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Qumran Cave 1 Revisited

Texts from Cave 1 Sixty Years after Their Discovery: Proceedings of the Sixth Meeting of the IOQS in Ljubljana

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BRILL
# CONTENTS

## HODAYOT

- **A New Proposal for Thinking about 1QH* Sixty Years after its Discovery** ......................................................... 101  
  **Angela Kim Harkins**  

- **Liturgical Function in the Cave 1 Hodayot Collection** .......... 135  
  **Esther G. Chazon**  

## WAR SCROLL

- **Compositional Layers in the War Scroll (1QM)** .................. 153  
  **Brian Schultz**  

- **Priests in Warfare in Second Temple Judaism: 1QM, or the Anti-Phinehas** .................................................. 165  
  **Christophe Batsch**  

- **The Law of Conscription in the War Scroll** ..................... 179  
  **Lawrence H. Schiffman**  

## GENESIS APOCRYPHON

- **Divergence from Genesis in the Genesis Apocryphon** .......... 193  
  **Daniel K. Falk**  

- **Genesis Revealed: The Apocalyptic Apocryphon from Qumran Cave 1** ......................................................... 205  
  **Daniel A. Machiela**  

- **The Recomposition and Evolution of Noah Traditions as Found in the Genesis Apocryphon and Jubilees: The DNA of Fraternal Twins** .................................................. 223  
  **Dorothy M. Peters**  

- **The Figure of Abraham in the Genesis Apocryphon’s Re-narration of Gen 12:10–20** ............................................. 233  
  **Beate Ego**  

## OTHER SCROLLS

- **Paleographical Observations Regarding 1QS—One or Several Scrolls?** ................................................................. 247  
  **Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra**  

- **The First Prayer of Festival Prayers (1Q34+1Q34bis, 4Q508, 4Q509): A Prayer for the Beginning of the Quarter?** ........ 259  
  **David Hamidovic**  

- **Index of Ancient Sources** ........................................... 277
the candidates to the community could appear before the whole congregation during the entrance ceremony. However, active participation of the individuals, whose deeds and spirit have not been cleansed from the stain of sin, in the spiritual life of the community, would compromise its purity and holy status. Hence certain rights of the novices and the lapsed members, such as the right of counsel, were restricted. With physical impurity, the situation is reversed. Restrictions imposed on the bodily unclean members concern their sharing of physical space, but do not limit their involvement in the decision-making and other functions of the communal spiritual life. It can thus be argued that the authors of 1QS and 1QSa did not conflate the concepts of sin-impurity and physical impurity.

ISSUES OF SEXUALITY IN 1QSA AND 4QPAP CRYPTA SEREKH HA-‘EDAH (4Q249D, E)

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The present paper arises out of my engagement in a research project which is investigating attitudes towards sexuality in Judaism and Christianity in the Hellenistic Greco-Roman Era.1 More particularly it belongs within the exploration of attitudes towards sexuality within the sectarian and related literature at Qumran.2 Here the Rule of the Congregation plays a significant role and was the focus of discussion from early days. In particular attention has focused on 1QSa 1:9–11, which speaks of a young man and of his spouse. The first part of the statement is quite explicit:

ולא יקריזו 10 אלף לשתהlemnמשておりますןilageעלואיםעלואים

and he shall not approach 10 a woman to have sexual intercourse with her by lying with her as male does until he has completed twenty years when he knows good 11 and evil. (1QSa 1:9–11)

There is to be no sexual intercourse and by implication no marriage (as in Jub. 25:4) before the age of twenty. The elaborate formulation used to describe sexual intercourse is found in Num 31:17 and similarly, Judg 21:12.3 Knowing good and evil may reflect Deut 1:39 and possibly the Eden story (Gen 2:17; cf. also 3:5, 22), where it includes awareness of nakedness and so sexual consciousness (cf. also 2 Sam 14:17 and 1 Kgs 3:9).4 Here in 1QSa 1:10b–11, knowing right and wrong would

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2 See the detailed discussion in William Loader, The Dead Sea Scrolls on Sexuality (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009).
3 So Michael A. Knibb, The Qumran Community (Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 B.C. to A.D. 200 2; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 149.
include matters pertaining to sexuality, including through instruction in the book of Hagy mentioned a few lines previously (1:7). Borgen notes that m. 'Abot 5:21, which also divides life up into stages, speaks of entering marriage at eighteen and Eccl. Rab. 1.2 §1 at twenty. Both are late, but may reflect a traditional view, though probably more ide alistic than realistic, since the latter does not speak of employment until later.

Controversy surrounded the statements about the woman:  

and on this she shall be received to testify about him in relation to the regulations of the law and to [stand in the proclamation of the judge ments. (IQSa 1:1)]

The initial reaction to this reading, which implied a woman would have a legal function, was to propose an amendment of the feminine קבלת halakha “she shall be received” to a masculine קבלת “he shall be received,” and העבר “concerning him” to עברה “in accordance with.” Baumgarten, who took up the suggestion and argued it in detail, later changed his assessment and abandoned the amendment. He then proposed instead to translate העבר on the basis of Jer 6:10 as “to warn him,” rather than “to testify concerning him.” Rothstein, while acknowledging that the notion of a woman as young as seventeen testifying poses some problems, nevertheless argues that העבר is best taken in this sense, as

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9 David Rothstein, “Women’s Testimony at Qumran: The Biblical and Second Temple Evidence,” RevQ 21/84 (2004): 597–614, at 599, 601; similarly Moshe J. Bernstein, “Women and Children in Legal and Liturgical Texts from Qumran,” DSD 11 (2004): 191–211, notes that “to admonish” is an unusual translation of קבלת, which generally means “to testify,” and it is difficult to understand how the rest of the sentence, the laws of the Torah and to stand in the hearing of the laws, pertains to the woman” (208). He suggests: “She shall take it upon herself to testify against him (according to?) the laws of the Torah and to be present at the proclamation of the verdict (?)” (208).


12 Baumgarten, “Age of Twenty,” 272–73.


basis of Philo and Josephus, nothing suggests that the concern was intercourse for purposes other than procreation.\footnote{Rothstein, "Women's Testimony," 602–5, 610–11. Cf. Davies and Taylor, "Testimony of Women," 331–32.}

The passage is therefore best understood as addressing marriage as coming also at the point where the man enters the community, but stressing that marital relations must remain within the law as understood by the community. In relation to the latter, then, there are matters on which only the woman had competence to report in the context of a hearing, and she is to do so. It might be seen as a digression, to be dealing with marriage at this point, but it belonged closely together with the man's turning twenty.\footnote{Knibb, *Qumran Community*, notes that this reflects the age of enrolment in the census in Exod 30:14; 38:26; Num 1:3; and 1 Chron 27:23 (149).}


4 Then at the age of twenty [years] 5 [he shall be subject (9) to the census; he shall enter in the midst of his clan by lot to be united with] 6 [the holy Congregation]. (13) Then at the age of thirty (14) he may be promoted to take his place among the chiefs of the [Thousands of Israel], (4Q249d 4–6)

(4Q249d [4Qpap cryptA Serekh ha-'Edah] 4b-6; 1QSa numbering in brackets)

The proposal that *homoioioteleuton* has taken place is slightly complicated by the fact that the words following the second occurrence of דתיה העדה "holy congregation," namely דתיה העדה "and to begin serving the congregation" are also missing, but that may relate to the occurrence of the word, דתיה העדה "congregation." Thus 4Q249d appears to lack the lines 10b-12 and so the statement about marriage, and then to continue with an abbreviated form of 13, referring to the age of thirty years. If the omission is due to *homoioioteleuton*, then this would imply that the text reflected in 1QSa is older than 4Q249d, which Pfann dates to the first half of the second century B.C.E., but that is another issue.\footnote{So Pfann, DJD 36:534.}

Then, at age twenty, [he shall be enrolled] 9,[in the ranks and take his place among the men of his clan, thereby joining the holy congregation]. He must not app[roach] 10 a woman for sexual intercourse before he is fully tw[en]ty years old, when he knows [right] 11. from wrong. From this time on she shall bear witness concerning him in relation to the statutes of the Law, and (he shall) ta[k]e his place among the ranks for the ceremonial proclamation of the ordinances. 12. And when he completes his vacat At age twenty-five, he is eligible to ta[k]e his place among the pillars of the holy 13. congregation and to begin serving the congregation. When he is thirty years old, he may begin to take part in [legal] disputes. 14. Further, he is now eligible for command, whether of the thousands of Israel... (DSSE adapted) (1QSa 1:8–14)

The proposal that *homoioioteleuton* has taken place is slightly complicated by the fact that the words following the second occurrence of דתיה העדה "holy congregation," namely דתיה העדה "and to begin serving the congregation" are also missing, but that may relate to the occurrence of the word, דתיה העדה "congregation." Thus 4Q249d appears to lack the lines 10b-12 and so the statement about marriage, and then to continue with an abbreviated form of 13, referring to the age of thirty years. If the omission is due to *homoioioteleuton*, then this would imply that the text reflected in 1QSa is older than 4Q249d, which Pfann dates to the first half of the second century B.C.E., but that is another issue.\footnote{Ibid.}

4Q249e, of similar age, is different again.
4Q249e contains additions written above the line. Read without them, it also appears to lack reference to the subject matter of 1QSa 1:10-11, namely, of a man’s approaching a woman, and of her testimony, and also to cut off, like 4Q249d, after הַדְּתָ הָרֹדֶשׁ, “holy congregation,” but instead of going straight to age thirty, it continues with what the young man is to do at age twenty-five in its line 8.

There is however a significant addition above line 8, reconstructed by Stephen Pfann as לֹאֹלַד וְכִבְרַּב אֵלָּת אַלֶּחָנָה, “and he shall not approach his wife.” Pfann sees in these words, a reference not to marrying at age twenty (1QSa has חָשֲׂב אַלֶּחָנָה instead of לֹאֹלַד), but to the beginning of a man’s celibacy. He also suggests that what he sees as the expansion in 1QSa is also not about marriage but rather extends the prohibition along the same lines to the effect of forbidding a man to approach any woman in the community. To do so he must read כִּבְרַּב not in its usual sense of “until,” but as the equivalent of כִּבְרַּב on its own, thus: “because, since.” Hence, instead of “he shall not approach a woman… until he is twenty years of age,” he reads “he shall not approach a woman… since he is twenty years of age.” He also suggests that this requirement of celibacy reflects the view that “the genderless nature of the heavenly realm is jeopardized if the human priestly element engages in marital relations,” an assumption without support in the text. It would assume that the passage is dealing exclusively with priests, which seems unlikely, and that the eschatological vision assumes such celibacy, motivated perhaps also by the notion of the military camp, but this runs against evidence elsewhere which suggests a future with abundant offspring. He also argues that a woman’s complaint against her husband would not make sense.

Leaving aside the issue of whether 1QSa represents an expanded version, or, as the homoioteleuton noted above might suggest, the earlier one, one might ask whether it is credible that such a community would find the need to extend the prohibition to apply to sexual approaches to any woman at age twenty and whether לא כִּבְרַּב need mean anything other than “until” in the context. It is also not clear to me why the text would make no sense in requiring a woman to report on her husband in relation to sexual matters.

The text is very fragmentary. It appears that we have in 4Q249e a text similar to 4Q249d in that both originally lack reference to a man approaching a woman or his wife and her testimony, though the omission is longer in 4Q249d than in 4Q249e. 4Q249e contains an addition above line 8 which now does make reference to a man approaching, in this reading, “his wife.” Assuming with Pfann that before כִּבְרַּב and לֹאֹלַד we read וְכִבְרַּב וְלֹאֹלַד אַלֶּחָנָה, “and he shall not approach his wife,” and that no words which followed qualified the statement significantly, we would have in 4Q249e a prohibition. At twenty a married man is to commence his celibate lifestyle, to cease engaging in sexual intercourse with his wife. This assumes he would have already been married, only for a very short time, but long enough to begin a family. One wonders whether this is really credible. If it were, it would be important evidence for the practice of celibacy which secondary sources attribute to some Essenes, but would reflect a two stage process: marriage before twenty, sufficiently long enough before to produce children, then entry into celibacy at twenty. The closest parallel is in the History of the Rechabites, which reports that among those on the island of the blessed some marry, have intercourse only once, thereby produce twins, and thereafter remain celibate for the rest of their lives (11:6-8), but the parallel is remote.

The fragmentary 4Q249e need not, however, be read in this way. An alternative explanation may be that after the word לא אֶחָנָה we read something like דְּתָיֲלִל, “for sexual wrongdoing,” as in 4Q270 (4QDp) 7 i 12-13; 4Q267 (4QPp) 9 vi 4-5, which reads אֶחָנָה כִּבְרַּב וְלֹאֹלַד אַלֶּחָנָה “and whoever approaches his wife for illicit sexual intercourse.” This would then simply be a variant way of expressing the same concern.

20 Ibid., 559.
21 Ibid.
22 See Loader, Dead Sea Scrolls on Sexuality, 376-83.
as in what I consider the more likely reading of 1QSa, namely that
the young man is not to engage in sexual intercourse with his wife in
illicit ways. One might speculate that 4Q249e could have begun with
a defective text as apparently 4Q249d, and that a scribe, aware of the
fuller text, supplemented it above line 8 with what was the original
concern in the omitted lines, namely proper sexual relations in mar-
riage. In a similar way in 7a ליעל appears to have been “added to
the text by a second hand.” In 1QSa it belongs to הביאש(main hints ליעל and was missing in the 4Q249e text.

Our discussion suggests that, if Pfann’s dating is correct, the rela-
tion between 1QSa and the 4Q249d and e texts may be the reverse of
what he assumes and may indicate that 1QSa preserves the older ver-
Sion. It would then have to be dated early second century B.C.E., per-
haps suggesting that its military imagery is more than symbolism. It
appears that 4Q249d has omitted by homoioteleuton what is preserved
in the longer text of 1QSa, that in 4Q249e, which also had a shorter
text, a scribe, knowing the fuller text, has inserted a summary of its
import above line 8, to the effect that the man must avoid any illicit
sexual relations with his wife. Negatively, we do not find 4Q249e to be
evidence of espousal of celibacy.

It remains for me to comment briefly that the remainder of the doc-
ument is not irrelevant to issues of sexuality, but reflects a demarcation
typical of a number of other texts at Qumran. For three days before
the great assembly it requires purity which entails also temporary and
locational celibacy. Outside that sacred space and time there is room
for normal family life, including marriage and sexual relations, wit-
nessed to also by the mention of women and children in the congre-
gation. Its image of differentiated time and space appears to mirror a
widespread understanding in the documents of the eschatological age,
where the same mixture of celibacy and family life is assumed. Our
wider investigation supports the view reflected in CD 7–8, namely
that some among the men of perfect holiness were celibates and that
that was related to their location, and that they were differentiated
from the others who lived in camps, but not as an expression of a less
worthy existence nor as a reflection of Hellenistic asceticism which
deemed sexual relations beyond procreation as unworthy.

23 Pfann, DJD 36:559.
24 See my discussion in Loader, Dead Sea Scrolls on Sexuality, 363–69.
25 See ibid., 369–83.