

Israeli Scholarship on the Texts from the Judean Desert

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The organizers of this meeting have asked me to focus on Israeli scholarship in my response to the paper by Prof. Nickelsburg. I find this a difficult task. In doing so, I would like to take Prof. Nickelsburg's remarks on the reaction in Israel to the find of the scrolls as my point of departure. Nickelburg says: "These factors were complemented, in turn, by the Scrolls' discovery in the Holy Land, precisely at the moment that Jewish nationalism was peaking. As Sukenik would assert, they were part of the 'Jewish heritage,' which at this moment could hardly be compartmentalized from an awareness of contemporary events." Sukenik's statement, as reported by Trever,¹ is correct, in my view. As religious Jewish texts the scrolls *are* part of the Jewish heritage. A different question is whether this view distorted the scholarly treatment of the scrolls, especially during the first decade. I note, for example, a statement by Yadin in the preface to his book *The Message of the Scrolls*²: "I cannot avoid the feeling that there is something symbolic in the discovery of the scrolls and their acquisition at the moment of the creation of the State of Israel ...These facts may have influenced my approach to the scrolls." At the same time, to the best of my knowledge, Yadin's emotional preface to his book did not distort his objectivity or that of other Israeli scholars. In general, Israeli scholarship did not have an axe to grind, it seems to me.

On the whole, Israeli scholarship is sober. It is difficult to characterize Israeli scholarship on the texts from the Judean Desert, just as one can hardly characterize the scholarship of scholars living in England, Germany, or France. I think that Israeli scholars are more text oriented than other groups of scholars. They have produced several text commentaries, linguistic, textual, and paleographical studies, as well as studies on the history of ideas, the interrelation of texts, and the history of the Qumran community. Some have overall theories, but on the whole these theories are probably less speculative than those of other scholars. Until some fifteen years ago, Israeli scholars were totally banned from the publication enterprise of any of the texts from the Judean Desert, except for the Qumran texts bought by the State of Israel and texts unearthed by Israeli archeologists, in the latter case the documents from Masada and many of the documents from Nahal Hever and Seelim. All these texts have been published or are presently being published by Israeli scholars. The texts from Masada and Nahal Hever are now in press. The banning of Israelis from the publication enterprise did not thwart scholarship on the scrolls in Israel, but some scholars were left with a feeling of deep frustration. Presently, however, a large contingent of Israelis participate in the international team publishing the documents from the Judean Desert.

¹ J. C. Trever, *The Dead Sea Scrolls—A Personal Account* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977) 125.

² New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957, p. 14

One of the claims to fame of Israeli scholarship is the role played by Professor Eliezer Lipa Sukenik and his son Yigael Yadin. Sukenik, who was probably the first to recognize the ancient character and importance of the scrolls, also wrote some pioneering studies. At a speed that can probably be considered amazing, he published a “First Survey” of the known scrolls in September 1948, certainly a great achievement in the pre-computer era, during the siege of Jerusalem in the War of Independence. The first publication³ contained a comparison of these scrolls with the script of the Nash Papyrus and the Uziahu inscription, and it further presented selections from the scrolls from cave 1. The “Second Survey” published in 1950 improved on the first one. The facsimile edition of the photographs of the major texts from cave 1 from 1954 contains a still improved version of that survey, with more transcriptions of texts and more introductory analyses.⁴ These books are now collectors’ items. Especially valuable are the photographs, which include the only published photographs to date of 1QIsa^b, 1QMih^{am} and 1QHodayot. Neither the plates are superb, nor the transcriptions, but they are usable and did not prevent scholarship on these texts from flourishing.

It was Sukenik who first called these scrolls *megillot genuzot*, a term which is commonly used until today in Israel. For many persons this is the official name of the scrolls, referring to scrolls which were placed in a *genizah* because they came into disuse. Sukenik suggested this term in 1948 which he defended with such arguments as the fact that some scrolls such as 1QIsa^b were torn, and the condition of 1QIsa^a which was handled so much that the last sheet needed re-inking.⁵ However, scholars have long ago abandoned this term and together with it the understanding that the caves were ancient *genizot*, but in the perception of the Israeli public this term lingers on, even if the implications of this nomenclature are not clearly understood by the general public.

Beyond these editions, Israeli scholars produced several commentaries which always went together with text editions: Licht on the Community Rule and the Thanksgiving Scroll,⁶ Yadin on the War Scroll,⁷ including thorough analyses of the arms, banners, and battle array described in the scroll, Avigad and Yadin on the Genesis Apocryphon,⁸ Yadin on the *tefillin*,⁹ and in more recent years Nitzan on the Peshier on Habakkuk,¹⁰ Qimron and Strugnell on 4QMMT,¹¹ Qimron on the Temple Scroll,¹² Tov on

³ *Megillot Genuzot, mitokh Genizah Q^edumah Shenims^eah B^emidbar Y^ehudah, S^eqirah Rishonah* (Scrolls that Were Stored away from an Ancient Genizah Found in the Judean Desert, First Survey; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1948).

⁴ E. L. Sukenik, *שְׁרֵי הַמְּגִלּוֹת הַנִּשְׁתַּלְּטוּ בְּיַד הַבְּרִיָּת* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and the Hebrew University, 1954).

⁵ *Megillot Genuzot* (1948) 20–21.

⁶ J. Licht, *The Thanksgiving Scroll* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1957); *The Rule Scroll* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1965).

⁷ Y. Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light* (Heb.; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1955).

⁸ N. Avigad and Y. Yadin, *A Genesis Apocryphon* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1956).

⁹ Y. Yadin, *Tefillin from Qumran (X Q Phyl 1–4)* (Jerusalem 1969) = *ErIsr* 9 (1969) 60–85.

¹⁰ B. Nitzan, *Peshier Habakkuk, A Scroll from the Wilderness of Judaea (1QpHab)* (Heb.; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1986).

¹¹ E. Qimron and J. Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4.V: Miqs^eat Ma'ase ha-Torah* (DJD X; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

8H>evXIIgr,¹³ Yardeni and Cotton on the Nah>al H>ever and S>e<elim texts,¹⁴ and Talmon on the Masada texts.¹⁵ Above all we should mention the edition of the Temple Scroll by Y. Yadin,¹⁶ probably the most elegant *editio princeps*. The introduction and commentary are more detailed than any of the *DJD* editions. Several of the mentioned editions were published in Hebrew, and therefore are less known outside Israel. A significant Hebrew edition which has been rather influential is the popular edition of the scrolls by Haberman.¹⁷ This edition contains the major texts from cave 1 in a very handy format without any commentary or apparatus. The texts were vocalized, as later by Lohse,¹⁸ and a concordance was added, which provided partial help for many years until the more complete concordances were published.

The Hebrew language scholarship between 1948 and 1964 was recorded in a bibliography by Yizhar.¹⁹ Later scholarship is covered by the more recent bibliographies.

The first linguistic studies of the special Qumran orthography were those of Yalon and Goshen-Gottstein.²⁰ So far the most thorough linguistic analysis of any Qumran scroll is the study by Kutscher of 1QIsa^a, which appeared first in Hebrew,²¹ and then in English. In this monumental work Kutscher not only provided an exhaustive analysis of the individual features of the Isaiah scroll, but he also discussed the linguistic background of each feature, and he further described the background of the idiosyncracies of the scroll as a whole. This exemplary study is of great help in the analysis of other scrolls as well. Continuing this line of investigation, Qimron described the background of all the Qumran scrolls, although he actually limited himself to the

¹²E. Qimron, *The Temple Scroll, A Critical Edition with Extensive Reconstructions* (Beer Sheva/ Jerusalem: Ben Gurion University and The Israel Exploration Society, 1996).

¹³*The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Nah al H ever (8H evXIIgr) (The Seiyal Collection I)* (*DJD* VIII; Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

¹⁴H. M. Cotton and A. Yardeni, *Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek Documentary Texts from Nah al H ever and Other Sites, with an Appendix Containing Alleged Qumran Texts (The Seiyal Collection II)* (*DJD* XXVII; Oxford: Clarendon, 1997).

¹⁵S. Talmon published in a long series of articles all the written Masada material which are to be combined into a single volume.

¹⁶Y. Yadin, *The Temple Scroll*, vols. 1–3 (Heb.; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1977); idem, *The Temple Scroll*, vols. 1–3 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1983).

¹⁷A. M. Haberman, *Megilloth Midbar Y^ehudah—The Scrolls from the Judean Desert* (Heb.; Tel Aviv: Machbarot Lesifrut, 1959).

¹⁸E. Lohse, *Die Texte aus Qumran Hebräisch und Deutsch* (München: Kösel, 1971).

¹⁹M. Yizhar, *Bibliography of Hebrew Publications on the Dead Sea Scrolls 1948–1964* (HTS XXIII; Harvard University Press; Cambridge 1967).

²⁰H. Yalon, *Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls—Philological Essays (1949–1952)* (Heb.; Jerusalem: Shrine of the Book, 1967) 11–28; M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, *Text and Language in Bible and Qumran* (Jerusalem/Tel Aviv 1960). Cf. also the more recent study of S. Morag, “Qumran Hebrew—Some Typological Observations,” *VT* 38 (1988) 148–164.

²¹E. Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll* (Heb.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1959); *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (1 Q Isa^a)* (STDJ VI; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974).

scrolls displaying the special Qumran orthography and morphology, focusing not only on these areas, but also on syntax and vocabulary.²²

The study of palaeography had its beginnings with the studies by Avigad²³ and Naveh²⁴ in Israel, and by Cross in the USA. Further significant work, especially on the Aramaic cursive script, was performed by Ada Yardeni.²⁵

Also significant is the work of Flusser, Talmon, and Dimant, each in his or her own area of expertise. While both Flusser and Talmon explored the nature of the Qumran community and its ideas, Flusser also studied the relation of the writings of that community to early Christianity,²⁶ and Talmon described the idiosyncratic calendar of the Qumran covenanters.²⁷ Dimant's summarizing reviews of the Qumran literature as a whole are widely quoted.²⁸

This brief survey is probably valid in its own right, and it also supplements the analysis by Prof. Nickelsburg.

²²E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (HSS 29; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986).

²³N. Avigad, "The Palaeography of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Documents," in: C. Rabin and Y. Yadin (eds.), *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Scripta Hierosolymitana 4; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1965) 56–87.

²⁴Summarized in the later study by J. Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet—An Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Palaeography* (2d ed.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1987). See further: "The Development of the Aramaic Script," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, V,1 (Jerusalem 1970) 1–69; idem, "Hebrew Texts in the Aramaic Script in the Persian Period?" *BASOR* 203 (1971) 27–32; idem, *On Sherd and Papyrus—Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions from the Second Temple, Mishnaic and Talmudic Periods* (Heb.; Jerusalem 1992).

²⁵Summarized in A. Yardeni, *The Book of Hebrew Script* (Heb.; Jerusalem 1991).

²⁶See the collected writings of D. Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1998).

²⁷The collection of essays by S. Talmon, *The World of Qumran from Within* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1989) combines many of Talmon's significant analyses of themes in the Qumran texts. Talmon is one of the scholars who consistently stressed that these writings were not by a sect, but by dissenters or nonconformists, and the members of this group should not be named Essenes, but the Community of the New Covenant, which Talmon called either the yah \geq ad or the Qumran covenanters.

²⁸D. Dimant, "The Qumran Manuscripts: Contents and Significance," in: D. Dimant and L. H. Schiffman (eds.), *A Time to Prepare the Way in the Wilderness. Papers on the Qumran Scrolls by Fellows of the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1989–1990* (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah XVI; Leiden 1995) 23–58.