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THE REMNANT MOTIF IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

A Paper
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Course
OTST658 Seminar in Ancient Near Eastern Languages:
Dead Sea Scrolls

by
Franklin A. Martí
December 09, 2009

ABBREVIATIONS

1Q20	<i>Genesis Apocryphon</i>
1Q27	<i>Book of the Mysteries</i>
1QM	<i>War Scroll</i>
1QH ^a	<i>Thanksgiving Hymns</i>
1QpHab	<i>1QHabakkuk Pesher</i>
1QS	<i>Rule of the Community</i>
1QSa	<i>The Messianic Rule</i>
1QSb	<i>1Q28b or Rule of the Blessings</i>
4Q88	<i>4QPS^f or Apocryphal Psalm</i>
4Q171	<i>4QPPS^a or 4QPsalms Pesher^a</i>
4Q173	<i>4QPP^b or 4QPsalms Pesher^b</i>
4Q174	<i>4QFlorilegium</i>
4Q183	<i>4QHistorical Work</i>
4Q204	<i>Book of Enoch</i>
4Q226	<i>4QPseudeo-Jubilees^b</i>
4Q266	<i>A fragment of the Damascus Document (4QD^a or 4Q267)</i>
4Q279	<i>4QTohorot D^a</i>
4Q280	<i>Blessings and Curses</i>
4Q364	<i>Reworked Pentateuch</i>
4Q370	<i>4QExhortation based on the Flood</i>
4Q374	<i>Sermon on the Exodus and the Conquest of Canaan</i>
4Q381	<i>4QNoncanonical Psalms A</i>
4Q386	<i>Pseudo-Ezekiel^b</i>
4Q416	<i>4QSapientiaial Work A^b</i>
4Q427	<i>4QHymns^a</i>
4Q475	<i>Renewed Earth</i>
4Q491	<i>4QWar Scroll^a</i>
11Q13	<i>11QMelchizedek</i>
CD	<i>The Damascus Document</i>

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THE REMNANT MOTIF IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

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INTRODUCTION

According to Gerhard Hasel, Johannes Meinhold was the first scholar, in modern Biblical scholarship, who studied the remnant motif in the Hebrew Bible.¹ On the one hand, Meinhold worked “with his own definition of the remnant motif,” but with a very limited and narrowly defined sense.² He never finished his investigation and did not go “beyond the prophetic tradition of Elijah, Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah.”³ On the other hand, Hasel researched also the remnant motif in a broader sense, but limited to the corpus from Genesis to Isaiah.⁴ Thus, he did not touch that topic in the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS).⁵

¹ Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1980), 1.

² *Ibid.*, 1, 2.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 46. Hasel employs “both the negative and positive aspects of the remnant idea as well as for its non-eschatological or eschatological use.” He does it in order to avoid the “one-sided and misleading emphases that are inherent in designations such as ‘doctrine of the Remnant,’ ‘concept of holy remnant,’ ‘idea of pious remnant,’ etc.” (p. 47). He prefers to base his investigation on “the Hebrew and Semitic notion of the remnant,” rather than on any presuppositions.

⁵ In the first chapter of his book, Hasel surveys “almost seven decades of research on the origin, history, and meaning of the Hebrew remnant motif.” And in the second chapter he investigates “the remnant motif in the Ancient Near Eastern literature.” From that starting point he studies the motif from Genesis to Isaiah.

The remnant motif has been researched in an extensive way in the Hebrew Bible, but it is not so in the DSS. And it looks like that only one dissertation has been written so far based on this literature.¹ Yet the topic has been used as part of other dissertations addressing the same concept.² Also, when scholars touch this concept they do it in a brief way, taking for granted that the community at Qumran believed to be the end-time remnant of the world.³

Others, such as Joel Willits, take certain passages or fragments where the term “remnant” does not appear but it is placed on the text under a reconstruction, based on parallels passages; and then they elaborate their arguments, based on that reconstruction.⁴ Despite the fact that this practice is normally used by scholars, in this research the idea of the remnant is going to be studied on passages where that word actually appears in the original text.

¹ This dissertation was written by Robert William Huebsch, “The Understanding and Significance of the “remnant” in Qumran Literature: Including a Discussion of the use of this concept in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocrypha and the Pseudoepigrapha” (Ph.D. diss., McMaster University, 1981). The Abstract is Online: <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=752821901&sid=2&Fmt=2&clientId=1898&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. Here he concludes that the men at Qumran “understood themselves not as the eschatological remnant, but rather as its proleptic representatives.” In other words, he divides the group in two (or better to say one group in two different times?): “the historical sect” and “the eschatological sect.” Therefore to be a member of the historical sect does not guarantee to be part of the remnant. The person had to remain steadfast to “become a member of the eschatological sect... until the end of time.” This interpretation could lead to a problematic conclusion, because it determines that there was a time when the men at Qumran believed that they were not living in the final days of the history of the world. But this conclusion seems unlikely according to the evidence that the community’s literature shows.

² See Leslie N. Pollard, “The Function of Loipos in Contexts of Judgment and Salvation in the Book of Revelation” (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 2007), 119-128.

³ The identification of the DSS community is still debated, so I prefer to avoid the names “sect” and “Essenes,” and instead to call it “the men of the community” or “the community” as they identify themselves in their writings.

⁴ Joel Willits, “The Remnant of Israel in 4QpIsaiah^a (4Q161) and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *JJS* 57 (2006): 10-25.

Knowing the fact that this theme in the DSS has been neglected, this is an opportunity to get a first hand information from the Qumran scrolls themselves, limiting and basing the research on those books and fragments where the term is used. As soon as presuppositions or implications are left behind, the scrolls can speak for themselves.

In this research I will try to answer the following questions: Do the men at Qumran consider themselves the remnant of their time? Which are the implications that could be drawn from the perspective of considering themselves the remnant of God? What biblical support did they use? What were their religious lifestyle and characteristics as the remnant? How was their relationship with others and, at the same time, how did they consider others in relationship to God?

Literary Context

The Hebrew Bible uses at least six different words for “remnant:” 1) The verb יָתַר and its derivative noun יָתֵר. In Biblical Hebrew the primary meaning of the verb is “be left over” or “leave over.”¹ On the other hand the masculine noun יָתֵר means “left over,” the “rest.”² “Implying that what is left is less in number or quantity.”³ 2) The verb מָלַט means basically “to escape,”⁴ but it is employed with the idea of “remnant” in a particular

¹ T. Kronholm, “יתר,” *TDOT* 6:485, 486. See Gen 32:25; Exod 10:15; 12:10; 29:34; Lev 8:32; 1 Sam 15:15. This verb can be used with a passive or reflexive meaning, conveying something that is “superfluous” (Exod 10:15); “ordinary” (Gen 32:24; Jugs 9:5). In the Books of Isaiah and Ezekiel this verb is introduced with the notion of “remnant” (Isa 1:8ff.; 4:3; Ezek 14:22). Amos establishes that those who are left shall die (6:9); thus giving a different notion of a remnant.

² Ibid., 486.

³ Ibid. See Exod 10:5; 23:11; Jer 27:19; Joel 1:4. There are other nuances in which the word means “remainder” without giving the idea of an eschatological “remnant” (1 Kgs 11:41; 15:23; 2 Chr 28:26); “the others” (2 Sam 10:10; Neh 6:1; Jer 29:1; Ezek 48:23). It is present also in a few adverbial expressions with the notion of abundance (Ps 31:24; Isa 56:12; Dan 8:9).

⁴ Hasel, “פלט,” *TDOT* 11: 555. See 1 Kgs 18:40; 19:17; Jer 39:18; Ezek 17:15, 18; 33:5.

way in Isaiah.¹ 3) The verb פלט and its derivative nouns are also used in the context of the remnant motif.² The verb means also “to escape.”³ That is the reason why some scholars prefer to study פלט along with the verb מלט.⁴ 4) The feminine noun אַחֲרֵית; is used most of the time meaning “after-part”, “end.” But there are at least four times where this noun has the meaning of “remnant” or “residue.”⁵ 5) The noun פְּרִיד means, semantically speaking, “remnant, survivors.”⁶ B. Kedar-Kopfstein argues that even when the original meaning was “escape,” that meaning “underwent a semantic shift” with the consequence of been “lost entirely.”⁷ The problem with this interpretation is that he does not show any evidence of it in his theological study. And 6) The two substantival derivatives פְּרִיד and אַחֲרֵית from the root שאר which mean “remnant” or “left over” occur in the OT “in a broad collection of contexts without any clearly discernible semantic distinction” of meaning.⁸ In this case the verb and the substantives are rather theologically neutral because the terms refer “to that which remains in any given counting.”⁹ However, R. E.

¹ Isa 20:6; 31:5; 34:15; 37:38; 46:2, 4; 49:24, 25; 66:7.

² Gen 14:13; 32:9; 45:7; Isa 4:2; 5:29; 10:20; 15:9; 37:31, 32; Jer 50:20; 51:50; Dan 11:42; etc.

³ Hasel, *TDOT* 11:555.

⁴ See *Ibid.*, 551-567; E. Ruprecht, “פלט,” *TLOT* 2: 986-990. Ruprecht says that these two verbs, in *piel* and *hiphil*, are “so similar... in meaning and construction that a single treatment of the two verbs is justified” (p. 986).

⁵ Amos 4:2; 9:1; Ezek 23:25 (two times).

⁶ B. Kedar-Kopfstein, “פְּרִיד,” *TDOT* 14: 215. See Num 21:35; Deut 2: 34; 3:3; Josh 8:22; Job 18:19; 20:26; Isa 1:9; Jer 47:4.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ R. E. Clements, “שאר,” *TDOT* 14:273.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 274. See Gen 47:18; Exod 10:5; Lev 5:9; Deut 28:51, 55; 8:27; 2 Sam 14:7; Isa 49:21; Jer 10:19.

Clements argues that “in many passages... both the verb and the substantival derivatives refer to those who physically survive or to the remnant of a group of people.”¹

Theological Context

Scholars usually divide the remnant motif in one of two ways: negative or positive. For them a negative remnant is the one left over to be destroyed, while the positive remnant is the “‘holy remnant’ consisting of converted Israelites.”² For those scholars it is difficult to appreciate the broader sense of the term because of their presuppositions. They “accept some passages and reject others on a priori grounds or on a supposed consensus of scholarly opinion.”³ Nevertheless Hasel uses the concept “in an unrestricted and not in a narrow sense.”⁴ So, he employs the concept in “both the negative and positive aspects.”⁵

Clements argues that the theological sense of the terms for “remnant” arises when they “refer to those who remain or are left over from Israel and Judah;”⁶ based on the notion that only a “believing minority” accomplishes the “necessary condition” of obedience; therefore, they are “chosen by God” to be rescued from a calamity.⁷ He

¹ Ibid., 273.

² Hebert Dittmann, *TSK* 87 (1914), 610 in Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah*, 9.

³ Hasel, 46.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Clements, *TDOT* 14:274.

⁷ Ibid.

proposes that the positive notion of a remnant is a later understanding of something that before was seen as negative or theologically neutral.¹

He recalls, for example, the story when the king Saul asks the people of Israel to “go down after the Philistines by night, and plunder them until the morning light;” and then he says, “let us not leave (שָׁאַר) a man of them” (1 Sam 14:36). He also mentions the story when the Israelites destroyed the Moabites cities, “and each man threw a stone on every good piece of land and filled it; and they stopped up all the springs of water and cut down all the good trees. But they left (שָׁאַר) the stones of Kir Haraseth intact” (2 Kgs 3:25).² Then he says that after “the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Babylonians in the 6th century the terms underscored the theological significance of the concept of a surviving remnant.”³

The Remnant Motif in the Dead Sea Scrolls

The DSS uses almost the same words as the Hebrew Bible to talk about the remnant:⁴ The verb יָתַר and its derivative noun יָתֵר are used in the context of the time which is remaining for certain event (1QM II:6, 10, 14), or the end of an era (1QpHab VII:7). It is used also to point out those who are left over from a group of people who

¹ Ibid., 277.

² See also Jer 50:26; Amos 9:12.

³ Clements, *TDOT* 14:277, 278.

⁴ Even though, in the Hebrew Bible, the noun אֲתֵרִית is used several times with the meaning of “remnant”, in the DSS the employment of this word does not have the implication of a remnant concept. It is used forty-four times and most of them mean “end” or “latter”; i.e.: “end of days” (CD IV:4; VI:11; 4Q174), or “end of the age” (4Q173 1:5). Only one time is used as “posterity” or “succession” (4Q416 = 4QSap.Work A^b 2iii7), but without the connotation of a remnant concept.

have been destroyed for their disobedience (CD II:11; III:13). Additionally, it is applied to the Romans (1QpHab VIII:15; 9:4, 7).

The verb מלט is used in different ways: it refers both to those who have escaped from a calamity because they keep the ordinances of God (CD XIX:9, 10; 1QH^a XI:9); and those who, even when they are not part of the remnant, they escape from a calamity to be exiled to another country (CD VII:14, 21). It is used also with a negative implication, establishing that those without understanding are not going to escape the destruction (1Q27, 1i4).¹

The DSS employs the verb פלט which mean “to escape,” “to deliver;” and its connate nouns with the meaning of “escaped one”, “survivor” or “fugitive.”² It is used sometime along with the word שְׂאֲרִית to refer to either group: those who are destroyed, without a remnant been left (CD II:7; 1QM I:6; 1QS IV:14; 4Q280 II:5); and those who are left because of their fidelity (CD II:11). So the connotation could be positive or negative.³

¹ Talking about the flood, this verb is used to illustrate the destruction that follows, when “everything [perished] on the dry land... And the g[iants] did not escape” (4Q370 I:5, 6). Also the community establishes that those who live in iniquity are not going to escape (11Q XXII:9). This word is used also in Aramaic with the same meaning in 1Q20 XI:14, 17; XIX:20; XXII:22.

² Florentino García Martínez sometimes translates it as “salvation”, in 1QH^a 27:29, 33. See Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated, The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 349, 350. Geza Vermes on his part, in the same passage, and also in 1QH^a 2i6, renders as “deliverance” or “to deliver.” See Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, rev. ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 289, 303.

³ The positive connotation is illustrated with a first-time pregnant woman, who, from the “crucible” of pregnancy, brings forth “a male,” who is reaching “the shores of death.” This male comes “freed from the womb” of the woman who is with pains and spasms (1QH^a XI:10). Also it is like a man, persecuted the whole day by a powerful wicked; but God intervenes changing “the storm to a calm,” giving freedom to his soul (1QH^a XIII:17, 18). This word is applied to those who escape or are saved from the flood (4Q204 1v5; 5ii21, 24). The negative connotation is illustrated when “the hypocrites”, who belongs to Belial, are approached by “the ropes of death... with no escape” (1QH^a XI:28); and when “the nations rise up in anger... in their actions and in the uncleanness of their deeds” (4Q374 frag 2, 2:1-4).

The noun שָׁרִיד is used only twice in the DSS. In one of these has a negative meaning, talking about the star of Jacob and the scepter of Israel which “will exterminate the remnant of the city, the enemy...” of Israel (1QM XI:7); and a fragmented passage, with an obscure meaning in 4Q364 24a-c, 10. Finally the words שָׁרָר and שָׁרִית from the root שָׂר are used with other nuances: positive and negative.¹ (See below.)

Two Remnants?

In the DSS there is a tension between the remnant of God and the remnant of the nations. Therefore both the positive and the negative connotations are together, but in an exclusive way.² For the community, the word is not only used to speak about the people of God, but also in reference to “the sons of darkness” (1QM I:7), who are God’s enemies and are going to be “defeated, with no remnant remaining, and there will be no escape” for them (1QM I:6; cf. IV:2). Thus God “gathered an assembly of nations for destruction with no remnant” (1QM XIV:5).³ These people do not know about the past or the future, and what is going to happen to their soul, so because they are without understanding, and

¹ 1QM I:6; 2:10, 11; IV:1, 2; XIII:8; XIV:5, 8, 9; 4Q386 1ii5, 6; 4Q491 8-10i3; CD I:4, 5; II:4-7; 1QS IV:14; V:12, 13; 1QH^a XIV:32; 4Q427 7ii7, 8.

² This idea is shown side by side when a man, who belongs to the remnant of God, is “like a sailor in a ship in the raging sea” which is roaring with its “waves and torrents” while he is reaching “the gates of death”; or as a man who is “looking for shelter” and is able to enter to a fortified city until salvation” comes; but the wicked are destroyed “in the era of judgment” with “the sword of God... without there being a remnant” (1QH^aXIV:22-32).

³ 4Q381 33:1 says, “...and he will not find a remnant” for it [appears.” This is a scroll containing 110 fragments of non-canonical Psalms which have been dated paleographically from the Middle to Late Hasmonean Period. Eileen M. Schuller says, “The language and the context call to mind the biblical psalms – petitions for deliverance from distress, affirmations of trust, praise of God, retelling of God’s mighty deeds in history, creation, and covenant, and confession of sin.” Eileen M. Schuller, *Non-Canonical Psalms from Qumran. A Pseudepigraphic Collection* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1986), 1, 2.

they are going to be destroyed (1Q27 1i4).¹ With this idea, 4Q386 shows a dialogue between the Lord and Ezekiel, who is called “son of man”, in which the Lord says that “a son of Belial will plot to oppress” his people; but he would not allow him to do it. And even when he would be able to defile a multitude, God would come, kill the son of Belial, and help his people to go out of Memphis and turn himself “toward their remnant” (II:1-6).

It is evident that for this community there were two groups, with no middle ground, on which God is going to exert His judgment; and only those who belong to the community are counted with the remnant of God; all the others take an opposite part with “the king of the Kittim... and the army of Belial” (1QM XV:2, 3).² Nevertheless this community recognizes that God is “patience... and abundance of pardon to atone for persons who repent from wickedness” (CD II:4, 5).

The Rule of the Community shows a deterministic creation of God, who appointed two spirits for men, “the spirits of truth and of deceit” (1QS III:18, 19). God loves those in whom the spirit of truth remains, and detests all the others forever (1QS IV:1).

The men with the spirit of truth also have meekness, patience, generous compassion, eternal goodness, intelligence, understanding, potent wisdom, dependence on God’s mercy, knowledge, enthusiasm, magnificent purity, unpretentious behavior, moderation in everything, and prudence. But for the men with the spirit of deceit belong

¹ See also 4Q88 in which the writer asks, “Who is going to *escape* [in his iniquity?]” (VIII:4), and then he answers saying that everybody is going to be “rewarded according to his deeds” (VIII:5).

² In the DSS the name Kittim means Rome. See Vermes, 128. For those who are counted with the remnant of God, see 1QM XIV:5-10.

greed, frailty of hands, irreverence, deceit, pride and haughtiness of heart, dishonesty, trickery, cruelty, much insincerity and insanity, impatience, impudent enthusiasm, appalling acts performed in a lustful passion, filthy paths, blasphemous tongue, blindness of eyes, hardness of hearing and of heart and stiffness of neck. While the previous will have a fruitful offspring, with eternal blessings and enjoyment; the latter will be punished with destruction “without being a remnant or a survivor among them” (1QS IV:3-14).

The remnant of God is composed by “the sons of Levi, the sons of Judah and the sons of Benjamin” (1QM I:2). They considered themselves to be “the exiled of the desert” (1QM I:2); who are ready to have a war against the remnant of the nations composed by “the sons of darkness,” “the army of Belial,” Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, Kittim, Ashur and all those “who assist them from among the wicked of the covenant” (1QM I:1, 2).

Though this war “will be a time of suffering” for the people of God, the end will be “eternal redemption” (1QM I:11, 12), “salvation for the people of God” and “everlasting destruction for all the lot of Belial” (1QM I:5). So, the remnant of God wins the war, destroying the “wickedness,” (1QM I:6), and as a result “peace... blessing, glory and joy” are established eternally (1QM I:8, 9).

The drama of this war is an allusion to the battle in Daniel 11 that is unfolded in chapter 12:1, where Daniel prophesizes that even when it “shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation,” the people of God “shall be delivered.”

A fragment of the Damascus Document, called also 4Q266, gives the idea that those who departs “from the way” they have been taught, “and scorn the law” will be

punished by God's "great wrath, with fiery flames... leaving" no "remnant" for them (2ii5, 6).

As Clements establishes, "The strong emphasis on obedience to the Torah and on the necessity of entering into the full community of the Qumran settlement indicates an almost exclusively religious understanding of the 'remnant.' All the earlier political and territorial characteristics of the concept seem to have been abandoned."¹

The phrase "with no remnant" refers to the belief of the community that all of those who are in the opposite side are going to be completely destroyed without the opportunity of having any posterity with salvation.

Religious Characteristics

Comparing the Community Rules and the Damascus Document it could be established that while the former was written for ascetic people, "living in a kind of 'monastic' society," the latter was composed "for an ordinary lay existence."² Or as James C. VanderKam explains "the Damascus Document... envisages a community different from the Qumran fellowship as it is reflected in the Manual of Discipline. In the Damascus Document the members belong to 'camps' and are apparently located in various towns in Israel."³ The differences in these documents could show diverse states of characteristics of the same group, which lately developed with a different pattern. This sometimes makes it difficult to put together the religious characteristics of the group.

¹ Clements, *TDOT* 14:286.

² Vermes, 26.

³ James C. VanderKam. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 83.

For example the Damascus Document indicates that God “preserved a remnant for Israel and did not bring them up to destruction” (I:4, 5), when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon went to Jerusalem. But after this event, that is called “the age of wrath,” God “caused a plant root to spring from Israel and Aaron to inherit His Land and to prosper on the good things of His earth” (I:6-8). This text has caused some scholars to ask whether “the remnant” and “the root” are the same group or not. Also they ask whether this passage is talking about the origin of a covenant community that separated from a previous one because of any confrontation or persecution. In this context Davies suggests,

The remnant and the ‘root,’ then, are hardly distinguishable in the original form of the discourse. The remnant is designated as ‘Israel (or ‘Israel and Aaron,’ if the addition of ‘Aaron is not also secondary), and we are given no cause to recognize this ‘root’ as a particular group *within* the remnant, since elsewhere in CD the terms ‘Aaron’ and ‘Israel’ jointly designate the whole community. In none of the other presentations of the origins of the covenant community in CD are we confronted with a distinction between the remnant and the CD community; the community is presented *as* the remnant, and not as a movement *within* it. However, in the expansion of this discourse which we have just described, it is clear that the remnant and the ‘root’ *are* presented as distinct, with the latter designating a new community originating a considerable time later than the original one, that is, the community to which CD originally, and still substantially refers.”¹

In this case Burrows interprets that the “root” could be “the restoration of the community in Palestine after the exile.”² Nevertheless this interpretation opens the opportunity for a bigger problem, because the word “restoration,” that he uses, implies that the community was in existence before the exile, unless he is referring to the Jewish community and not to the community at Qumran. Even when he does not explain it, if he

¹ Philip R. Davies, *The Damascus Covenant* (England: JSOT, 1983), 65.

² Millar Burrows, *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (N.Y.: The Viking, 1958), 192.

is referring to the Jewish community, then the “root” could mean the people that were in Palestine after the exile, and the “remnant” refers to the people who came from that root to form the community in Qumran.

The True Israel

Regardless of the existence of one or two groups, it is clear that this community “regarded themselves as the true Israel, the repository of the authentic traditions of the religious body from which they had seceded.”¹ On the other hand Willitts disagrees saying that in the Dead Sea Scrolls “community, the remnant did not replace Israel—it was not a new Israel—but was the elect from among Israel with whom and through whom God will ultimately fulfill his covenant promises and restore the Davidic kingdom.”² Therefore, for him the community was like a remnant taken from a remnant which came to be the means of the fulfillment of God’s promise.

However, the evidence of the scrolls shows that the men of this community organized themselves in a structure similar to Israel: priests and the twelve tribes. And accordingly in the War Scroll it is written, “The twelve chief Priests shall minister at the daily sacrifice before God... Below them... shall be the chiefs of the Levites to the number of twelve, one for each tribe... Below shall be the chiefs of the tribes... (1QM II:1-3). Furthermore the Community Rules follows a biblical pattern organizing its people “in thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens...” (1QS II:21, 22; cf. CD XIII:1, 2; Exod18:21).

¹ Vermes, 26.

² Willitts, 25.

Thus, in this context “Israel” passed to be a more restricted group that, probably, did not mean anymore the people living in Judea, but the people who keep the covenant.¹ Meanwhile they say: “Who is like your people, Israel, whom you chose from among all the peoples of the earth, a people of holy ones of the covenant, learned in the law, wise in knowledge, alert to the voice of Glory, seers of the holy angels, with open ears, hearing profound things?” (1QM XIII:9-11). Since everybody who is outside of this group, is regarded as belonging to the “lots of darkness,” when they talk about the “Israelites” as the people chosen by God, it is understandable to believe that they are talking about themselves.

Therefore, to believe that they were the true Israel implies that only those who belong to their community are going to be saved. In this context Willits proposes that for the Second Temple period the different Jewish groups were redefining the concept of election in such a way that for them to be “ethnically Jewish did not guarantee the experience of Yahweh’s redemption...”² Even though the concepts of election and remnant are different at certain points, the Second Temple period witnessed a challenge to a fundamental Jewish presupposition of Israel as God’s people.

Prayers

According to most scholars the community at Qumran did not offer “animal sacrifices outside the Jerusalem temple;” but they “refused to participate in the cult in the

¹ The commentary on the Psalms alludes to “the wicked plots against the just person.” The wicked is a reference “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” (4Q171 II:13-15). Even though this division could be a reference to the problems among the leaders of the two groups, it is evident that this illustrates the differences between them.

² Willits, 11.

Jerusalem temple because they considered it impure.”¹ Then in order to atone for their sins the community offered prayers instead of animal sacrifices. Accordingly the Community Rules IX:1-5 says that when somebody “sins through oversight” that person shall be tested “in order to establish the spirit of holiness in truth eternal, in order to atone for the fault of the transgression and for the guilt of sin and for approval for the earth, without the flesh of burnt offerings and without the fats of sacrifice- the offering of the lips in compliance with the decree will be like the pleasant aroma of justice and the correctness of behavior will be acceptable like a freewill offering-.”

In the meantime, prayer was a substitute means that the community used until the cult of the temple could be redeemed from the corruption that the priestly leaders had on it. Also prayers were used as a stand point to avoid any conflict with those who could think to go to the temple and offer any sacrifice for their sins.

Segregation

It is quite evident that the people at Qumran had at least three kinds of attitudes toward other people:

Firstly, they accepted the Jews who lived like them. So the people at Qumran said: “They shall love each man his brother as himself; they shall succor the poor, the needy, and the stranger. A man shall seek his brother’s well being.” (CD VI:20-22). In this text “the poor, the needy, and the stranger” refers to those who came to the community to be part of it.

¹ Jodi Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 118.

Secondly, they rejected those Jews living with a different religious lifestyle. As the Community Rules establishes, when somebody wanted to enroll the community he should swear, in the presence of all, to live apart from all evil and men of sin: “He should swear by the covenant to be segregated from all the men of sin who walk along paths of irreverence” (1QS V:10, 11). The person involved in the community “shall separate from the habitation of unjust men and shall go into the wilderness to prepare there the way of Him; as it is written...” in Isa 40:3 (1QS VIII:13, 14). For them it was clear that they were the faithful people chosen by God, and all the others were part of “the congregation of the men of injustice” (1QS V:2).

Thirdly, they were anti-Hellenizing people. Even when they were anti-Hellenizing, the 4Q279 divides the community into four lots or classes: Priests, Levites, Israelites and Proselytes. What kind of people are these proselytes? The text does not say. But since the people of Israel are included in the first three classes, could these proselytes be Gentiles? If that is so, then it is clear that the community was not closed to non-Jewish people. Nevertheless “proselytes” could refer to new members of the community or beginners who, in all case, were also Israelites. If this is true then the community was only willing to receive Israelites; and plainly the Gentiles were condemned without remedy.

Communal Meals

The community at Qumran had regularly communal meals that they call the “pure meal” in which a priestly messiah presided.¹ Burrows says that these meals “are thought

¹ 1QS V:13.

by some to have taken the place of the temple sacrifices.”¹ In order to participate in this meal the new member of the community had first to be tested for one full year and then, according to the decision of the Council of the Community, the new member may be accepted to partake of the meal, but not of the “drink of the congregation until he has completed a second year among the men of the community” (1QS VI:16-21).

Even for those who already belonged to the community, in order to participate in the pure meal, it was required to be living in accordance to the covenant; otherwise they were excluded for a certain time, ranging from ten days to a final expulsion, depending on the level of the case (1QS VI:24-7:27). If the case did not demand an expulsion then they had “to turn away from their wickedness” (1QS V:13, 14), and passed a rigorous test (1QS VII:23). After this test they were accepted again in the communal meal.

The Messianic Rule (1QSa), which was intentionally written for “the congregation of Israel in the final days” (I:1), shows the description of this communal meal in which the men of the community took part according to their dignity and positions. They ate after the chief priest of the congregation and the Messiah of Israel blessed the bread and the wine, and “all the congregation of the community” (II:11-22).

Even though scholars are debating about the nature of this meal, it reflects the order of blessing of Melchizedek in Gen 14:18, and of Jesus in the last supper in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24).² Nevertheless, comparing the last supper with the communal meal a difference arises: While in the last supper Jesus did not prohibit Judas Iscariot to participate, even knowing he was a traitor (Matt 26:21; Mark

¹ Burrows, 365.

²See Magness, 113-115.

14:18), in the communal meal the congregation excluded sinners, and all those who had any defilement in their flesh (1QSa II:3-9).

But in the exclusion of those who are defiled in their flesh, the community probably rejected them from the communal meal based on what God said to Israel in Deut 23:1, 2: “He who is emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter the assembly of the Lord. One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord.”

Eschatological View

The War Scroll describes the drama of the organization of “the sons of light” who launch a war “against the lot of the sons of darkness” (1QM I:1). As the document reveals, “the exiled of the desert will wage war against” Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, Kittim (I:1-4); and even when the people of God pass through an extreme suffering, they defeat “the army of Belial” and “eternal redemption is fulfilled” (I:12). Eventually it is God Himself who destroys “Belial and ... the army of his dominion for an everlasting blow” (XVIII:1).

On the other hand, 11Q13 describes a time when Melchizedek proclaims liberty to the holy ones of God in the Day of Atonement, which happens coincidentally “at the end of the tenth jubilee” (II:1-8). In this event Melchizedek carries God’s judgments giving freedom to all those who are in the hands of Belial (II:13), while he is consumed by fire (III:7).

Comparing 1QM with 11Q13, there is the probability that the men of the community at Qumran were basing their ultimate redemption on what God would do in a

certain Day of Atonement that coincides with a time of Jubilee. In 4Q475 the author talks about the eschatological paradise of Zion which God has chosen and it is “at rest for ever” after his hands intervene and then there is “no more guilt in the land,” all hatred is destroyed, and as a result all its inhabitants live in righteousness. According to some outsiders,¹ there were others religious characteristics that the men of the community practiced, such as using white robes and having daily baths of purification before their meals; but those practices are not attested by the Qumran texts themselves.

The Covenant

In the War Scroll the word “remnant” is used in apposition to “the survivors of your covenant” (XIII:8). This means this people consider themselves under a covenant with God, and therefore the ones who have obeyed His requirements. God has created them for him and has “made” them “fall into the lot of light” (XIII:9); which means God chose them to be His. He established a covenant with their father and now is the time to ratify it “with their offspring for times eternal” (XIII:7, 8).

As VanderKam suggests, the community at Qumran believed that “God made a new covenant... with a surviving remnant of his people.”² Thus for the community at Qumran they were the people chosen by God, and not the Jewish living in Judea. Only those living with the community are “the true Israel”³ that God has called for “a deeper

¹In this case “outsiders” refer to those writers who were not members of the community at Qumran, and did not write for them, but about them. Philo, Josephus and Pliny the Elder are in this category. But because this research is limited to what the community says about itself, it is preferable not to include as a fact what they wrote about it, in order to avoid certain difficulties to this research.

² VanderKam, 111.

³ Ibid.

understanding of what was required and a greater incentive to obey.”¹ In that context the CD says that those who were unfaithful to the covenant have been delivered up to the sword, but those who adhered to the commandments of God have been left over, for God has confirmed His covenant with them (III:10-13). With the seed of that remnant God is going to fill the surface of the earth (II:11).

VanderKam adds that “the people who lived in and around Qumran believed firmly that they were part of that remnant raised by God to be a plant of righteousness and truth;”² and this objective could only be achieved by living in a covenantal relationship with Him. For them the covenant was so important that “they enacted a ceremony of covenant renewal annually, at the festival of Weeks.”³ In 1QM, God is shown gathering “an assembly of nations for destruction with no remnant,” while, at the same time, he chooses a “people” for redemption (XIV:5). “All the wicked nations shall be destroyed” (XIV:7) along with “their heroes”; nevertheless “the remnant of your people... will remain standing” (XIV:8), because they are “the redeemed ones” (XIV:10). The remnant “blesses” God (XIV:8) because He has protected them with “favors” in order to stand still “during the empire of Belial,” who is trying to separate them from the covenant of the Lord (XIV:9).

Vermes emphasizes that the “covenant ideology” led the men at the Qumran community “not only” to consider “themselves to be the ‘remnant of their time, but the

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. (See also 4Q226 16-18).

‘remnant’ of all time, the final ‘remnant.’”¹ This belief marked their life to be devoted students of the Holy Scriptures, and “to observe its precepts with absolute faithfulness.”²

In 4Q266 the community establishes that they “are the people of Thy redemption and the flock of Thy pasture” (II:13) because they keep “all the precepts found in the Law of Moses” (II:5, 6). Evidently the identity of the community was to keep the covenant and anybody living in a different way was rejected and taken as “a rebel” (II:7) that “shall be dismissed from the Congregation” (II:7, 8).³

The Damascus Document summons the people “who know righteousness, and understand the dealings of God” (CD I:1, 2) in order to explain that God “hid his face from Israel and from his sanctuary” because “they sinned in forsaking him” (I:3). Because of that God “remembered the covenant of the fathers” and “preserved a remnant for Israel and did not bring them to total destruction” (I:4, 5). This passage talks about to an event where the community was possibly persecuted by its enemies and reduced to a lesser quantity.

As Davies says, the Damascus Document is “a series of condemnations of apostates;”⁴ meaning that there were at least two communities: one who was adhered to

¹Vermes, 68, 69.

²Ibid, 69.

³ The liturgical texts of *Rule of the Blessings* repeat an idea which is also throughout the DSS: Those who keep the covenant receive blessings from the Lord, while the others are left “with not survivor” (1:1-7). In fragment concerning the *Curses of Melkiresha*, a curse is pronounced upon those who have “turned away from following” God, “plotting against” His “Covenant”, saying, “[May you be cursed] with no remnant, and damned without escape” (4Q280 2:5).

⁴ Davies, 173.

the Teacher of Righteousness and the other comprised for those who once were part of the covenant, but later depart from it.¹

This kind of notion of covenant is like a covenantal membership in which only those who decide to live according to the covenant could be members of the community. All who wanted to be part of the community had to decide with a personal commitment to be faithful to the covenant and reject all what is evil (1QS I:4-8).

Even though the Law of Moses establishes the renewal of the covenant every seven years by the “year of release” (Deut 31:10-13), this community was so dedicated to follow the covenant that they had a renewal every year.

The major contention of this community and the covenant could be the lack of sacrifice in the temple. How do they agree with the law and being the remnant of Israel when they did not offer sacrifices in the temple? The community was clear in the obligation of the sacrifice in the temple; but as the priests, who were leading the temple, were corrupt then to offer sacrifices would be contrary to the law. Therefore, Burrows suggests that the only alternative was “to worship by their own rites until the temple was purified.”² In this context the community establishes a distinction among those who “defile the temple”, and are going to arise for wars destroying themselves, and those who keep the covenant, who are going to be saved and set free by God (4Q183 1-3).

¹ See CD XIX:33-XX:1.

² Burrows, 365.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

According to the DSS several evidences can be drawn:

1. The remnant motif marked the lifestyle of the men living at Qumran in such a way that they believed themselves to be the only ones saved by God. They divided the world in two: “‘We’ and ‘them.’”
2. The characteristics of this notion transcend nationality, because they were the “true Israel” and all the others, even the Israelites who were not with them, would be punished along with the Gentiles. Along with this point, they believed they had the truth; therefore, those who wanted to be saved had to accept the community’s truth.
3. Their religious lifestyle as “remnant” was not only based on the Hebrew Bible, but also on their own traditions based on their writings and presuppositions.
4. God was only on the community’s side. His blessings were only for its members; all the others were cursed.
5. The only way to escape of God’s punishment was becoming member of the community.

To conclude, the community at Qumran had the understanding that its members were becoming the historical and eschatological remnant, living in the midst of a world of sinners, who were ready for God’s judgment. The only way to scape was to repent, taking part of the community. This would provide the only place to get forgiveness for their disobedience.

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