QM-2:** MOGILANY 1989. *Papers on the Dead Sea Scrolls in Memory of Jean Carmignac. Part I: General Research on the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Present State of Qumranology. Qumran and the New Testament*, Kraków 1993, pp. 296. Paper. Euro 21.00

The Second International Colloquium on the Dead Sea Scrolls in Mogilany, near Cracow, was held on September 10-14, 1989; it was devoted to the memory of the Rev. Jean Carmignac, the creator of the “Revue de Qumran.” In the colloquium participated twenty-six scholars from eleven countries in four continents. They decided to speak openly as a united group and prepared an independent “Mogilany Resolution” concerning the current crisis in their branch of studies.

Contents: Z. J. Kapera, The Second International Colloquium on the Dead Sea Scrolls in Mogilany near Cracow 1989. General Remarks (pp. 7-14); The Mogilany Resolution 1989 (pp. 15-16). \* “General Research on the Dead Sea Scrolls”: 1. Ph. R. Callaway, the 364-Day Calendar at Qumran (pp. 19-29); 2. J. Chmiel, Sons of the Scrolls. Some Reflections on the Dead Sea Scrolls from the Aspect of Communication Theory (pp. 31-35); 3. Ph. R. Davies, Re-asking Some Hard Questions About Qumran (pp. 37-49); 4. Ph. R. Davies, Qumran and Apocalyptic (pp. 51-52); 5. N. Golb, Hypothesis of Jerusalem Origin of DSS - Synopsis (pp. 53-57); 6. L. H. Schiffman, The New Halakhic Letter (4QMMT) and the Origins of the Dead Sea Sect (pp. 59-70); 7. J. C. Trever, The Cave 1 Manuscripts and Archaeology Converge to Reveal the Qumran Story (pp. 71-78). \* “Qumran and the New Testament”: 8. O. Betz, Qumran and the New Testament. Forty Years of Research (pp. 79-104); 9. G. J. Brooke, Levi and the Levites in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament (pp. 105-129); 10. H. Burgmann, John the Baptist was an Essene! (pp. 131-137); 12. H.

Lichtenberger, Johannes der Täufer und die Texte von Qumran (pp. 139-152); 13. F. Sieg, Das Königtum Gottes in Qumran und in der Offenbarung des hl. Johannes Malkut Adonai - Basilea tou Theou (pp. 153-157). \* „The Present State of Qumranology“: 14. F. Sen, Qumran in the Spanish Research (pp. 159-174); 15. F. E. Young, The Kansas Qumran Project (pp. 175-179); 16. Z. J. Kapera, The Present State of Qumranology (pp. 181-213) plus (appendix I:) On the Most Recent Developments in Qumranology (pp. 214-224) and (appendix II:) The Impact of the Mogilany Resolution 1989 (pp. 225-228).

Appendixes: Z. J. Kapera, Life and Work of Rev. Jean Carmignac (1914-1986), (pp. 229-244); P. Lathuiliere, L'abbé Jean Carmignac et la datation des Evangiles (pp. 245-262).

**QM-3:** *MOGILANY 1989*. Part II: *The Teacher of Righteousness. Literary Studies*, Kraków 1991, pp. 244. Paper. Euro 13.50

Contents: \* “The Teacher of Righteousness“. 1. L. N. Gluskina, The Teacher of Righteousness in Joseph Amussin's Studies (pp. 7-21); 2. R. Moscow, The Dialectics of Biblical Enigma, Parable and Typology: From Genesis to the Revelation of John, from Qumran: Revelation and the Teacher of Righteousness (pp. 23-46); 3. I. Schiffmann, The Teacher of Righteousness in the Soviet Qumran Studies (pp. 47-52); 4. F. M. Schweitzer, The Teacher of Righteousness (pp. 53-97); 5. B. Thiering, Can the Hasmonean Dating of the Teacher of Righteousness Be Sustained? (pp. 99-117); 6. W. Tyloch, Le Maître de Justice dans les Documents de Qumrân (pp. 119-120) ; 7. M. O. Wise, The Temple Scroll and the Teacher of Righteousness (pp. 121-147). \* “Literary Studies“: 1. A.-M. Denis, La Place de la Loi de Moïse a Qumran et dans le Judaïsme du Deuxieme Temple (pp. 149-175) ; 2. R. Eisenman, Playing on and Transmuting Words - Interpreting “Abeit-Galuto” in the Habakkuk Peshet (pp. 177-196); 3. S. Mędala, Le Quatrieme Livre d'Esdras et les Textes Qoumrâniens (pp. 197-205); 4. I. Fröhlich, Jewish Literary Tradition and the Qumran Tradition (p. 207); 5. B. Nitzan, The Peshet and Other Methods of Instruction (pp. 209-220); 6. J. Riaud, Les Thérapeutes d'Alexandrie et l'Idéal Lévitique (pp. 221-240); 7. M. Wilcox, “Silence in Heaven” (Rev. 8:1) and Early Jewish Thought (pp. 241-244).

**QM-4** (unpublished)

**QM-5:** Hans BURGMANN, *Die Geschichte der Essener von Qumran und Damaskus*, Kraków 1990, pp. 180, 4 tables, 1 map. Paper. Euro: 12.00

“Burgmann, a historian of religion who writes in a journalistic manner, identifies the Jews of Qumran as an Essene monastic community (“essenische Mönchsgemeinde”). [...] He treats in twenty-nine chatty essays the usual topics of Qumran research: the calendar, the relation of the sect to the Maccabees, the identification of the Wicked Priest, the Man of the Lie, the formation of the community by the Teacher of righteousness, the settlement of Qumran, the

relation of the sect to the Zealots, etc.” (J. A. Fitzmyer in OTA 16,1993, p. 190-191, item 697).

**QM-6:** *INTERTESTAMENTAL ESSAYS in Honour of Józef Tadeusz Milik, ed. by Z. J. Kapera*, Kraków 1992, pp. 347, 7 plates. Paper. Euro 30.00

Studies offered to J. T. Milik to celebrate forty years of his scholarly work on texts from the Wilderness of Judaea. Contents: \* “Intertestamental Studies”. 1. J. Cook, The Dichotomy of 1QIs a (pp. 7-24); 2. M. Delcor, A propos de l’emplacement de la porte des Esséniens selon Joseph et de ses implications historiques, essénienne et chrétienne. Examen d’une théorie (pp. 25-44); 3. J. D. M. Derret, Discipline and Betrayal in Qumran (pp. 45-52); 3. B. W. W. Dombrowski, Synagogé in Acs 6: 9 (pp. 53-65); 4. D. F. Graf, The “God” of Humayma (pp. 67-76); 5. P. Grelot, De l’Apocryphe de la Genese aux Targoums: sur Genese 14,18-20 (pp. 77-90); 6. A. Laato, The Eschatological Act of Kipper in the Damascus Document (pp. 91-107); 7. E.-M. Laperrousaz, La chronologie de la Période I de l’occupation essénienne de Qumrân et la datation des Manuscrits de la mer Morte (pp. 109-129); 8. P. Muchowski, Dysorthographic Forms hapon and ‘akon in 3Q15 (p. 131-133); 9. S. Olafsson, Late Biblical Hebrew. Fact or Fiction? (pp. 135-147); 10. A. Oppenheimer, Benevolent Societies in Jerusalem at the End of the Second Temple Period (pp. 149-165); 11. B. Pixner, The Jerusalem Essenes, Barnabas and the Letter to the Hebrews (pp. 167-178); 12. R. Riesner, Das jerusalemmer Essenerviertel. Antwort auf einige Einwände (pp. 179-186); 13. S. Segert, Parallelistic Structures in the Aramaic Enoch Fragments (pp. 187-203); 14. E. Tov, 4Q Josh b (pp. 205-212); 15. J. C. VanderKam, The Birth of Noah (pp. 213-231); 16. J. P. M. van der Ploeg, Fragments de Psaumes de Qumrân (pp. 233-237); 17. Al Walters, Literary Analysis and the Copper Scroll (pp. 239-252). \* “Semitica Varia”: 18. S. P. Brock, Some Notes on the Dating Formulae in Middle Aramaic Inscriptions and in Early Syriac Manuscripts (pp. 252-264); 19. M. T. Davis, L. T. Stuckenbruck, Notes on Translation Phenomena in the Palmyrene Bilinguals (pp. 265-283); 20. J. Elayi, Nouveaux poids nord-ouest sémitiques (pp. 295-288); 21. A. Lemaire, La stele araméenne d’Assouan (RES 438,1806) : novel examen (pp. 289-303); 22. E. Lipiński, Maqluta’, qinita’ et plug qduš a Palmyre (pp. 305-311); 23. S. Mędala, The Original Language of 4 Esdras (pp. 313-326); 24. J. Neusner, Language as Taxonomy. The Rules for using Hebrew and Aramaic in the Babylonian Talmud (pp. 327-342); 25. S. Szyszman, Le karaïsme parmi les berberes du Maghreb (pp. 343-347).

**QM-7, QM-8** (unpublished)

**QM-9:** Hans BURGMANN, *Weitere lösebare Qumranprobleme*, Kraków 1992, pp. 178. Paper. Euro 13.50

“This collection is a follow up to [Burgman’s] *Zwei Lösbare Qumranprobleme* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1986). It comprises 11 short papers from the years 1986-1992, all in German (most with English summaries), of which six have

been previously published while the remainder appear here for the first time. The papers themselves are preceded by a "Foreword" contributed by O[tto] Betz, and followed by a tribute to B. penned by Z. J. Kapera and a supplementary bibliography of the deceased likewise compiled by Kapera." (J. A. Fitzmyer in OTA 16,1993, p. 642-643, item 2304).

Contents of "More Soluble Qumran Problems": 1. Wanted ! (pp. 1-26); 2. Migration from the North did Take Place (pp. 27-51); 3. The Death of the Teacher of Righteousness (pp. 53-59); 4. Save the Peshet! (pp. 61-81); 5. A Historically Justifiable Dating of 4QMMT (pp. 83-105); 6. Jonathan, the Neglected Maccabee (pp. 107-122); 7. "Sitz im Leben" of the Joshua Curses in 4Q 379 22II and in 4Q Testimonia (pp. 123-125); 8. John the Baptist was an Essene! (pp. 127-136); 9. Dispute About the Origins of the Sect (pp. 137-156); 10. Who was the "Wicked Priest"? (pp. 157-161); 11. Thoughts on 11Q Temple (pp. 163-166).

#### **QM-10** (unpublished)

**QM-11:** Bruno W. W. DOMBROWSKI, *Ideological and Socio-structural Developments of the Qumran Association as Suggested by Internal Evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Part I: Major Texts mainly of Qumran Cave 1, CD and 4QMMT*, Kraków 1994, pp. 184. Paper. Euro 13.50

Dombrowski investigates the interrelations of major texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls with the intent to find out what bearing they have on the historiography of the Qumran Association. He closely follows the assertions of the 1QH, 1QS a, CD, 1QM and MMT with respect to their relationship to the Manual of Discipline and to each other in view of their character as documents of self evidence left by the Qumran Association in the course of its history. He shows how the history of these writings coincides with ideological and social developments of this Jewish group.

**QM-12:** Bruno W. W. DOMBROWSKI, *Ideological and Socio-structural Developments of the Qumran Association. Part II: Assorting the Bulk of the Remainder of Scrolls and Fragments found in the Area of Caves I-XI*, Kraków 2002, pp. 108. Paper. Euro 10.00

"This volume continues Dombrowski's earlier efforts to distinguish between those Qumran texts which were used by the "Association" (yahad) and those which were merely found in their possession. In fact, he delineates five groups of texts: 1) texts of the Association; 2) text which have been reworked by the Association; 3) outside texts barely used by the community; 4) texts with no relevance to the association; and 5) uncertain texts." (J. E. West in OTA 26,2003, p. 179, item 732).

**QM-13:** *MOGILANY 1993. Papers on the Dead Sea Scrolls in Memory of Hans Burgmann*, ed. by Z. J. Kapera, Kraków 1998, pp. 256. Paper. Euro 21.00

The Fourth International Colloquium on the Dead Sea Scrolls held in Kraków-Swoszowice in 1993 continued the series of the Mogilany colloquia which started in 1987. The 1993 conference was held in memory of the German religion scholar and writer on Qumran Dr. Hans Burgmann of Offenburg (1914-1992), participant of all the three previous meetings.

Contents: Z. J. Kapera, The Fourth International Colloquium on the Dead Sea Scrolls Kraków-Swoszowice 1993. General Remarks (pp. 7-11). \* "Early History of the Qumran Community": 1. Ph. R. Callaway, 4QMMT and Recent Hypotheses on the Origin of the Qumran Community (pp. 15-29); 2. B. W. W. Dombrowski, Preliminary remarks on Ideological and Socio-Structural Developments of the Qumran Association as suggested by Internal Evidence of Dead Sea Scrolls (pp. 31-43); 3. E.-M. Laperrousaz, La protohistoire de la communauté essénienne du Maître de Justice. Essai de synthese (pp. 45-59). \* "Qumran and the New Testament": 4. O. Betz, The Messianic Idea in the 4Q Fragments. Its Relevance for the Christology of the New Testament (pp. 61-75); 5. G. W. Buchanan, 4Q246 and the Political Titles of Jesus (pp. 77-87); 6. D. M. Paton, An Evaluation of the Hypothesis of Barbara Thiering concerning Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls (pp. 89-107); 7. R. A. Rosenberg, Sedeq as Divine Hypostasis in Qumran Texts and Its Link to the Emergence of Christianity (pp. 109-127); 8. L. T. Stuckenbruck, "Messias" Texte in den Schriften von Qumran (p. 129-139). \* "The Present State of Qumranology": 9. Z. J. Kapera, Forty-Eight Years of Qumran Studies (pp. 141-167); 10. S. Valtschanov, Qumran in der bulgarischen Forschung (pp. 169-173). \* "Qumranica Varia": 11. J. Lübke, The Exclusion of GER from the Future Temple (pp. 175-182); 12. P. Muchowski, Two Proposals of Reading in the Eight Column of 3Q15 (pp. 183-185).

Appendixes: \* "Contributions on Hans Burgmann": 13. Ph. R. Callaway, The Writings and Views of Hans Burgmann on the Dead Sea Scrolls (pp. 187-198); 14. H. Lichtenberger, Ansprache bei der Trauerfeier von Dr. Hans Burgmann am 17. 7. 1992 in Offenburg (Baden) (pp. 199-201); 15. A. S. van der Woude, In Memoriam Hans Burgmann (1914-1992) (pp. 203-207); 16. Z. J. Kapera, Hans Burgmann Bibliography on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Addenda (pp. 209-212).

#### **QM-14** (unpublished)

**QM-15:** *MOGILANY 1995. Papers on the Dead Sea Scrolls in Memory of Aleksy Klawek*, Kraków 1998, pp. 256. Bound. Euro 30.00

The Fifth International Colloquium on the Dead Sea Scrolls held in Kraków-Zakrzówek in 1995 was held in memory of the Rev. Professor Aleksy Klawek (1890-1969), a great Polish scholar and an eminent specialist in the Old and New Testament. The main purpose of the conference was to discuss on a professional level new archaeological interpretations of the Khirbet Qumran site. The volume also includes the publication of original archaeological artifacts (ceramic lamps) from the Qumran soil.

Contents: Z. J. Kapera, The Fifth International Colloquium on the Dead Sea Scrolls Kraków-Zakrzówek 1995. General Remarks (pp. 7-12). \* "Archaeology of Khirbet Qumran": 1. Z. J. Kapera, Archaeological Interpretations of the Qumran Settlement. A Rapid Review of Hypotheses Fifty Years After the Discoveries at the Dead Sea Scrolls (pp. 15-33); 2. B. W. W. Dombrowski, Golb's Hypothesis: Analysis and Conclusions (pp. 35-54); 3. J. Magness, The Chronology of Qumran, Ein Feshkha, and Ein el-Ghuweir (pp. 55-76); 4. Z. J. Kapera, Recent Research on the Qumran Cemetery (pp. 77-86); 5. R. Donceel, Poursuite des travaux de publication du matériel archéologique de Khirbet Qumrân. Les lampes en terre-cuite (pp. 87-104); 6. J. Ciecieląg, Coins from the so-called Essene Settlements on the Dead Sea Shores (pp. 105-115). \* "Qumranica Varia": 7. J. Chmiel, Quelle herméneutique est utile pour interpreter les textes du désert de Juda ? (pp. 117-121); 8. S. Cinal, Les Anges-Pretres dans les Širôt 'Olat haš-Šabbat de Qumrân (4Q400-407) et les 'Utria dans le Diwan Nahrawata des Mandéens (pp. 123-138); 9. M. Conley, Understanding the Intent of 1Q Serek (pp. 137-149); 10. K.-W. Niebuhr, 4Q 521,2 II - Ein eschatologischer Psalm (pp. 151-168); 11. S. Segert, Hebrew Essenes - Aramaic Christians (pp. 169-184); 12. F. Sen, Qumran and Nag Hammadi (pp. 185-210); 13. F. Sen, Selected Bibliography on Qumran, Gnosis, Judaism and New Testament (pp. 211-228).

Appendixes: 1. Z. J. Kapera, The Rev. Aleksy Klawek (1890-1969). The University Scholar (pp. 229-246); 2. Z. J. Kapera, List of the Rev. Professor Aleksy Klawek's Publications in the Congress Languages (pp. 247-248).

**QM-16:** Bruno W. W. DOMBROWSKI, *Wider die Hellenisierung jüdischer Religion: Hellenisierung jüdischen Erbes und Lebens. Die Qumran-Assoziation nach dem 'Manual of Discipline' (QS)*, Kraków 1998; Part I: pp. IV+235 plus Part II: pp. IV+395. Bound. Euro 90.00

"This two-volume work, which represents a thorough reworking of the author's 1963 Basel doctoral dissertation, investigates the nature of the Qumran Association in the light of various manuscripts of Manual of Discipline. It gives particular attention to the theme of resistance to the hellenization of Jewish religion through the hellenization of other elements of the Jewish heritage. The first volume presents an introduction to and outline of 1QS, an annotated Hebrew text, and an annotated German translation, as well as the texts (with notes) of fragments and related manuscripts from Qumran Cave 4 and 5. The second volume deals with the social heritage (the use of the biblical-Hebrew concepts of *qhl*, *m*, and *'edh* in 1QS), the sociological self-presentation of the Qumran Association according to 1QS (ethical, gnostic, cultic, legal, social, communal, charismatic, and public-political dimensions), and the Qumran Association's sociological position and Hellenistic character" (NTA 43, 1999, p. 419).

**QM-17:** Zdzisław J. KAPERNA & Robert FEATHER, *Doyen of the Dead Sea Scrolls. An in Depth Biography of Józef Tadeusz Milik (1922-2006)*, Kraków-Mogilany 2011, pp. XV+ 240, 16 plates. Bound. Euro 60.00

This is the first book on the life and work of J. T. Milik, a great Biblical and Semitic scholar, one of the pillars of Qumran studies, once called “the fastest man with a fragment”, the main decipherer and publisher of scrolls from the Judaean Desert in the 1950s and 1960s, one of creators of the Essene hypothesis, and also a foremost Nabataean epigrapher.

Z. J. Kaperna presents a preliminary, but fully documented, account of Milik’s family background and his scholarly career, focusing on his labours as a qumranologist, a Biblical archaeologist, and epigrapher of ancient Nabataea. He explains Milik’s true role in the Third Battle of the Scrolls in the 1990s. R. Feather publishes the transcriptions and comments on the contents of the tapes of his interviews with Milik in the scholar’s last years. Many photographs from the private collections of the authors and from the archives of Milik’s family are presented for the first time.

**QM-18:** Felipe SEN, *Bibliography of Publications on Qumran in the Spanish Language (1949-2011)*. With a survey essay by Florentino Garcia Martinez, Kraków-Mogilany 2012, pp. 262. Bound. Euro 50.00

Spanish language publications on the texts from the Judaean Desert are, as is visible in the present volume, plentiful and well worth attention. The volume will benefit both those who study specific Qumran manuscripts and those looking for either general or more particular information on the discoveries. The Spanish readers receive here not only a list of publications in their native language arranged by authors’ names but also a detailed Spanish index. Scholars from other countries will find all the Spanish titles translated into English, with a detailed English index. Thanks to the very kind collaboration of Prof. Florentino Garcia Martinez, we have been able to include his thorough survey in Spanish of the output of Spanish qumranology.

**QM-19:** Phillip Ray CALLAWAY, *Extending the Torah: The Temple Scroll in Modern Research*, Kraków-Mogilany 2022, pp. XX + 296. Paperback. Euro 60.00

The publication of the Temple Scroll literally transformed the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In only 66 or 67 columns unknown ancient Jewish exegetes extracted, distilled, and explained Pentateuchal laws dealing with the temple, the calendar, purity, monarchy, war, false prophecy, treason, prohibited sexual unions, and other topics. Close analysis of the Temple Scroll reveals the lively legal thinking of those ancient exegetes whose goal was to present a useful compendium of divine law for reflection and practice. Not only is the Temple Scroll a central halakhic document of the pre-Christian period, its unrolled columns reveal an impressive document that helps us to connect the Torah and the Mishnah. Within the Temple Scroll there are some redactional elements



related to the language of the legal part of the Damascus Document, Some of the Works of the Law, and miscellaneous laws known since the discovery of the so-called library of the Qumran community. Roughly half a century of research on the Temple Scroll has enlivened both the ancient Jewish thought-exegesis and modern Jewish and Christian scholarship.

**QM-20:** John BEN-DANIEL, *The Essenes of Mount Arbel and Jerusalem. Origins, History, and Influence*, Kraków-Mogilany 2023, pp. VIII, 240. Paperback.