

לשוח IN 1QS 7.15

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Since the very beginning of Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship the word לשוח in 1QS 7.15 has perplexed interpreters and translators. The full passage reads as follows:

והמוציא את יד שמאולו לשוח בה ותענש עשרת ימינ

Whoever brings out his left hand לשוח with it shall be punished ten days.

The interpretations of this problematic word have been numerous, as the following review of the literature will demonstrate.

The first study of the Community Rule was that of W.H. Brownlee, who simply emended the text to read לשוח, which in this context was understood as 'to muffle'.<sup>1</sup> The difficulties with this interpretation are two-fold: grammatical and semantic. The form לשוח is an impossibility, since the expected form would be לשוחה (infinitive construct of final *yodh* verbs ends in *-ôt*). Brownlee, of course, sensed this, as he was compelled to note that his proposed reading was a piel infinitive absolute. Moreover, even if it could be demonstrated that the root שוח can mean 'muffle', it is not clear what or who is being muffled here. Brownlee undoubtedly realized this as well, for he included a question mark in his translation after 'muffle'.

1. W.H. Brownlee, *The Dead Sea Manual of Discipline: Translation and Notes* (BASOR Supplementary Studies, 10-12; New Haven, 1951), pp. 30-31.

Not surprisingly, this emendation did not gain acceptance; the only scholar who concurred was H. Bardtke, though he used 'beschwichtigen'.<sup>1</sup> However, Brownlee keenly noted that 'only the left hand could be put to such ignoble use', a point to which we shall return below.

In the same year that Brownlee's monograph appeared, four European scholars published their translations of the Community Rule. The Latin version of J.T. Milik rendered  $\text{נשׁל}$  as 'in colloquio (gesticulans)'.<sup>2</sup> The other three translations were in French, and they offered a variety of possibilities. G. Lambert concurred with Milik, using 'parler', with the additional note 'pour discourir en gesticulant' and the comparison with the well-known root  $\text{שׁח}$  'speak'.<sup>3</sup> H.E. del Medico opted for 's'écouler', with no explanation offered to justify this translation (though see below).<sup>4</sup> Lastly, J. van der Ploeg gave two possibilities: to read  $\text{נשׁל}$  (with  $\text{šin}$ ) 'pour parler (faire des signes avec sa main?)' or to read  $\text{נשׁל}$  (with  $\text{šīn}$ ) 'pour baisser', though for the latter he added the comment, 'mais qu'est-ce que cela veut dire dans ce contexte?'<sup>5</sup> Each of these options requires some comment.

As Lambert noted, the justification for the renderings 'in colloquio/parler' is the connection with the root  $\text{שׁח}$  'speak', assuming an interchange between medial *waw* and medial *yodh* verbs as commonly occurs in Hebrew. However, since the action of bringing out the left hand 'to speak with it' hardly makes any sense, those scholars who opt for this solution to the problem have had to extend the meaning of  $\text{שׁח}$  to mean 'gesticulate while speaking'. This begins to make sense and one can imagine that this would be a punishable act (van der

1. H. Bardtke, *Die Handschriftenfunde am Toten Meer* (Berlin, 1952). I have been unable to consult this volume and cannot cite the page reference. I quote it via J. Maier (see below, p. 85 n. 2).

2. J.T. Milik, 'Manuale Disciplinae (Textus integri versio)', *VD* 29 (1951), p. 148.

3. G. Lambert, *Le Manuel de Discipline du désert de Juda* (ALBO, 2/23; Louvain, 1951), p. 33 (p. 968) and n. 79.

4. H.E. del Medico, *Deux manuscrits hébreux de la Mer Morte* (Paris, 1951), p. 46.

5. J. van der Ploeg, 'Le "Manuel de Discipline" des rouleaux de la Mer Morte', *BO* 8 (1951), p. 122 and n. 78. (His reading  $\text{swḥ}$  in the body of this translation is obviously an error for  $\text{šwḥ}$ .)

Ploeg also cited 1QS 11.1 and Prov. 6.13 to this effect). However, one is forced to admit that this is stretching the meaning of  $\text{šw h/šy h}$ , especially in an *ad hoc* manner with no additional prooftext or Semitic usage being put forward. Nevertheless, this interpretation of 1QS 7.15 has been the most popular throughout the four decades of Qumran research.

But it is of interest to note what transpired as time passed. Very quickly scholars forgot about the actual meaning of  $\text{šw h/šy h}$  'speak', and instead they simply started using 'gesticulate', as if this were the meaning of this root. Thus, for example, G. Molin<sup>1</sup> and J. Maier<sup>2</sup> both rendered 'gestikulieren(?)', H.A. Brongers's standard Dutch translation uses 'een beweging mee te maken(?)',<sup>3</sup> F.M. Tocci's Italian rendering uses 'gesticolare'<sup>4</sup> and the standard English translations of T.H. Gaster,<sup>5</sup> G. Vermes,<sup>6</sup> and most recently M.A. Knibb<sup>7</sup> all opt for 'gesticulate'. The great legal scholar J.D.M. Derrett has also accepted the interpretation of 'gesticulate' for 1QS 7.15.<sup>8</sup> Note, as well, that whereas earlier scholars still included the question mark, later scholars omitted it.

Having just mentioned Molin, it is apposite to refer to his 1953 article concerning some purported similarities between Egyptian priests and the Qumran community. Molin cited the Hellenistic philosopher Chairemon's report that the former 'ihre Hände in den Ärmeln des Gewandes verborgen hielten', to which he compared our passage in 1QS 7.15.<sup>9</sup> This comparison is interesting, but Molin is too succinct on the matter and

1. G. Molin, *Die Söhne des Lichtes* (Vienna, 1954), p. 28.

2. J. Maier, *Die Texte vom Toten Meer* (Munich, 1960), I, p. 35.

3. H.A. Brongers, *De Gedragsregels der Qoemraan-Gemeente* (Amsterdam, 1958), p. 78.

4. F.M. Tocci, *I manoscritti del Mar Morto* (Bari, 1967), p. 84.

5. T.H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (Garden City, NY, 1964), p. 62.

6. G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 84.

7. M.A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 124.

8. J.D.M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London, 1970), p. xlv n. 2.

9. G. Molin, 'Der gegenwärtige Stand der Erforschung der in Palästina neu gefundenen hebräischen Handschriften', *TLZ* 11 (1953), col. 654.

does not, for example, take note of the fact that 1QS only prohibits the left hand from being brought forth for the purpose of whatever is meant by *לשח*.

Several variations of our 'gesticulate while speaking' hypothesis should be mentioned. J. Carmignac and P. Guilbert translated *לשח בה* as 'pour demander (la parole) ainsi' with the note that literally it means 'pour s'exprimer par elle'.<sup>1</sup> J. Licht's standard Hebrew commentary actually reads the manuscript as *לשיח*, which is certainly understandable given the marked similarity between *waw* and *yod* in Qumran orthography. He then understands the words as simply 'speak', adding *להיעזר בהטעמותיה בשעת הדיבור*.<sup>2</sup> In addition, it is possible that E. Lohse's use of 'fuchteln'<sup>3</sup> is based on Milik's original suggestion of gesticulation, though there is no comment to aid us here.

A. Dupont-Sommer introduced a slight twist with his rendering 'pour manifester ses réflexions'.<sup>4</sup> Clearly this comes from the same root *šwh/šyh* 'speak' which also means 'consider'.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, though Dupont-Sommer does not cite this evidence, our very word *לשח* in Gen. 24.63 was translated *ἀδολεσχηῖσαι* by the LXX, *לצלאה* by Onqelos, and *ad meditantum* by Jerome.<sup>6</sup> Also, in *Berakhot* 26b R. Yose ben Ḥanina deduced Isaac's institution of the *Minḥah* service on the basis of an understanding of *לשח* = 'to meditate' in Gen. 24.63.

Returning to 1951 now, we still have to consider Del Medico's 's'écouler' and van der Ploeg's 'baisser'. The former gives no clue as to how he arrived at his translation. In fact B. Otzen was later to remark, 'What does Del Medico mean by

1. J. Carmignac and P. Guilbert, *Les Textes de Qumran* (Paris, 1961), p. 52.

2. J. Licht, *Megillat ha-Serakhim* (Jerusalem, 1964–65), p. 164.

3. E. Lohse, *Die Texte aus Qumran* (Munich, 1964), p. 27.

4. A. Dupont-Sommer, *Les Écrits esséniens découverts près de la Mer Morte* (Paris, 1980), p. 104. I am unable to consult the original 1959 edition, but I trust the same rendering appears therein.

5. See e.g. BDB, p. 967; and L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden, 1953), p. 919.

6. See G.A. Rendsburg, 'Hebrew *šw/yh* and Arabic *šhḥ* in Y.L. Arbeitman (ed.), *Fucus: A Semitic/Afrasian Gathering in Remembrance of Albert Ehrman* (Amsterdam, 1988), p. 421.

“s’écouler ...”?<sup>1</sup> On the latter suggestion, however, more can be said. Van der Ploeg identified the root as *šwḥ*, a byform of the more common root *šḥḥ*.<sup>2</sup> These lexemes range in meaning from ‘sink’, to ‘bow down, crouch, be low, etc.’ This interpretation of מַשָּׁל has been the second most popular in Dead Sea Scrolls research. Thus we may note since van der Ploeg’s original suggestion the use of ‘bücken (?)’ by K. Schubert,<sup>3</sup> ‘recline’ by P. Wernberg-Møller,<sup>4</sup> ‘lean’ by A.R.C. Leaney,<sup>5</sup> and ‘appoggiarsi’ by L. Moraldi.<sup>6</sup> Here again we may see an extension of meaning since *šwḥ/šḥḥ* means ‘bow down, etc.’, and not necessarily ‘lean’. For the latter to be expressed we would expect the good Hebrew root *š’n*.<sup>7</sup> Wernberg-Møller did add an explanatory note: ‘In other words: they should sit up when eating, and not indulge in lying down. This interpretation suggests itself by the mention of the left hand only, and by the character of the context which deals with table manners.’<sup>8</sup> Although I understand his first sentence as a defense of the shift from ‘bow down, etc.’, to ‘recline’, I fail to follow his line of argument in the second sentence.

In surveying the history of interpretation of IQS 7.15 two novel proposals must now be discussed. Otzen, who correctly noted that the use of *šwḥ/šyḥ* for ‘gesticulate while talking’ is not attested elsewhere, proposed the root of our *crux interpretum* to be *swḥ*, a byform of *shḥ* ‘sweep out, sweep away’.<sup>9</sup> As is well known, *śin* and *samek* interchange both in biblical Hebrew<sup>10</sup> and in Qumran Hebrew,<sup>11</sup> so clearly there is no

1. B. Otzen, ‘Some Text-problems in IQS’, *ST* 11 (1957), p. 94 n. 1.

2. See, e.g., BDB, p. 1005; and Koehler–Baumgartner, *Lexicon*, p. 960.

3. K. Schubert, ‘Die jüdischen und judenchristlichen Sekten im Lichte des Handschriftenfundes von ‘En Fešcha’, *ZKT* 74 (1952), p. 51.

4. P. Wernberg-Møller, *The Manual of Discipline* (Leiden, 1957), p. 32.

5. A.R.C. Leaney, *The Rule of Qumran and its Meaning* (Philadelphia, 1966), p. 198.

6. L. Moraldi, *I manoscritti di Qumran* (Turin, 1971), p. 156.

7. See Koehler–Baumgartner, *Lexicon*, p. 1000.

8. Wernberg-Møller, *Manual*, p. 118.

9. Otzen, ‘Text-problems’, p. 94.

10. J. Blau, *On Pseudo-Corrections in some Semitic Languages* (Jerusalem, 1970), pp. 114-25.

phonological problem present. Otzen further stated: 'We could perhaps assume from these usages [referring to Isa. 5.25, Lam. 3.45, and Prov. 23.29] a figurative meaning of the verb  $\text{סח}$  also: "make a sweeping move, make a move of disgust and repulsion", perhaps like a menacing move'.<sup>1</sup> This interpretation of our passage was then formalized in the Danish translation by Otzen and E. Nielsen where we find the reading 'for at gøre en affejende bevægelse' and the additional note 'egt. [= egentlig] "for at feje bort"'.<sup>2</sup> Several things are ironic here. First, one wonders if del Medico's 's'écouler', which Otzen characterized as puzzling (see above), did not develop out of a similar understanding of  $\text{סח} = \text{סח/סח}$ . Secondly, Nielsen and Otzen's Danish phraseology is not far removed from the gesticulation concept which Otzen saw as improbable. My own opinion of this interpretation is that it too involves an extension of meaning, albeit a slight one, from physical 'sweeping' to figurative 'moving of the hand'. It is perhaps this difficulty which led Wernberg-Møller to refer to Nielsen and Otzen's rendering as a 'suggestion of somewhat dubious value'.<sup>3</sup>

The final proposal I shall present is that of R. Marcus and G.R. Driver. The former agreed that the phrase was difficult, and then added the following words: 'Unfortunately, the only alternative suggestion that occurs to me seems somewhat far fetched, namely that the reading was *šwh*, "to dig", and referred to digging a hole for the purposes of excretion (as the Essenes were supposed to do, according to Josephus). The rabbis had similar prescriptions regarding the use of the right and left hand on such occasions.'<sup>4</sup> In discussion relating mainly to the problem of  $\text{לשח}$  in Gen. 24.63 but also to our passage, Driver accepted Marcus's argument and expanded upon several of

11. E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta, 1986), p. 24.

1. Otzen, 'Text-problems', p. 94.

2. E. Nielsen and B. Otzen, *Dodehaus Teksterne* (Copenhagen, 1959), p. 79.

3. P. Wernberg-Møller, 'Review of E. Nielsen and B. Otzen, *Dodehaus Teksterne*', *RevQ* 1 (1959), p. 541.

4. R. Marcus, 'Textual Notes on the Dead Sea Manual of Discipline', *JNES* 11 (1952), p. 209.

its points.<sup>1</sup> The word לשח is derived from the nominal forms, שחקה, שיקה, שחקה, all meaning 'pit', but it should be noted that Hebrew possesses no verb of this root meaning 'dig'.<sup>2</sup> The rabbinic texts which Driver cited are as follows (I quote only the beginning of each passage; in each case the discussion continues for several more lines):

*Berakhot 62a*

תניא אמר רבי עקיבא פעם אחת נכנסתי אחר ר' יהושע לביית הכסא  
ולמדתי ממנו ג' דברים למדתי שאין נפנין מזרח ומערב אלא צפון  
ודרום ולמדתי שאין נפרעין מעומד אלא מיושב ולמדתי שאין  
מקנדין בימין אלא בשמאל

It has been taught: R. Akiba said: Once I went in after R. Joshua to a privy, and I learnt from him three things. I learnt that one does not sit east and west but north and south; I learnt that one evacuates not standing but sitting; and I learnt that it is proper to wipe with the left hand and not with the right.<sup>3</sup>

*Derekh Eretz Rabbah 7*

הנכנס לביית הכסא לא יחזיר פניו למערבו ולא לאחוריו אלא  
לצדדין ולא יפרע עצמו עד שישב ולא יקנח בימין אלא בשמאל

When entering a privy one should not face west or east but only the sides. He should not expose himself until he sits, and should not wipe himself with the right hand but only with the left.<sup>4</sup>

*Avot de-Rabbi Nathan 40*

הנכנס לביית הכסא לא יחזיר פניו לא למזרח ולא למערב אלא  
לצדדין לא יפרע עצמו מעומד אלא מיושב ולא יקנח אדם עצמו  
הימין אלא השמאל

If one enters a privy, let him turn his face neither to the east nor to the west, but sideways. Nor should he uncover himself stand-

1. G.R. Driver, 'Problems of Interpretation in the Heptateuch', in *Mélanges bibliques A. Robert* (Paris, 1957), pp. 66-68.

2. Driver ('Problems of Interpretation', p. 68 n. 1) states that Aramaic possesses a denominative verb *šwḥ/šyḥ* but I am unaware of it and have not found it listed in any Aramaic dictionary.

3. The English translation is that of I. Epstein, *Berakoth* (London, 1948), p. 388.

4. The English translation is that of A. Cohen, *The Minor Tractates of the Talmud* (London, 1965), II, pp. 554-55.

ing up, but sitting down. Nor shall a man wipe himself with his right hand, but with his left.<sup>1</sup>

By relating QS 7.15 to excretion, Marcus and Driver, unlike others who have dealt with this text, had a natural explanation for why specifically the left hand is mentioned in our passage.<sup>2</sup> From these citations from rabbinic literature, it is clear that the custom among Jews in late antiquity was to use the left hand for the purpose of excretion.<sup>3</sup> As is well known, the same holds true in traditional Arab culture to this day.<sup>4</sup> Marcus does not state which Josephus passage he has in mind, but clearly he must be referring to *War* 2.8.9. Josephus describes the Essene practice of defecation thus: "They dig a trench a foot deep with a mattock—such is the nature of the hatchet which they present to the neophytes—and wrapping their mantle about them that they may not offend the rays of the deity [= the sun], sit above it."<sup>5</sup> In light of all this information, it is clear that Marcus and Driver had developed an attractive solution to the problem of לטח in 1QS 7.15. Oddly, only one other scholar ever referred to this suggestion, and he did so without even citing Marcus and/or Driver. Leaney, although he preferred the rendering 'lean', also did allow for the possibility 'that from 13b onwards . . . the regulations are concerned with correct behaviour when relieving oneself'.<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding the attractiveness of Marcus's and Driver's

1. The English translation is that of J. Goldin, *The Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan* (New Haven, 1955), p. 168.

2. This answers the question posed by Wernberg-Møller (*Manual*, p. 118): 'but why, then, only the left hand?'

3. For further references concerning the association of the left with the ignoble and the inauspicious, see S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1962), pp. 166-67. I owe this reference to Stuart S. Miller of the University of Connecticut. Of course, the concept is actually quite widespread, as indicated by Latin 'sinister', French 'gauche', etc.

4. See, for example, E.W. Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1842), pp. 134, 187. For the use of the left hand for impure purposes (though not specifically excretion) in the ancient Near East, see M. Civil, 'Enlil and Ninlil: The Marriage of Sud', *JAOS* 103 (1983), pp. 46-47.

5. The English rendering is that of H.St.J. Thackeray, *Josephus* (LCL; London, 1927), II, p. 379.

6. Leaney, *Rule*, p. 207.

solution, I still want to reiterate that the lack of a Hebrew verb *šwh* 'to dig' remains a difficulty.

We shall return to this discussion, but first I would like to digress to note connections made by other scholars regarding the left hand in 1QS 7.15. Although Marcus and Driver were the only scholars to relate the left hand specifically to excretion, they obviously were not the only interpreters of the Rule to realize that the left hand is the one reserved for ignoble purposes. Indeed as mentioned at the outset, already Brownlee noted that 'only the left hand could be put to such ignoble use'.<sup>1</sup> Otzen referred to 'the left hand being the *manus sinistra*, likely to cause mischief'.<sup>2</sup> Gaster came close to Marcus and Driver with the general statement 'that the left hand is used in the Near East for all unclean purposes'<sup>3</sup> and Brongers has a very similar statement in his Dutch work.<sup>4</sup>

A more specific proposal was advanced by Dupont-Sommer<sup>5</sup> and Vermes.<sup>6</sup> They noted that according to Philo, *De Vita Contemplativa* 30.77, the Therapeutae required members at the assembly to sit 'with their hands inside the robe, the right hand between the breast and the chin and the left withdrawn along the flank' and disapproval of a speaker to be indicated 'by a gentler movement of the head and by pointing with a finger-tip of the right hand'.<sup>7</sup> Given the many similarities between the Therapeutae and the Qumranites,<sup>8</sup> it is assumed that 1QS 7.15 is to be understood in light of Philo's testimony. This interpretation has been accepted by Carmignac and Guilbert,<sup>9</sup> Leaney,<sup>10</sup> and Knibb.<sup>11</sup>

1. Brownlee, *Dead Sea Manual*, p. 31 n. 30.

2. Otzen, 'Text-problems', p. 94.

3. Gaster, *Dead Sea Scriptures*, p. 110.

4. Brongers, *Gedragregels*, p. 95.

5. Dupont-Sommer, *Les Écrits*, p. 104 n. 6 (already in the 1959 edition, according to Vermes [see next note]).

6. G. Vermes, 'Essenes-Therapeutai-Qumran', *Durham University Journal* 52 (ns 21) (1960), p. 111.

7. The English rendering is that of F.H. Colson, *Philo* (LCL; London, 1941), pp. 131, 161.

8. On this see Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 110-13.

9. Carmignac and Guilbert, *Les Textes*, p. 52 n. 132.

10. Leaney, *Rule*, p. 207.

11. Knibb, *Community*, p. 127.

Another piece of evidence which has been put forward<sup>1</sup> to explain 1QS 7.15 is Josephus's report in *War* 2.8.9 that the Essenes were 'careful not to spit into the midst of the company or to the right'.<sup>2</sup> Although the Qumranites are most often identified with the Essenes, this parallel seems less germane for the understanding of our passage. It is, of course, quite germane for 1QS 7.13 וַיֵּשֶׁב אִישׁ יְרוּק אֶל חֹךְ מוֹשֵׁב הַרְבִּים וַתֵּעַשׂ שְׁלוֹשִׁים יוֹם, but that is another matter.

The problems that לָשַׁח in 1QS 7.15 have caused for interpreters and translators has been demonstrated. Now permit me to contribute to the understanding of 1QS 7.15.

Let us return to Marcus's and Driver's interpretation of the passage which sees here a reference to excretion. In my opinion, they were correct, but for the wrong reasons. As emphasized above, there simply is no Hebrew verb *šwh* 'to dig'. Accordingly, I prefer to avoid emendation, to point our word לָשַׁח (exactly as occurs in Gen. 24.63), and to translate it 'to excrete, defecate, urinate'. Hebraists are always hunting for cognates in the Semitic languages and in the present instance they are readily available: Arabic *šḥḥ*,<sup>3</sup> Soqotri (a modern South Arabian language) *šḥḥ*,<sup>4</sup> and Harari (an Ethiopian language) *šäḥat*,<sup>5</sup> all meaning 'excrete, defecate, urinate'. The sibilant correspondence is perfect among these etyma. It is true that our Hebrew root is medial *waw/yodh* and its Arabic and Soqotri cognates are double *ayin*, but these two verb

1. See Dupont-Sommer, *Les Écrits*, p. 105 n. 6; Carmignac and Guilbert, *Les Textes*, p. 52 n. 132; Knibb, *Community*, p. 127.

2. Thackeray, *Josephus*, II, p. 379.

3. H. Wehr and J.M. Cowan, *Arabic-English Dictionary* (Ithaca, NY, 1976), p. 458.

4. W. Leslau, *Lexique Soqotri* (Paris), p. 427.

5. W. Leslau, *Etymological Dictionary of Harari* (Berkeley, 1963), p. 145. The word *šäḥat* is the noun 'urine', and the verbal usage is *šäḥat äša*, literally 'make urine'. The Harari term could be a borrowing from Arabic, especially since the Harari are Muslims and have many Arabic loanwords in their lexicon. Leslau also calls attention to the following Cushitic cognates: Bilin *šaḡ*, *šaḥ*, Qemant *šaḡ*, Khamir *ṣaq*.

classes often interchange. Compare, as an analogy, Hebrew *nwt* (see Ps. 99.1) and Arabic *ntt*.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that Marcus's and Driver's *Textgefühl* was characteristically excellent and that their broad knowledge of Hebrew literature led them to the afore-cited rabbinic texts which connect the left hand with the bodily functions. But their attempt to introduce a non-existent verb into the language was unnecessary. Their proposed *šwh* 'dig a hole' is on a par with extending the meanings of *šwh* to 'gesticulate' and *šhh* to 'lean'. In defense of my own introduction of *šwh* 'excrete, defecate, urinate' into the Hebrew lexicon, I would cite the most famous passage where this word may be seen, 1 Kgs 18.27. Jewish tradition has always understood the byform מוּשָׁב (and the word מוּשָׁב [together these two terms apparently form a hendiadys]) to refer to excretion.<sup>2</sup> It is more than probable that Gen. 24.63, Isa. 5.25, and Prov. 23.29 also reflect this meaning.<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, I view 1QS 7.15 as a reference to excretion. However, given the widespread practice of using the left hand for bodily functions, it is extremely doubtful if this is what our passage is prohibiting. Rather, it states that it is an offense to urinate/defecate in the Assembly of the Many (מושב הרבים), with the left hand mentioned presumably for stylistic or literary purposes. Moreover, this interpretation of 1QS 7.15 fits the context of this section of the Rule, since the preceding laws deal with obscene acts such as nudity and spitting.

### Appendix

I now refer to two other items, one of some minor curiosity, the other of some major import. For the former, I want to return to the unexplained translation of מוּשָׁב by Del Medico in 1951 as 's'écouler'. Curiously, eighteenth-century French did use the

1. See L. Kopf, 'Arabische Etymologien und Parallelen zum Bibelwörterbuch', *VT* 8 (1958), p. 183.

2. See Targum Jonathan and Rashi on this verse. I have written a detailed article on this verse; see G.A. Rendsburg, 'The Mock of Baal in 1 Kgs 18.27', *CBQ* 50 (1988), pp. 414-17.

3. For details, see Rendsburg, 'Hebrew *šw/yh*', pp. 419-30.

noun 'écoulement' to refer to urination.<sup>1</sup> Is it possible that this is what Del Medico intended already in the days of Qumran scholarship's infancy? I doubt it. The standard dictionaries record no such usage for 's'écouler' and the native French speakers and professors of French I have consulted confirm this for me. It remains a curiosity.

Of more importance is the following. After I had independently developed my own interpretation of לשוח in 1QS 7.15, I discovered that I had been anticipated by several decades by the great dictionary of Eliezer ben Yehuda. Its final volume, published in 1959 under the direction of N.H. Tur-Sinai, includes the following statement under the entry שוח: וּבְמַגְלַח סֶרֶךְ הַיַּחַד מְמַדְבֵּר יְהוּדָה, בַּמִּשְׁמָה הַפִּיל מִים, הַשְׂחִין drawn to the Arabic cognate *šḥḥ*.<sup>2</sup> It is striking that for approximately thirty years now this understanding of 1QS 7.15 has been available to interpreters and translators of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and yet it has not found its way into the vast secondary literature. The reason for this is obvious: Ben Yehuda's encyclopaedic compilation is extremely underutilized by scholars of Hebrew and interpreters of Hebrew literature. J.F.A. Sawyer has recently decried this situation.<sup>3</sup> He is absolutely correct that the Ben Yehuda goldmine is too often neglected; the example presented here may serve as a paradigm thereof. Furthermore, I trust that the lesson which can be learned from this discussion will send scholars to comb the pages of Ben Yehuda. It is a vast reserve whose many nuggets await extraction.

1. See A. Rey (ed.), *Le Grand Robert de la langue française* (Paris, 1986), III, p. 770.

2. E. Ben Yehuda, *Millon ha-Lashon ha-Ivrit* (New York, 1959), XVI, p. 7531.

3. J.F.A. Sawyer, 'The Role of Jewish Studies in Biblical Semantics', in H.L.J. Vanstiphout, et al. (eds.), *Scripta Signa Vocis: Studies about Scripts, Scriptures, Scribes and Languages in the Near East presented to J.H. Hospers* (Groningen, 1986), pp. 202-203.