

Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell, in consultation with Y. Sussmann, and with contributions by Y. Sussmann and A. Yardeni. *Qumran Cave 4: V: Miqṣat Ma'aseh ha-Torah*. Discoveries in the Judaean Desert 10. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. xiv, 235 pp.; 8 plates.

To review this book is no easy matter. Except for a summary of the chapters, anything I can say about the subject most likely will be out-of-date by the time this review appears. For rarely in the history of the field has a book's appearance been so anticipated, rarely have the contents of a published text been so well known and so widely debated among scholars even before its *editio princeps*, and rarely has a book's appearance elicited so much scholarship so quickly. The first two of these "rarely's" are due in no small part to the manner in which Elisha Qimron generously shared the text with his colleagues years before the official publication (on which see more below). And as a sign of the third of these "rarely's," note that within weeks of the book's publication two major panel sessions were held at the annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature (Chicago, November 1994) and the Association for Jewish Studies (Boston, December 1994).

Scholars devoted to the field of Dead Sea Scrolls will not need this review to assist them in the study of the text published by Qimron and fellow author John Strugnell. Rather, since this review appears in a journal read by students of Jewish studies in its broadest conception, I will devote most of my remarks to the broader issues emanating from the publication of this text.

The text is called *Miqṣat Ma'aseh ha-Torah* (MMT), translated by Qimron and Strugnell as "Some Precepts of the Torah." Six manuscripts of this document were found in Qumran cave 4 in the 1950s and were assigned to Strugnell for publication. As Strugnell informs us in his portion of the foreword, "by 1959, the six manuscripts of MMT had been identified, transcribed, materially reconstructed and partly combined into a common text" (p. vii). Strugnell gives us only a few hints as to why his work on the text did not progress beyond that point throughout the 1960s and 1970s. I do not want to open the whole discussion on the delay in publishing the Qumran documents; that is water under the bridge at this point. But one can only wonder how Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship would have been different if this text had been published a quarter-century ago. Not until Qimron approached Strugnell in 1979 with an eye toward publishing the text did any significant progress occur. Eventually Qimron took over the major share of work on the text, and the present volume appears to be more his product than Strugnell's

(only one relatively short chapter “was composed by both Strugnell and myself,” Qimron informs us in his portion of the foreword [p. ix]).

The authors have been criticized in some circles for not publishing the text years earlier. But to Qimron’s credit at least, I want to mention that he shared the text with colleagues at a very early stage in his investigations. I was shown all the material in 1985, though naturally with the understanding that right of publication belonged to Qimron and Strugnell.

What is so important about this text? MMT is a polemical letter sent by the Qumran sect to another group. It discusses in great detail about twenty items of halakhah that separate the writer from the addressee. Furthermore, a third view or a third group is mentioned in the letter at certain points. These three views are called the “‘We’, ‘You’ and ‘They’ Groups” by Qimron and Strugnell (e.g., p. 114), after the text’s own repeated use of the words אֲנַחְנוּ, אַתָּם, and הֵם.

As such, the letter serves as a foundational document for the sect and gives us greater insight into the very formation of the Qumran sect than any previously published document. For here we have the sect expressing its position, that of the “We” group, in contradistinction to the views of the “You” group and the “They” group. And while the earliest of the six extant manuscripts can be dated paleographically to about 75 B.C.E., Qimron and Strugnell present sound arguments for dating the composition of the letter to ca. 155 B.C.E., the “early period in the evolution and history of the Qumran group” (p. 121).

The legal issues discussed in the text revolve around “(a) the cultic calendar; (b) ritual purity (especially in connection with the Temple) and the sacrificial cult; and (c) laws on marital status (in connection with the priests and the Temple)” (p. 131). Qimron and Strugnell consider these to be “the three topics that stood at the center of the controversy between the Jewish religious parties of the Second Temple period” (*ibid.*).

Obviously, scholars working on MMT attempt to identify the three positions noted in the letter with the three “philosophies” of Judaism presented by Josephus (though Qimron and Strugnell enter into only a brief discussion on this issue). One point that all can agree on is that the “They” party represents the Pharisees, for on several occasions the view ascribed to the “They” party in MMT is identical to that found in later tannaitic literature. Furthermore, on several occasions the view of the “We” party in MMT is identical to that attributed to the Sadducees in tannaitic literature (this has been emphasized by L. H. Schiffman in his work both on MMT and on

the Temple Scroll). And yet this does not mean that the Qumran sect is therefore Sadducean. Qimron and Strugnell still subscribe to the reigning Essene hypothesis, but at the early stages of the Qumran sect at least, its approach to matters of Jewish law was closer to that of the Sadducees than to that of the Pharisees. Accordingly the “We” group are Essenes, and in the letter they are trying to convince the addressees, the “You” group, or Sadducees, of the rightness of their ways, especially when contrasted with the “They” group, or Pharisees.

Yaakov Sussmann contributes an appendix (pp. 170–200) on “The History of Halakha and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” essentially a less detailed version of his Hebrew essay in *Tarbiz* 59 (1989–90): 11–76. He discusses the picture presented above extensively and concludes as follows:

The Sadducean halakha mentioned in rabbinic literature was followed not only by the Sadducean aristocrats . . . but also . . . by fanatical religious sects (e.g., Essenes). . . . Only from the perspective of the Pharisees were all the opponents . . . included in the same category . . . they generally speak only of “Sadducees.” . . . The Essenes waged a dual battle: a religious-political struggle . . . against the priestly Sadducean aristocracy, on the one hand, and a religious-halakhic struggle against the opponents of the strict Sadducean tradition (i.e., the Pharisees), on the other. (p. 200)

If the three groups referred to in MMT are indeed the three groups delineated by Josephus (and it seems difficult to conclude anything else), then an important reassessment of sectarianism is forthcoming. A reading of Josephus would lead one to believe that issues of dogma and belief were the main issues that separated Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. But as the MMT text makes clear, it was issues of halakhah that were at the root of sectarianism, a conclusion that is not surprising within the greater scope of Jewish history. Naturally, though, there are ways of dovetailing the two positions. Thus, one may posit that Josephus is writing for a non-Jewish audience for whom issues of ritual purity and the sacrificial cult would seem like minutiae and would be of little interest; whereas for the author of MMT these issues matter greatly and are more significant than any underlying theological or ideological differences.

This volume presents the six manuscripts with notes on the readings and on the script (the latter by Ada Yardeni); a composite text with English translation; a detailed discussion of the grammar and lexicon of the text (not surprising given Qimron’s special interest in this subject); a chapter

on “The Literary Character and the Historical Setting” (this is the section to which Strugnell contributed most directly); a detailed presentation of the halakhah (clearly a major achievement for the authors, since their previous work on Dead Sea Scrolls was on text, language, etc.); the Sussmann essay; a concordance to MMT; a reverse index to MMT; and eight plates with superb photographs of the manuscripts.

In short, everything that a scholar would need for the study of MMT is included in this volume. Scholars in a wide array of fields (history of the Hebrew language, history of Judaism in the Second Temple period, rabbinic literature, and so on) are indebted to the authors, Qimron especially, for their diligence and excellent work in producing this marvelous edition of this crucial text for the study of Judaism.

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Daniel Boyarin. *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994. xi, 366 pp.

In this book, which announces its postmodernism on the first page, the apostle Paul is a “cultural critic” whose critique of Jewish particularism from the inside is of value for Jews and others even today. The best recent scholarship on Paul has abandoned the long-held Christian view that Paul rejected Judaism because of its desiccated legalism. But if Judaism was a vital and attractive force and the commandments of the Torah a source of joy rather than of anxiety, what led Paul to reject the observance of the law? Daniel Boyarin’s answer to this question is that Paul was deeply worried about the status of gentiles in God’s plan for salvation, and he argues that the writings of Paul should be read as directed at this problem.

In Boyarin’s view, it was the dualism Paul shared with so many of his contemporaries that gave him the tools to provide a consistent and thorough answer to this problem. The dualism that came to him from the widely diffused, popular Platonism of the day was both anthropological and hermeneutical. Just as the body is inferior to the soul, the literal meaning of the text of the Torah is inferior to its spiritual meaning. Thus the true Israel consists not of the physical descendants of Abraham, the Jews, but of the spiritual descendants, the Christians, and the true fulfillment of the Torah is