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**METHODS OF INVESTIGATION  
OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS  
AND THE KHIRBET QUMRAN SITE  
PRESENT REALITIES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS**

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# The "Qumran Library" in the Light of the Attitude towards Books and Libraries in the Second Temple Period

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The phenomenon of the DSS is an illuminating test-case for the study of the genesis, evolution, and crystallization of different and contradictory historical world views and disciplines as well as their interrelationship. This is yet another historical and intellectual domain in which speculations and creative imagination inevitably serve as tools to create and defend theories, particularly when scholars involved in the debate wish to present a general historical picture.

Qumran as a "historical problem," comprises three sets of facts: the external textual evidence, the archeological evidence, and the scrolls themselves. Since there is no unanimity between these three sets, and since they can be interpreted in various ways, they can serve as a basis for the construction of diverse general theories. The problem is that every such theory is like a small blanket—it is capable of covering only part of the problem, while leaving some other part uncovered. Similarly, in every theory like this, we can discern the loose threads with which it has been sewn.

Despite the intensive debate on the "Qumran problem" and the diverse theories put forward, there still remain a number of central issues which have not been adequately addressed. I will attempt to discuss the methodological aspect of the subject, by considering the question of "the Qumran library."

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Regarding the question of the origin of the library that was found in the Judean Desert, three main paradigms have been proposed during more than 45 years of research.

1) The library belonged to the "Qumran Sect." Members of the sect are those who wrote the books and preserved them in their library in Qumran; they are also the ones who concealed the books in the caves.

2) The library belonged to the members of the "sect" or the "community," to be used by them as a study-library. Qumran did not serve as a center for writing and copying, but rather as a center of learning. The library contained about one thousand scrolls, some of them in a few copies. Before the enemy's arrival, the entire contents of this library were hidden in caves.

3) The scrolls did not come from Qumran itself, but from outside it, and therefore include both sectarian and non-sectarian works.

Among those who advocate the first two paradigms, two explanations have been set forth regarding the contents of the "library." One camp maintains that we are dealing with a "textual unit" of a decisively homogeneous nature; the second camp believes the books were of a more complex character, and were not made up entirely of "sectarian literature." Supporters of the latter view believe that the literary corpus found in the caves of the Judean Desert, consists of a rather broad corpus, in its genre and content. It is also not singular in its nature or its design. It also is not representative of all the literature written by Jews from the Hasmonean period up to the Great Revolt and thereafter. For example, no distinctively historical texts were found among the manuscripts, and there is no literature representative of the Pharisaic stream. Alas, there is no way of knowing what the totality of the hidden manuscripts contained or did not contain in the first place. If this is the case, undoubtedly a great deal of what was written up to the time of the destruction is simply not known to us. In any case, the corpus that had been preserved was also not homogeneous, and therefore, a commonly accepted assumption is the notion that the DSS are indeed a diverse corpus, but that it was collected and preserved by a defined group espousing a clear world outlook. If one takes this view, one ought to find in this corpus a clear distinction between what might be called its "canonical" or "primary" literature and what might be called "secondary literature," *i.e.*, literature introduced by new convenanters who joined the "community," or manuscripts that were written or copied in other parts of Palestine and brought to the Qumran library. According to this view, there is actually a clear criterion of classification between "canonical" manuscripts and "less canonical" manuscripts in the community's library: manuscripts that were composed by the community members and manuscripts that were copied elsewhere but studied and deposited in its library.<sup>1</sup> This criterion is determined according to the relationship the scholar finds between the content of the texts and what is known to us about the Qumran sect from external sources, particularly Josephus. However, in my view, any

<sup>1</sup> EMANUEL TOV, "The Biblical Scrolls from the Judean Desert and their Contribution to Textual Criticism," in MAGEN BROSHI *et al.*, Eds. *The Scrolls of the Judean Desert: Forty Years of Research*, Jerusalem, 1992, pp. 63-98 (Heb). Esther G. Chazon offers four criteria for determining the sectarian or non-sectarian authorship of the scrolls found at Qumran; see her article, "Is Divrei HaMc'orot a Sectarian Prayer?" in DEVORA DIAMANT and URIEL RAPPAPORT, Eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls—Forty Years of Research*, Brill-Leiden, 1992, pp. 3-17.

such criterion is basically an arbitrary one, because we lack knowledge about the full extent of the texts and there is no evidence that the members of the sect made any such classification themselves.

The logic in the claim that the authors of the texts and those who hid them belonged to the same defined group is that the "secondary" books, those not written by the members of the sect itself, were not copied in Qumran, since it is not very likely that the "community scribes" would engage in copying writings that were not an integral part of their spiritual-cultural world! However, these books were not rejected by the sect or the community and were considered to at least merit a place in their "library." According to this view, one can find in the caves a methodical and deliberate organization of the material according to its origin. But at the same time: "We do not know whether all of the texts found in Qumran were kept in a 'library,' and the people in their daily lives used only one textual group [ . . . ]."<sup>2</sup> This thesis assumes, first, that there was a "textual group," that was used in daily life, and second, that before the books were hidden at some time in the caves of the Judean Desert, they had constituted the "library," the treasury of manuscripts, that was in their possession or was available for the use of members of the Qumran sect. It is not clear whether the intent here is to assert that the caves were the "library" from the outset or that the books of the "second category" were first hidden in them, because they were not an integral part of the sect's world, or that they were part of the library found in the central building in Khirbet Qumran itself, and later transferred to hiding places along with the important books "as one unified whole."

In any case, as a foundation for this theory, which regards Qumran or the members of the specific community residing there or belonging to it and also living elsewhere as the sole source of all or most of the texts, several explanations were offered for the diverse nature of the Qumranian literature. Briefly, these are:

1) Those who came to live with the community brought with them various works, which were not an integral part of the sect's library, and hence were placed for safekeeping in the library.

2) Members of the "community" also read, studied, or collected non-sectarian literature, which therefore was also kept in their "library." These manuscripts were hidden together with the sect's main writings when the "sect" tried to save its manuscripts by placing them in the caves for safekeeping. Therefore Qumran is indeed a center of learning and its "library" the collection of a large portion of "Jewish literary writing" of the Second Temple period.

3) For reasons which are not clear, books belonging to members of the community living in other, sometimes distant, places, were also sent to the

<sup>2</sup> EMANUEL TOV, *ibid.*, p. 95.

Judean desert caves for storage and safekeeping. The argument in principle, in contrast to the widely held (until recently, at any rate) view, is that in Qumran, writing and copying were not carried out intensively, but books were intensively collected for the purpose of study!<sup>3</sup>

Against the background of these assumptions, we may ask: Are we dealing with a "library" (in the Hellenistic sense) or with a "collection of books"? Is it possible to discover any logic in the corpus' contents, or is it made up of different sources? Is the organized effort made to safeguard these books a single instance of a Jewish library in the Second Temple period known to us, arising from the nature of the community and its attitude towards the written word, or is this perhaps a cultural custom that prevailed in the Jewish society of the time, which the Qumran community also adopted? If indeed books were hidden at one specific time, when an enemy was approaching or because of some dramatic political occurrence, even if we assume this occurred over a period of two years, that would mean that most of this great number of texts—certainly many hundreds and probably more—were kept until then in some "library" at the sect's headquarters in Qumran or in other places where there was a concentration of sect members. If we assume that the members of the community did indeed collect and preserve many books, we have to try and understand what motivated them to do so. The accepted premise that they had a compelling interest in keeping the books, because of the message they contained or the codification of the way of life set forth in them, is also an *a priori* assumption. It presupposes that all of the manuscripts were regarded as sacred texts that must be saved from destruction, even when the community itself and Jerusalem were on the verge of annihilation. Can we assert that this attitude was a part of the prevailing cultural tradition or norm which the sect also shared and were part of, or that the people of Qumran were the only ones in their time to demonstrate such an attitude towards books? Does the very act of hiding the writings imply that books had in the eyes of their owners an eternal existence beyond that of humans, or the Messianic (or natural) expectation that a day would come when the members of the community would return and need these texts?

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This leads us to the first question to be considered: Were there libraries in Jerusalem or in other Jewish cities, as there were in many Hellenistic cities as well as in the pagan temples in the ancient and the Hellenistic-Roman world? Libraries as a cultural institution were a Hellenistic phenomenon. In

<sup>3</sup> One of the problems with this theory is that many of the scrolls do not constitute "study material," like the Temple texts, and thus one must assume that this library was no more than a reading room.

these *bibliotekhe*, "qualified" librarians handled the books, which were kept in niches on shelves carved into the wall or in rounded boxes (*capsa*) in reading rooms with catalogs (*pinakes*).<sup>4</sup>

Professor Golb posits this kind of attitude towards books by Jews, and therefore in speaking about the "act of removal of manuscripts from Jerusalem during the revolt," states "that indicates that Hebrew literary texts were deemed precious enough to warrant rescue during periods of danger."

Golb speaks about the existence of "libraries" in Jerusalem, and hence about an organized operation of their removal elsewhere since they were regarded as no less than treasures of the Temple.<sup>5</sup> The problem with this thesis is that although it has a great deal of internal logic, we have no evidence attesting to the existence of libraries in Jerusalem, although it is reasonable to assume that there were collections of books in that city. Nor do we have any evidence or indication that a central library existed in the Temple in Jerusalem.

What does Josephus tell us about books and libraries? When Josephus in *The Wars of the Jews* speaks about the removal of the Temple's treasures with the approach of the Roman soldiers, he does not explicitly mention the removal of books or a library, just as he does not enumerate manuscripts among the "Temple treasures." It is hard to assume that Josephus, a scholarly author, who by his own testimony appreciated and understood the value of books and libraries, would have failed to explicitly mention the existence of a library or allude to the thousands of books among the "Temple treasures." Josephus does not speak about the removal of treasures from Jerusalem itself and from his descriptions it appears that until the final stages of the siege, treasures were left in the Temple (*Wars of the Jews*, V, XIII, 6; IV, VIII, 3) in *Against Apion* C Ap (II, 11). Josephus makes references to history books and chronicles kept in the temples or public archives in the cities of the Hellenistic East, but does not mention the existence of such a collection in Jerusalem. In the fifth chapter of *Wars of the Jews*, he describes the Temple in detail, without making any mention of a library. In *Antiquities of the Jews* (Book V, chapter 5, as well as in book XV which relates to the construction of the Temple), there is no reference to books but only to an archive ("בית הספרות").

As for the possibility that we are dealing here with a "Temple library," there is no hint in the sources as to the existence of a library in the Temple. In pagan

<sup>4</sup> LUCIANO CANFORA, *The Vanished Library: A Wonder of the Ancient World*, translated by MARTI RYLE, University of California Press, 1989; and F. G. KENYON, *Books and Readers in Ancient Greece and Rome*, Oxford, 1951.

<sup>5</sup> NORMAN GOLB, "Khirbet Qumran and the Manuscripts of the Judean Wilderness: Observations on the Logic of Their Investigation," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 2, pp. 103-114. One can assume, for example, that in the *beit midrash* of Hillel the Elder in Jerusalem, and in Shamai's as well, there were collections of a quantity of books. We also know of the literature of the Sadducees and other groups, from which the writings known as "apocryphal" were preserved.

temples (in Egypt, for example), there was a library, usually the library of the priests; however, in Jewish sources of that time, as well as in later periods, there is no suggestion that the Temple priests engaged in writing of any kind or in the organization and operation of a library in the Temple in Jerusalem. In the listing of priestly duties, there is no mention of priests being responsible for the "library." The "scribes" of the Second Temple period were not writers of books but rather clerks and administrators. There was an archive in the Temple (the "house of the archives," *בֵּית סִפְרִיָּא*) (Ezra 6, 1,2), but it housed official documents of various types. However, it is difficult to assume that a library containing literature pertaining to rules and regulations, eschatological literature and wisdom texts existed there. On the other hand, in the "Qumran Library," no remnants were found of literature that could be designated as "Pharisaic," which makes it difficult to establish a connection between Qumran and the Temple.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Josephus relates how the archives were burned by the rebels in Jerusalem, who set fire to *בֵּית נְנוּי הַכֹּהֲנִים* (*Wars of the Jews*, Book VI, chapter 6), but makes no mention of books destroyed or rescued from the destruction. In all the descriptions of Jerusalem in the Hellenistic-Roman literature, as well as in the writings of Philo, no mention is made of a "treasury of books," nor is Jerusalem praised as a city renowned for its libraries.

The *Damascus Rule* speaks about the treasures of the Temple, but it is quite clear that the reference is not to tainted books "[. . .] They shall separate from the sons of the Pit, and shall keep away from the unclean riches of wickedness acquired by vow or anathema or from the Temple treasure [. . .]."

Even from a later period, we have no evidence of the existence of collections of books or of the attribution of sanctity to books that were not Torah scrolls.<sup>7</sup> The Talmudic sources refer to the fact that the authoritative source of the Pentateuch was kept in the archives of the Temple (*Mishnah, Moed Katan*, [Minor Festival] C,D) and that other versions were in public hands, as well as various books copied by professional copiers (*librarians*). Certainly books of laws and other books (*Megillat Ta'anit*, for example, which was not found at Qumran) were disseminated in quite a few copies.<sup>8</sup> However, again there is no allusion to a general central library that one might assume had been kept by "secular" elements (in the courts of Herod or Agrippas, for example). It is reasonable to assume that there were also private libraries in Jerusalem.

In the Qumran texts, only the *Copper Scroll* lists sixty-four hiding places where gold and silver aromatics and scrolls are said to be deposited, but we

<sup>6</sup> There is no doubt that there was written Pharisaic literature, regardless of whether it was literature of rules and regulations or another type, for example, liturgical literature.

<sup>7</sup> Every time a Talmudic source speaks of scrolls (in plural), the reference is not to collections of books, but mainly to the Pentateuch.

<sup>8</sup> It was only after the Destruction that the Sages began to compile traditions of laws, and one can assume that not everything was compiled from memory.

have no clue as to who wrote the scroll, even if we accept the premise that its authors did indeed list in it the true hiding places of treasures and books.

If in fact books were removed from Jerusalem and hidden outside the city when the Roman Legions approached, it is likely that this was done by those who appreciated their importance in their own time, and perhaps also for future generations. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the existence and removal of hundreds or thousands of parchment scrolls, encompassing the greater part of "Second Temple literature," would have merited some mention and that at least some intimation of it would have been retained in the collective memory. It is well known that from the beginning of the revolt, Jerusalem became the focus of a ruthless struggle in a factional war that erupted in the opening stages of the Roman siege, and the atmosphere in the city was one of Messianic self-confidence mingled with terror. It is extremely unlikely—although not inconceivable—that it would have been possible, in the midst of this mad furor, to carry out an orderly removal of hundreds of sealed jars containing parchment scrolls. It would have been necessary to make hundreds of jars, since the books were not kept in jars in the "libraries" before their removal. Josephus tells us that even before the siege was laid, "no one thought of anything but his own safety" (I, C, 5), and writes that people were fleeing from Jericho and the Jordan Valley to Jerusalem—not in the opposite direction.

It is not clear which of the diverse groups in Jerusalem had either the interest or the ability to carry out an act of removal of this scale. Even if it were carried out over a short span of two years (68–70 A.D.), it would have been a well-organized rescue operation requiring many participants. The only place in which Josephus mentions caves is in the fourth book (Chapter 8, 4) in which he relates that Simeon Bar Giora widened many caves in the Valley of Paran, some of which he found already prepared, and hid the treasures of his loot in them. It is highly unlikely that his booty also included jars containing scrolls. Then, who in Jerusalem would have endangered his own life, in such catastrophic times, in order to rescue not just a few valuable or sacred texts, but all of the books in the city, or a large portion of them? And who could have felt certain that a hiding place like the caves near Khirbet Qumran was a place no one would know about or succeed in uncovering? After all, during a period of civil strife, of starvation and plunder, no hiding place was safe—certainly not in the environs of Jerusalem. Caves in the nearby Judean Desert or in the area of Jericho are not safe hiding places in any case, particularly for invaluable treasures and hundreds of manuscripts. It seems to me that in this instance also, Golb's thesis makes an *a priori* assumption in order to explain the existence of manuscripts at Qumran and other places and to postulate the existence of many others, in an unknown location. He makes this assumption, based on the experience of later generations (the Cairo Geniza) that Second Temple Jews attributed sanctity and value to every written text. The fact that manuscripts were found in Masada, for example, is not evidence of

this, since the few found there might have been part of a really "small library" rather than remnants of manuscripts placed in hiding.

Let us return to the question of the libraries. It appears that in every major Hellenistic city, there were official public libraries (as Josephus tells us in the *Wars of the Jews*, Book VII, Chapter 3: "It happened that a fire destroyed the Square Market, the City Hall, and the Law Courts [. . .]," as well as large, wealthy private libraries. In the sources, however, there is no allusion to a Jewish library as a public institution. One can infer from the Talmudic source that deals with the issue of which books are worthy of being saved from fire on the Sabbath (Mishnah *Shabbat* 16a; Babylonian Talmud *Shabbat* 116a) libraries which included diverse types of texts existed. However, it may also be true that the issue discussed in this source is a fundamental one presented in a rhetorical fashion. The Sages recognize the existence of secular books (Sifrei Hamiros, ספרי המירס) and the Apocrypha (those that sully the hands and those that do not sully the hands) but they do not allude to the existence of sizable collections of books that contain both of these types.

There is no doubt that larger or smaller collections of books could be found in the synagogues for the use of those who came there to study, as we know from the Gospels, or in various institutions, but there is no mention of that. In various sources of the Sages, there are allusions to the reading of books and commerce in books, usually Torah scrolls ("Wealth and riches shall be in his house, and his righteousness endureth forever, the one who writes Pentateuch, Prophets and Hagiographa, and lends them to others [רחן ועשר בכתבו וצדקתו עמדת לעד — זה הכותב תורה נביאים וכתובים ומשאלים לאחרים (נכתבו)]. In most cases, not in all, the reference is to the Bible. There is no doubt that the Sages also knew of other literature, but their attitude towards it was negative. It is to that kind of literature that the verse "By these my son be admonished: of making many books there is no end" (Ec 12:12) refers, which the midrash relates to the "Apocrypha" that create turmoil in the home of the reader (Ec Rabah 12; Jerusalem, Sanhedrin 10:1) etc. The Sadducee tradition places an emphasis on the oral culture even in an era of "book culture." It can be argued that the existence of book collections was self-evident, and needed no mention. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that in the sources there is no reference to the significance and practice of preserving books and how that should be done.

In other words, the historical sources confront us with a dilemma that is far from simple: there can be no doubt that Jews in the Second Temple period wrote many books, a few of which were preserved as "Apocrypha," while others were lost.<sup>9</sup> But the sources mention only isolated names out of a wide corpus, and we have no evidence at all that there were collections of books, and even less, that there were public libraries, such as existed in Hellenistic

<sup>9</sup> Jews wrote in both Hebrew and Aramaic in this period.

centers of learning. It is clear that in order to dispute beliefs appearing in the "Heretical books," the Sages had no need to keep the books in their possession, and could learn the main principles of these beliefs and contentions through oral discourse. If that is the case, the fact that there is no reference in the literature of the Sages to the wide literary corpus that predated the destruction of the Temple can indicate either a break in the literary sequence, apathy toward the corpus, or a conscious and diversified attempt to cover up and expunge its existence.<sup>10</sup>

There is no doubt that a "book culture" flourished during the Hellenistic period. Books were written, copied and sold, and obviously were also kept in various collections.<sup>11</sup> However, all of the evidence presented for this argument comes from Hellenistic Egypt or from the Hellenistic society in general, but does not relate directly to the Jewish society and its reading public. If there is any reference to books, it is, as already stated, to a limited canon. Even if we assume that books were bought and sold, there is still a substantive difference between that and a collection of hundreds of books. We may agree there was a library attached to every Hellenistic *gymnasium*, but one cannot infer from this that there was a large collection of books in every synagogue or *beit midrash*. The spread of literacy does not necessarily contradict the centrality of the oral culture. Jesus, for example, is described as a preacher, and no mention is made of any books he read (except for the Book of Isaiah) or any parables or adages he put into writing! Jesus certainly read books, but the writers of his story had no interest in mentioning them.

On the other hand, it is very difficult to accept the view that the only place books were written or kept was the site of Qumran—the *Civitas Litterarum* of Palestine, and it is equally hard to accept the view that Qumran was a central place of learning—where people came from all over the country to read and study books, a sort of *beit midrash* of the Essenes.

And what about the possibility that the "sect" possessed a large collection of books for its own use? It is well known that archeological research has failed to identify such a special storage place for parchment scrolls. In fact, there is no way of identifying the location of a library unless one finds a clear inscription indicating its existence. However, in our case the most striking fact is that the written sources contain no reference to the existence of a library in Qumran, despite the assumed central role that the copying and collecting of

<sup>10</sup> As expressed in Rabbi Akiva's famous diatribe against heretical literature, and the deliberate—and successful—attempts to expunge the apocryphal writings from memory.

<sup>11</sup> MICHAEL O. WISE, "Accidents and Accident: A Scribal View of Linguistic Dating of the Aramaic Scrolls from Qumran," *Abr-Nahrain*, Supplement 3, 1992 (Louvain, 1992), pp. 124–167. In this regard, see *ibid.*, pp. 138–141, and particularly note 54.

books played in the community's life, at least according to the accepted theory, and despite the importance of written literature in the Jewish culture of the Second Temple period. It is very hard to accept Stegemann's theory that almost one thousand scrolls were preserved in baskets or jars in the main building; this theory has its logic, but he cannot present any solid evidence for its validity.

In the literature on Qumran, there is no allusion—either directly or indirectly—to a library or to books.<sup>12</sup> Josephus relates that the Essenes were “[. . .] studying the writings of the ancients, and chose out of them what is most for the advantage of their soul and body [. . .]” (*Wars of the Jews*, Book II, Chapter 8) and this is the only reference. But there is no mention of new books being written, of books being collected, or of the intense and assiduous work of copiers. Philo (about 20 A.D.) relates that the members of the sect “had a storehouse, common expenditure, common raiments, common food [. . .]” but he does not mention “common books.” From his description of the requisite spiritual activity, we learn that it comprised reading and interpreting the Bible. Josephus states that the Essenes applied themselves to different arts, but does not mention the art of writing or copying books, and there is no suggestion of special times devoted to reading books of any sort. Therefore, it is difficult to accept the claim that “Nowhere is there a relationship of community to scriptures so tangibly attested as in the case of the Qumran sect and the Scrolls [. . .].”<sup>13</sup> Even in the Qumran texts themselves, there is no mention of writers or copiers, or of a big library which serves as a center of learning. It seems to me that in a closed sect that held books in such high esteem, it is reasonable to expect some reference to the organization of a library and to the copiers and writers, or to the Hellenistic practice of copying books and differentiating between “old copies” and “latest correct editions.” The *Damascus Rule* describes the “Rule of the assembly of the camps” but mentions only that “[. . .] the Priest who enrolls the Congregation shall be from thirty to sixty years old, learned in the Book of Meditation and in all the Judgement of the Law so as to pronounce them correctly.” He is not required, however, to know the broad literary corpus included in the “Qumran library,” but only a limited number of works. From the corpus, we can conclude that the members of the community did not differentiate between the Oral Law and the Written Law, but this conclusion stems from the character of the corpus and not from a written provision of any kind.<sup>14</sup>

In conclusion, it is possible to argue that there is no point in searching

<sup>12</sup> Again, whenever there is a mention of scrolls or copper scrolls, it does not refer to a large collection of books.

<sup>13</sup> A. POWELL DAVIES, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, New York, 1956, p. 42.

<sup>14</sup> SHEMARYAHU TALMON, “Between the Bible and the Mishna in the World of Qumran” from *Within, Collected Studies*, Jerusalem-Leiden, 1989, p. 28.

for any mention of libraries in the sources, if indeed they were a common cultural phenomenon. I believe, however, that it is precisely because we are dealing with a common and well-established phenomenon during the period under discussion, and because a “library” is an institution entailing organization, resources and skills, one could expect to find some sort of reference to it. Of course, this does not mean that the Jews had no libraries, only that the fact of their existence, if they did indeed exist, is not alluded to in the sources; hence perhaps they did not attribute any basic cultural or religious value to libraries. This calls for an explanation particularly due to the extent of the “Qumran corpus” from which we can deduce the richness, the scope and the diversity of literary creation during the Second Temple period. In other words, there is no evidence that the “Qumran library” exemplified a widespread practice, just as there is no evidence that various Jewish groups had libraries as permanent institutions to any marked degree. Nevertheless, it is clear that there was a considerable Jewish reading public in Palestine which consisted of much more than small elite enlightened groups, but we have no data regarding its extent or its reading patterns.

The fact that we have no evidence of this special regard, which almost everyone considers self-evident, does not entirely eliminate the possibility that those who hid the corpus were indeed motivated by the strong desire to preserve their intellectual world for future generations. To claim that the corpus is heterogeneous and therefore could not belong to a single group—the Essenes, for example—ignores the fact that the gnostic corpus, for instance, is also heterogeneous in character.<sup>15</sup> A heterogeneous content and genre are characteristic of the spirit of syncretism of those times. Such a claim, naturally, also establishes unequivocally that the authors and copiers were the ones who hid the texts.

At this point, we should deal with the general attitude towards the literary product of the period.

The writings in the DSS included works that presented relatively anomalous points of view. The one positive assumption we can make about them is that the urge to collect and to save the books came from a specific group within the Jewish society of the period. If indeed this is the case, which of the groups in Jerusalem would be interested in preserving the heterogeneous totality of these writings—the Zealots, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, or some other unidentified group?

<sup>15</sup> GIOVANNI FILORANO, *A History of Gnosticism*, translated by ANTHONY ALOK, Cambridge, MA, 1992, pp. 7–19. One should draw comparisons between the Qumran sect and the Hellenistic Associations (thiasoi) as well as between it and the Gnostic communities.

Let us discuss the hypothetical possibilities:

There is no evidence that the Pharisees, who held the Oral Law in high esteem, placed much value on collecting and preserving books; neither are there accounts of such an attitude on the part of the Sages after the Destruction. During the period we are dealing with, we can assume that their understanding was similar to that of Horace, as quoted by Hieronymus, that "*delere licebit quod non edideris; nescit vox missa reverti*." An echo of the same view is found in the Jerusalem Talmud (*Pe'ah* 2:17b; *ibid. Hagigah* 1:76d), which makes a distinction between Israel and the nations of the world, in that the Jewish people do not find their law (Torah) in books.<sup>16</sup> In the Qumran library, in any case, sections of the corpus are missing, just those sections which characterize the Pharisee way of thinking (and the Christian, *e.g.*, sayings and proverbs).<sup>17</sup> The Sadducees, on the other hand, ascribed great importance to the Written Law, but there is no evidence that they attributed any value to post-Biblical literature, and certainly not to literature which promulgated ideas far from their own world outlook. It is difficult to assume that they would make a supreme effort to preserve works whose spiritual world so contradicted their own. If we consider the "Essenes" an all-inclusive name for not only the settlers of Qumran, but a wider, relatively heterogeneous circle, then it is possible to assume that the members of this circle could preserve diverse works toward which they felt a spiritual affinity. However, this would not apply to works which were remote from their world. In any event, we do not have a glimmer of evidence of such a practice, which would have had to continue over a long interval.

One possibility is "radical" Hassidean circles—part of the Jewish people, whatever their identity—who placed great value on written literature and were among those who wrote it. As is well known, "marginal circles" or "avant-gardists" place a paramount value on their own literature or that which is akin to it. This is particularly true because they are on the fringes of consensus, and their literature is the basis and unifying force of their shared world—even, and primarily, when they are dispersed in many places. Their "spiritual territory" does not consist only of the literature of religious regulations, but is rather a sum total of a much wider literary picture. Written literature is their foremost means of expression and experience, as well as their means of communication. Through literature, they create a new world, which encompasses the world of imagination; they interpret reality and react to it. Perhaps a suggestion of this can be found in later Jewish tradition, which views the hiding of books in the ground as characteristic of heretics, a practice usually ascribed to the Karaites, but to the Hellenistic-Egyptian Hermetic tradition as well.

<sup>16</sup> SHAUL LIEBERMAN, "Light on the Cave Scrolls from Rabbinic Sources," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, Vol. XV, New York, 1951.

<sup>17</sup> And in the Qumran literature there are no rules and regulations pertaining to the people's "ephemeral life"!

Another possibility is that first-century Christianity evolved out of oral traditions, but had a written body of literature that served as a basis for study and was disseminated among the members of the community. Colossians 3:16 states: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs [ . . . ]" In other words, they possessed written religious literature for daily use. In Timothy II 6:13, Paul requests: "Bring with thee the books but especially the parchments [ . . . ]" In Corinthians 4:7–9, it is written: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, [*ostrakinois skenesin*] that the excellence of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken [ . . . ]" In the metaphoric language of apocryphal literature, an expression like "החרום הספר ער-עת קץ" may perhaps give a hint of the philosophical outlook that advocated the hiding of books, which was characteristic of these circles and not those of the "establishment."

This does not mean that the documents were Christian works, but only that the early Christians were interested in preserving them, in their strong desire to prove that they grew out of a long-standing traditional—therefore valid—literary (and revelatory) base.<sup>18</sup> A group like this, at the beginning of its way, under the influence of diverse traditions, is not yet fully consolidated, has not yet written its own history and the history of its messiah and has not yet begun its canonization. Such a group would typically be interested in preserving texts, especially during periods of internal crisis and bitter persecutions which forced its members to flee and hide (like those that characterized Judaeo-Christian history in the first century). Therefore, we need not search the corpus for works of a clear-cut Christian nature, like the Evangelistic writings or a mention of Jesus and his pupils, since there is no need to presume that the works were written by Christians. There is also no need then to search for direct textual or conceptual links between the scrolls and Christian literature as evidence of contact—or the absence of contact—between the early Christians and the "Qumran sect" or "Jewish sectarian literature."<sup>19</sup> There is no doubt that there was some sort of contact, but there is no way to reconstruct the nature of these contacts between the diverse streams and sub-streams, against the broad syncretic backdrop of contemporary intellectual and spiritual history. In any event, I must re-emphasize that if any group were interested in preserving a relatively heterogeneous collection of works which approximated their world view it would be just such a new group. Such a group would be interested in preserving books, since its spiritual world had

<sup>18</sup> There is no doubt that in its short existence until the Destruction of the Temple, the Judeo-Christian community could not have written such a large number of literary works.

<sup>19</sup> R. Eisenmau's theory on the nature of the "Christians" and their status is totally groundless, in my view.



still not been conclusively crystallized or institutionalized; it was aware of the innovations within it, while at the same time it emphasized its continuation of an ancient tradition which formed the basis for its spiritual world. Let me stress that this does not mean that the Judaeo-Christian hypothesis is valid. I have suggested it only in order to elucidate my view that we are dealing with the literature of a group, not the literature of the Second Temple in its entirety, and that this group must be a body with a special self-consciousness and with a special regard for books.

In this connection, it is important to emphasize that as far as the Sages were concerned, apocryphal literature, including that written by the Hassidean sect, was identified with the works of the heretics. The existence of hidden works and hiding places in the Judean Desert and the like, were known in the third century A.D. (to Origen, for example) and later, which proves that the sages realized that the sort of books found in the Judean Desert were associated with heretical views. There is an additional point worth mentioning here. Almost without being aware of it, research follows the typology of Josephus, by identifying in the Jewish community of the Second Temple period a limited number of well-defined and well-characterized groups. Jewish society, however, was more stratified and also included other groups and sub-groups. Even more pertinent, scholarship has made an indispensable and exclusive connection between "organized groups" and "written literature," thus conveying the impression that "literature" was in every instance a product of well-defined groups and could not be the works of individual anonymous authors reflecting streams of a *Zeitgeist*; there is a difference between a messianic-popular mood and a well-defined messianic theology, often versed in a language that is incomprehensible to many. Nor could it be the work of similar-minded people (with a similar style) who were not part of a specific, cohesive socio-spiritual framework.

To sum up, we can state that according to the information available at present—and perhaps in the future as well—we can date many of the Scrolls, but unfortunately, cannot know with certainty where they came from and when, and who brought them to the Judean Desert caves, a place which may not have been such a deep secret at the time, and was frequented by people who took books from it. All one can say with certainty is that their spiritual world reflects much more than the restricted and exclusive world of one particular sect.

With this background in mind, what conclusions can we reach about the contents of the corpus itself? Moreover, if we exclude the process of publishing, deciphering and final reprinting the texts, as well as the interrelationship between the different texts, what questions should scholars address?

Research on the Qumran corpus, in its historical and literary-historical context, is troubled by two central issues:

1) the attempt to identify the members of the sect with the authors of the texts through parallels between the world reflected in the corpus and what we know of the sect and kindred groups, from other sources. This has generated a great deal of speculation in an effort to decipher clues in the literature which conform, in one way or another, to what we have learned elsewhere. Scholars, on the basis of radical speculation, even try not only to determine precise identities and relationships, but to reconstruct (as it were) the events and incidents involving the sect and to fit them into the known historical narrative.<sup>20</sup>

Such an attempt in this case, I believe, is an unproductive one. The sources which deal with Qumran are of a typological nature, not historical or narrative. We have not even a hint, for example, of the confrontation between the people of Qumran and the Temple<sup>21</sup> in Jerusalem (which does appear in the New Testament) although such a confrontation was almost inevitable, in light of the attitude of the Qumran people to the Temple. In other words, the sources do not mention even one event pertaining to the history of the "sect." And if we are indeed referring to a "sect" that functioned for many years, there is no doubt that its internal life, as well as its relations with the world around it, would be filled with events, confrontations and a complex dynamic. If indeed various groups were in contact with the "people of Qumran," then it is remarkable that we find not the slightest intimation of such contact in literature.

2) the attempt to determine the literary and spiritual links between Qumran literature and the works of other circles, including the influences of one group on its contemporaries.

The first attempt uncovered hints and reports of historical events, but we must point out that these hints make it possible to establish with certainty only when a text was *not* written, but not exactly when it was written. Therefore, a reconstruction that seems to present a complete picture of events, but which interweaves fragmented and vague information, is a mere figment of the imagination. All the texts in our possession are theological, halachic or literary texts, some of them utopian or eschatological. Despite the similarity between the way of life in *Manual of Discipline* and the *Damascus Document* and what we learn from Josephus and others, we may wonder whether we are dealing with a set of rules according to which life was actually lived, or

<sup>20</sup> Regarding the way to draw an historical conclusion from apocalyptic literature, see P. J. ALEXANDER, "Medieval Apocalypse as Historical Course," *American Historical Review* 73 (1960), pp. 997-1018.

<sup>21</sup> ITHAMAR GRUENWALD, "From Priesthood to Messianism: the Anti-Priestly Polemic and the Messianic Factor," in I. GRUENWALD, S. SHAKED and G. G. STRONMSA, *Messiah and Christos: Studies in the Jewish Origins of Christianity*, Tübingen, 1992, pp. 75-93.

a utopian depiction of a utopian society. The allusion to historical events in a non-historiographic text calls for utmost caution in anything that relates to the "historical validity" of the event, since literary texts "use" historical events in different ways: as a paradigm, a symbol, "authentic background" and the like.

The second attempt ignores the fact that although we speak of the socio-spiritual life of the period, there was a broad and multifaceted mosaic of groups and circles, and a diverse and wide range of literary works being written, that were not necessarily linked to an organized and unified group. Nevertheless, studies try to use clear-cut group typology to relate each literary corpus to one specific group. This diversified literature was written in a climate of viewpoints and a common cultural environment, and without doubt, there existed within it a migration of ideas and motifs, even without direct contact or organized group cooperation. It therefore seems correct to argue that the similarity between ideas and motifs does not necessarily prove a direct connection between two texts or two groups, and might be the result of cooperation in one great heterogeneous and syncretistic intellectual-literary-semantic domain. Certainly it does not prove that this cooperation was extensive and thorough. The social history of ideas in more documented periods clearly shows that a similarity of semantics, or even of ideas or literature, is not necessarily the aftermath of cooperation and unity. There is a fundamental difference in the way in which ideas, symbols and terminology get their meaning and the way in which they are interpolated or internalized into a text. Since the Qumran texts were not single copies (there is no evidence of this, even regarding texts ascribed to the "community" and that guide its way of life), it is reasonable to assume that they were influenced from diverse directions, and could in turn, be influential in diverse ways.

Even if we agree that the DSS embody the contents of one large library, it still does not mean that the library was homogeneous in character or that it was the only library of its kind. Any attempt to reconstruct the entire contents of a library cannot be thorough; and this is all the more so in regard to the attempt to reconstruct the position and status of the "library" within the sum total of written literature. Much has been written of the affinity and relationship of the Qumran literature to Biblical literature and to the works of various groups in the Jewish community, but in the absence of the full corpus, any such reconstruction will be partial and deficient, because we are missing many important links in the chain. On the other hand, if the Qumran library represents more than a subordinate or even marginal stream, or if it was inter-related with other segments of the contemporary cultural-literary life, we might ask where its traces can be found in generations after the Destruction. Its influence on the New Testament—or its affinity to it—and on the Karaites has been extensively discussed. It is known that scrolls were taken from Qumran, over circuitous paths to many locations, but there is no way of

knowing by whom they were taken, when and to what destinations. However, if the Qumran library represented more than a marginal stream it is logical to suppose that there are corresponding ideas and manners of expression in the literature written after the Destruction. And if it was a marginal stream, we can assume that the Destruction decreed its end; however, if we are dealing with a stream that was firmly fixed in the contemporary *Zeitgeist*, the destruction of the Temple would not necessarily have caused its demise.<sup>22</sup>

We must remember, therefore, that the existence of an extensive literary corpus does not necessarily testify to its place and status in its contemporary culture—certainly not in a culture that was in the main an oral one—and at times, it is precisely this corpus which can represent a subordinate stream rather than a central one. The influence of such a corpus must be tested both in the context of its own time and also in the context of later generations—and there is not necessarily a correspondence between the two. Frequently, a corpus, which is subordinate in its own time, can be very influential through different channels, in later generations, which may be times of deep schism, of ferment, and of new creativity. Written literature cannot in any way provide the key for a thorough reconstruction of the course of contacts and influences and of the various routes through which ideas travelled from one place to another, one group to another, one text to another, and one age to another. Ideas and motifs can travel and permeate in a diversity of forms, and literary and intellectual parallels found in different texts are not sufficient evidence for reconstructing patterns of influence and contact. Therefore, we can only say that the Qumran library provided a unique key to recognizing the existence of the spiritual complex, but did not furnish us with the key for charting its complete map.

<sup>22</sup> As stated, the attitude of the Sages to apocryphal literature testifies to the fact that they were aware that in Palestine there were many heretics with an extensive literature. There are those who regard anything in post-Destruction literature bearing a resemblance to ideas or exegetic techniques in the "Qumran literature" as evidence of the direct influence of the specific Qumranian corpus. However, in my view it is more reasonable to assume that the literature of the Sages, as well as the Jewish literature of the second century A.D., could have "absorbed" or even developed ideas defined as "Qumranian," not necessarily through familiarity with the "literature of Qumran," but through similar ideas found in Jewish literature that has not come into our hands.

## DISCUSSION OF THE PAPER

RAYMOND EDGE (*University of Texas at Austin*): You mentioned that Jesus probably never read any text. I think we're told that he read from Isaiah when he was in the synagogue at Nazareth, so there was one incidence of reading. I would suggest that he probably knew how to read and read others as well. Based on what we heard this morning concerning the Hellenistic or possible Hellenistic influences in Judaea, why not accept that there was also a library in Jerusalem?

YAACOV SHAVIT (*Tel Aviv University, Israel*): I'm sure that Jesus read the Bible. What I suggested is that the New Testament writers put no importance on the fact that he read or wrote something. The early Christians, of course, had their own library; it's written somewhere that Paul said, "Come, and bring with you the scrolls, mainly the parchment scroll." We don't know if it was a small library or a big library but they had their own collection of books.

The question of Hellenistic influences on Judea during this period is very complicated. I'm convinced that there were libraries somewhere and that Jews read books. They also read history books. History books were the most popular in the Hellenistic-Roman period. But in Qumran we could not find even one fragment of any so-called "secular" historical book. So there were libraries somewhere, but the sources are silent about them. This is a very interesting question of the so-called collective memory, which somehow neglects to mention their existence.

LENA CANSDALE (*University of Sydney, Cremorne, N.S.W.*): If biblical Judaism was witness of the various sects, and it was their writing from the third century onwards which we have, is it possible that what we know about a Second Temple period is what the Pharisees and rabbis wanted us to know?

What happened on the other side of the fence, namely the Sadducees and Hellenistic writers with their own books, their own libraries, is what (following Professor Golb's idea) we have got in Qumran. Would you agree with or comment on that?

SHAVIT: I would be very happy to find, instead of the Copper Scroll, a catalogue of books. I think a catalogue of books, or even a receipt for a printer somewhere, that he charged this amount of money for schemes or ledger or ink, would be very useful for us in order to decide where the scrolls were written and so on. But we don't have a catalogue and we don't have a receipt from a printer.

Again, my main notion was that, if indeed libraries in the Hellenistic period were such an important institution, then why don't we have any indication or reference, or any evidence, that libraries were indeed such in the social, cultural and educational life of the Jews in Palestine? I really don't know the answer.

NORMAN GOLB (*Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL*): I

said before, the trouble for those of us who work in the field of Jewish history, especially ancient and medieval Jewish history, is that we don't have the history, we just have little pieces and shreds of the history. We have to learn; that's why we're manuscript scholars, we're trying to learn from the sources, to make inferences about the nature of the ancient culture of the Jews. We only have certain pieces of the culture, certain pieces of the books.

We're confronted with this phenomenon of 850 scrolls; just in the caves of Qumran. We know that scrolls were discovered in the third century near Jericho and in the eighth century near Jericho. They were found also at Masada. So we have a bigger picture building up of many, many books, and the question is how best to interpret; what inferences can we make, what proper conclusions can we draw about the source of those books? I acknowledge we don't have a source which says we had libraries in Jerusalem; that's the way historians have to work, with what we have.

SHAVIT: You know better than me that the corpus of the Geniza has a totally different nature than the corpus of Qumran. The corpus in the Geniza, which was kept for different reasons, can give us a picture of the social and cultural life of the Jews in the Middle Ages. Here in Qumran we have literary books, and literary books are hard to interpret in historical terms.

GOLB: The reason we have that kind of a construction in the Cairo Geniza is that when various people died, their literary remains, all their manuscripts, regardless of whether they were documents or not, were put into this storage because they had the name of God written on these papers. In the case of the library at Qumran, we have a selective group of literary sources, as opposed to documentary sources that the Geniza naturally included.

SHAVIT: This is my point, that during the Second Temple period, this type of Jew or sect of Jews was interested mainly in keeping a certain selected corpus of books and not the entire archives of that period. That causes us all these troubles, which may last forever without any real solution.

DENNIS G. PARDEE (*Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL*): One aspect of Professor Golb's hypothesis that I've always wondered about was its "Jerusalemocentricity," if I may put it that way. Would you be any more sympathetic to a hypothesis that would see those manuscripts coming from all over Palestine?

SHAVIT: I think so, not only from Palestine, but maybe even from the Jewish diaspora; why not? We have a lot of evidence that a so-called community had connections with communities elsewhere, outside Palestine. If we take the example of Paul, who was traveling with these scrolls from synagogue to synagogue, I can't see why members of a so-called community couldn't do so as well.