

BOOK REVIEW

THE TEMPLE SCROLL FROM QUMRAN

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מגילת-המקדש. ההדיר וצירף מבוא ופרוש יגאל ידין. ירושלים, החברה לחקירת ארץ-ישראל ועתיקותיה. המכון לארכיאולוגיה של האוניברסיטה העברית, היכל הספר, תשל"ז. 3 כר' + לוחות משלימים.

(The Temple Scroll (Hebrew Edition). Edited by Yigael Yadin, Jerusalem, 1977, Volume one: Introduction; Volume two: Text and Commentary; Volume Three, Plates and Text; Volume 3b, Supplementary Plates.)

The Temple Scroll is the largest and longest of the famous Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran. It is not completely preserved; for instance, the beginning of the Scroll is lacking. The work of arranging the Scroll and of its deciphering was very difficult and reading and commenting on the Scroll was none the easier. It is impossible to overestimate the quantity and quality of Yadin's achievement and his ability to make the fruits of his research available to the readers. The edition of the Scroll, both in its splendid form and in its content, shows the high standard of scholarship in Israel and especially the excellent rank of Yadin's ingenuity. The Scroll itself is an outstanding contribution to the history of Judaism in the second Commonwealth and an important document of the religious and social way of thinking and life of the famous Dead Sea Sect, rightly identified by most scholars with the Essenes. The new Scroll brings new evidence which supports this obvious identification.

The Temple Scroll does not contain theological passages or religious poetry. Its author does not speak about the historical situation, in which the Scroll was written. We can only indirectly suppose that the time was the later Maccabaeian period. But even so, it is clear that the Scroll was not written in the broader movement, in which the sect originated, but that the Scroll was composed by a member of the sect itself. This can be recognized by comparison of the Scroll with other sectarian documents. The Scroll contains prescriptions concerning mainly the Temple and its service, but also other prescriptions are included. The document is a kind of Torah and the greatest part of its content are quotations from the Pentateuch –

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and sometimes also from other biblical books. The biblical verses are rewritten, rearranged, harmonized and often adapted to the special sectarian understanding of the meaning of biblical precepts. Yadin rightly recognized that very often we can find in the Scroll hidden polemics against the oral law of the Pharisees. There are also in the Scroll very important new passages, especially those concerning the special liturgical year of the Sect. The Calendar of the Scroll is the same utopistic solar calendar, which we know already from the other Scrolls and from the apocryphal Book of the Jubilees. Yadin has shown that the sectarian liturgical year was not completely forgotten even in later periods. To this aim he brings a very interesting quotation from Saadia Gaon (10th century C.E.) and a quotation from a Karaite author of the Middle Ages. The sect celebrated four festivals in a distance of 50 days between them: the festival of new barley, of new wheat, of new wine and of new oil. There is an interesting note in the medieval *Liber pontificalis*¹ about the Pope Callistus (217-222 C.E.): "He fixed that there shall be a fasting at Shabbat four times in the year, that of grain, of wine and of oil, according to a prophecy". The note speaks about four fastings, but enumerates only three. If we suppose that in the mention of grain two fasting days are wrongly named, namely that of barley and that of wheat, the four fastings of Callistus correspond, even in their order to the four festivals of the Essenes. Did then some of the Roman Jews observe, in some form, the ancient Essene festivals? In any case, it is known that Callistus quarreled with Roman Jews. Thus, the possibility cannot be excluded that a prophecy proclaiming four fastings at sabbat as a contrast against four festivals of the Jews could serve very well the purpose of the Pope.

The Scroll is based upon the Pentateuch, but not only this: it is written as if the Lord had spoken Himself. This is not the only case in Jewish pseudographic literature of the second Commonwealth, as can be seen also from the Book of Jubilees. The direct speech of God invested our book with the highest degree of authority in the eyes of the Dead Sea Sect, and no wonder that it was often transcribed, a difficult enterprise because of the exceeding length of the Scroll. Yadin proposes some identifications with books, mentioned both in the writings of the Sect and in the Bible. All identifications with those mentioned in the sectarian literature and pseudographic identifications with non-existing books named in the Bible are possible. Yadin also wrestles with the problem, how a human author can dare to write in the name of his God. One point is of special interest: not only God speaks, so to say, through the whole Scroll, but, He even does not, as it often occurs in the Pentateuch, address His words to Moses. Moses himself is never named in the Scroll and Aaron, his brother, appears only in the phrase "sons of Aaron" i.e. the priests. Thus, there is a similarity between our Scroll and the Book of Deuteronomy, where the main laws are described as God's direct utterances and as addressed to Moses, and Aaron is mentioned in Deuteronomy only in historical

1. Ed. L. Duchesne, I, 1955², 17, 2; R. Rordorf, *Sabbat and Sonntag*, Zürich, 1972, p. 35: "Hic (sc. Callistus) constituit ieiunium die sabbati quater (ter *var*) in anno fieri, frumenti, vini et olei, secundum prophetiam.

connections. Unfortunately, we cannot know, what was the literary frame of the Scroll, because the historical – or pseudohistorical – circumstances, in which the revelation took place, were surely indicated in the first lines of the Scroll, which are lost.

There is a hint in the Scroll itself (page 45, line 5, see Yadin II, page 131), as to what was the fictive frame of the supposed revelation: there we read about “the sons of Aaron your brother”. Thus, it appears that the Scroll was understood by its author to be God’s revelation to Moses and, therefore, it was impossible to the author, when he brought this revelation, to write what God said to Moses, because according to this concept, God could not speak about Himself in the third person.

It is not our task here to study the Temple, described in the present Scroll. Yadin has rightly seen that it is not the eschatological Temple as seen by the prophet Ezechiel and described in Aramaic fragments of another Dead Sea Scroll. The Temple of our Scroll was the Temple of its time as it should be, but even so, this Temple belonged somehow in the realm of Utopia. The author speaks, *inter alia*, about the twelve tribes, the oracle of Urim and Tumim, and about the two Cherubs in the sanctuary. It is very improbable that the author of the Scroll thought that the Temple of his days was unacceptable, because these things no longer existed. On the other hand, the Temple of the Scroll does neither fit the Temple of Solomon. Thus, the situation is complex, but one thing is clear: the author describes a non-eschatological ideal Temple.

The Scroll contains a hint to the eschatological Temple. The ideal Temple of the Scroll shall exist until the day of bliss, “when I will create My Sanctuary, in order to prepare it for all the days, according to the covenant, which I made with Jacob in Bethel”. Bethel means in Hebrew “the House of God” and also, according to the rabbinic opinion, God has shown in Bethel to Jacob the Temple of the last days. The Scroll was written before the destruction of the Second Temple and our passage confirms the fact that the hope for a new Temple in the last days preceded the destruction of the actual Temple. This is not without importance for the history of the Christian concept of New Jerusalem.

This is not the only contribution of the new Scroll to the understanding of origins and development of Christianity. Yadin tries e.g. to show that the Essenes occur in the Gospels under the name of Herodians. From the Scroll it becomes also absolutely sure that the Essenes opposed polygamy and divorce, a position which was inherited by the Church.

In connection to capital punishment, the Scroll is far more rigid than everything we knew from the sectarian literature until now. This standpoint is clearly a fruit of a hyperfundamentalistic opposition to a contrary position of the Pharisees and rabbinic Judaism:² Pharisaic and rabbinic Judaism succeeded in restricting

2. About this question see especially A. Büchler, “Die Todesstrafen der Bibel und in der jüdisch-nachbiblischer Zeit”, *MGWJ*, vol. 50, 1906, pp. 539-562, 664-706.

capital punishment and eliminating all atrocities of executions, both in order to prevent mutilation of the body and the cruel suffering of the executed. This was part of the humanization of Judaism by the Pharisees. In this tendency the opponents of the Pharisees were both conservative Sadducees and the fundamentalistic sectarian preachers of theological sacred hatred from the Dead Sea. It is not difficult to decide, whether the preacher of all-embracing love was nearer to the Essenes or to the more humanistic rabbinism.