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Historiography in the Dead Sea Scrolls

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Abstract

Historiographical writing is woefully under-represented in the Scrolls. This fact may be due in part to ideological reasons. The sectarians were not disposed to preserve the praises of the Maccabees, and they seem to have been far more interested in the niceties of halakah than in historical records. But in part it is also due to chance. The *peshtarim* presuppose familiarity with historical traditions, whether oral or written, that have not survived. The so-called annalistic texts provide a glimpse of the form those traditions may have taken. These texts are not historiography on the grand scale of the books of Maccabees or Josephus, but they are historical records, however minimal, and they show that Judeans between the Maccabees and Josephus, including the sectarians known from the Scrolls, were not entirely indifferent to historical memory.

Keywords

Historiography; apocalyptic; peshtarim; ex eventu prophecy; annalistic lists; calendars

To speak of historiography in the Dead Sea Scrolls is largely to speak of an absence. The Scrolls contain no historical narratives that could be compared to the books of Maccabees or the writings of Josephus. In the words of Armin Lange, “the classical Greek and modern concepts of historiography do not apply to this type of literature. At Qumran, only a few fragments were found that appear to recall history by mentioning historical personae and their deeds by name (e.g. 4Q332–333, 4Q468e) and are in some way comparable to Greek historiography.”¹

¹ Armin Lange with Ulrike Mittmann-Richert, “Annotated List of the Texts from the Judean Desert Classified by Content and Genre,” in *The Texts from the*

It is not the case that the people who wrote and gathered the Scrolls had no interest in the past, but they were interested in it for the light it might shed on their own situation in the present.² In part, their interest in history resembles what we find in the apocalyptic writings: a concern for the broad sweep of history and their own place within it, and for the patterns they perceived on the macro-historical level.³ In other part, their treatment of history is more distinctive, especially in their intense interest in the fulfillment of prophecy in the history of their time. The lack of historical narrative, however, is striking, as is the absence of details such as the name of their Teacher. It has been noted that even the historical books that we know as biblical, the books of Kings and Chronicles, are poorly represented in the Scrolls. There are only three manuscripts of Kings, one each from caves 4, 5, and 6. One manuscript, 4Q118, has been identified as a copy of Chronicles. Part of one column corresponds to 2 Chron 28:27–29:3. But the other column has no parallel in Chronicles, and so it is questionable whether this actually is a copy of the book as such.⁴ It has been suggested that the sectarians avoided Chronicles because of its strong focus on Jerusalem and the temple,⁵ but this seems unlikely. There are plenty of texts that focus on Jerusalem and the temple among the Scrolls. There is nothing to indicate that Chronicles was regarded as authoritative scripture by the sectarians, or that they attached any special importance to it. Ideological considerations probably do account, however, for the absence of 1 Maccabees from the caves. While the relations of the sectarians to the Hasmonean dynasty may have been more complex than is often supposed, they surely did not share the enthusiasm for the Maccabees that is reflected in the Hasmonean court history.

Judaeen Desert. Indices and an Introduction to the Discoveries in the Judaeen Desert Series (ed. Emanuel Tov; DJD 39; Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 120.

² I assume that the Scrolls are a sectarian collection, although it is unlikely that they all belonged to the library of the community that lived at Qumran.

³ On apocalyptic historiography see now Michael E. Stone, *Ancient Judaism. New Visions and Views* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011), 59–89.

⁴ George J. Brooke, “Types of Historiography in the Qumran Scrolls,” in *Ancient and Modern Scriptural Historiography. L’Historiographie Biblique, Ancienne et Moderne* (ed. George J. Brooke and Thomas Römer; BETL 207; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), 211–30 at 214.

⁵ James C. VanderKam and Peter W. Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Significance for Understanding the Bible, Judaism, Jesus, and Christianity* (San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), 118.

Apocalyptic Historiography

Probably the best known historiographical, or quasi-historiographical passage in the sectarian Scrolls is found in the opening column of the *Damascus Document*:

For when they were unfaithful in forsaking him, he hid his face from Israel and from his sanctuary and delivered them up to the sword. But when he remembered the covenant with the forefathers, he saved a remnant for Israel and did not deliver them up to destruction. And in the period of wrath, 390 years after delivering them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, he visited them and caused to sprout from Israel and from Aaron a root of planting, in order to possess his land and to become fat with the good things of its soil. And they realized their iniquity and knew that they were guilty, but they were like blind people and those who grope for a path over twenty years. And God appraised their deeds, because they sought him with an undivided heart, and raised up for them a Teacher of Righteousness, in order to direct them in the path of his heart. (CD 1:3–11)

This passage is highly schematic. It presupposes the pattern of sin-punishment-restoration familiar from the Deuteronomistic History. The rise of the sect is located a significant time after the Babylonian Exile, but the figure of 390 is symbolic—it is the number of years assigned for the punishment of Israel in Ezek 4:5. Although this has often been taken to indicate an approximate date for the origin of the sect, it has no reliable chronological value—any more than the seventy weeks of years, or 490 years, which is given in Dan 9 as the period from the destruction of Jerusalem to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. (The actual period was approximately 420 years). The *Damascus Document* is not concerned with chronology (although the 20 years of groping has some value for understanding the way in which the movement developed). Rather, it is concerned to illustrate the ways in which God works in history, and to suggest that the author's group represented the elect of the last days.⁶

⁶ This is not the only passage in the *Damascus Document* that uses history for paranetic purposes. For a fuller treatment see Albert I. Baumgarten, "The Perception of the Past in the Damascus Document," in *The Damascus Document: A Centennial of Discovery. Proceedings of the Third International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 4–8 February, 1998* (ed. Joseph M. Baumgarten et al.; STDJ 34; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 1–15.

In the *Damascus Document*, this passage is found in a hortatory section of the text, known as the Admonition. The use of history, however, is reminiscent of the apocalypses of the early second century. The *Apocalypse of Weeks* in *1 Enoch* is at least as schematic in its overview of history. There too plant imagery is used to identify the elect group that arises at the end of history. In Daniel, this role is taken by the *maskilim*, or wise teachers, who arise in the time of persecution in Dan 11, although that passage is somewhat atypical in its historical detail. The schematic overview of history, culminating in the rise of an elect group, is so typical of the apocalyptic writings of the Maccabean era that scholars like Martin Hengel assumed that they must all refer to the same movement, the Hasidim. That view is no longer compelling. There was more than one elect group in this era. But these texts do testify to a common way of viewing history in highly schematic terms, to highlight the rise of an elect group in the final period.

The book of Daniel, and most of the books of Enoch (except for the *Similitudes*) are found at Qumran in multiple copies. There are also some previously unknown texts that present history in the form of *ex eventu* prophecy. Examples are found in 4Q390, which has been variously identified as pseudo-Jeremiah or pseudo-Moses, and in the pseudo-Daniel texts (4Q243–244, 245).

4Q390 is notable for exempting the first generation after the Exile from the general corruption of the post-Exilic period, which was subject to the “angels of destruction.” The text is fragmentary, and does not extend to the final restoration, but it evidently deals with the broad sweep of history in schematic terms. It is unlikely that the positive judgment on the first generation after the Exile has any basis beyond the traditional scriptures.

The Aramaic pseudo-Daniel texts (4Q243–244) are also largely paraphrases of biblical history in the guise of prophecy. They offer a few interesting variations. The destruction at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar is attributed to the sacrifice of children to the demons of error, but again it is unlikely that this statement was based on any independent tradition. It is apparent, however, that Pseudo-Daniel included some historical information beyond what is found in the traditional scriptures, in the prophecy of the Hellenistic period. There is a fragmentary name ending in “-rhos, son of...” (the Aramaic “rh” reflects a double *rho* in Greek) and mention of a figure called Balacros (a relatively common Hellenistic name). Unfortunately, the text is too fragmentary to allow us to reconstruct the historical events to which it refers. The text ends with the in-gathering of the elect.

The second Pseudo-Daniel text, 4Q245, also contains historical information that is not derived from the traditional scriptures.⁷ Fragments of two columns survive. The first column mentions Daniel's name, and "a book that was given." Then it gives a list of names. The first part of the list gives the names of High Priests, beginning with Levi and Qahath. This is followed by a list of kings beginning with David and Solomon. The second fragment refers to the end of wickedness and eschatological restoration.

The list of priests preserves the names of Bukki, Uzzi, Zadok, Abiathar and Hilkiah. All of these, except for Abiathar are found in 1 Chron 5:27–41. Since no other list begins as far back as Levi and Qahath, this may suggest that Pseudo-Daniel drew on Chronicles here (despite the near absence of manuscripts of Chronicles from the Scrolls). It is also possible, however, that Pseudo-Daniel and the Chronicler had a common source, which they adapted in slightly different ways. The inclusion of Abiathar shows that, unlike Chronicles, Pseudo-Daniel's list was not confined to the Zadokite line. Michael Wise argues that the list would also have included the five High Priests descended from Ithamar, beginning with Eli, who held office immediately before Zadok according to Josephus.⁸ (The argument is based on the space available). If this were so, then Pseudo-Daniel must have had available a list of High Priests similar to that presupposed by Josephus, but that argument depends on the filling of a lacuna.

The most interesting part of Pseudo-Daniel's list of High Priests, however, lies in the extension of the list beyond the period covered by Chronicles. The names חוניה (Onias) and שמעון (Simon) are clearly preserved, and the name before the latter ends with תן- and can only be Jonathan. So the list included at least two Hasmonean High Priests. Wise reasons that the list skipped at least eleven High Priests in the Persian and early Hellenistic period and resumed about the year 200 B.C.E. Wise also supposes that the list continued to John Hyrcanus and perhaps Judah Aristobulus, but Simon is the last name actually preserved. The last king whose name is preserved is Joash, but that list probably extended down to the Babylonian exile.

4Q245 raises various interesting questions about the attitude of its author to the Hasmonean priest kings. The list contains no comment.

⁷ For the text, see John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, "245. 4Qpseudo-Daniel^c ar," *DJD* 22:153–64.

⁸ Michael O. Wise, "4Q245 (4QpsDan^c ar) and the High Priesthood of Judas Maccabaeus," *DSD* 12 (2005): 313–62 at 329–31; cf. Josephus *Ant.* 5.361–362.

Jonathan and Simon appear as legitimate as their Zadokite predecessors. My concern in this paper, however, is not with the substance of the history preserved, but with Pseudo-Daniel as historiography, or at least as witness to a kind of historiography that is poorly attested in the Scrolls. This consists of preserving historical memory in the form of lists. The lists, no doubt, were made for a purpose. In this case, the separate lists of High Priests and Kings may have been meant to show that the two offices should not be combined, as they eventually were, at least by Alexander Jannaeus. But in the process, they preserve a record of historical succession. In large part the lists are compiled from traditional scriptures, but it is apparent that the author was prepared to modify the traditional lists (by including at least Abiathar in the list of High Priests) and to extend it, whether the extension was based on written sources or on oral tradition.

In 4Q245, the mention of Daniel suggests that the lists were presented as part of a revelation, although the text is too fragmentary to be sure. There are other lists among the Scrolls, mostly culled from the Scriptures. 4Q339 gives a list of “the false prophets who arose in [Israel].” The last line of the fragment only preserves the letters נח. Alexander Rofé and Elisha Qimron proposed that the line should be restored to read “Yohanan ben Shim’on,” or John Hyrcanus, who was said to have the gift of prophecy. The editors, Magen Broshi and Ada Yardeni decided that it was simpler to restore “the prophet from Gibeon,” since Hananiah son of Azur was from Gibeon.⁹ If the restoration of Hyrcanus were correct, the list would be compiled for the purpose of stigmatizing a recent or contemporary figure. If the reference is to Hananiah, then it is simply a matter of classifying information from the biblical text. 4Q340 provides a list of *netinim*, or temple servants. Such lists can be found in Ezra 2:43–54 and Neh 7:46–56, but the very fragmentary list from Qumran does not correspond to these. Later, in the Talmud, they are prohibited from marrying unblemished Israelites, and they were equated with bastards (*m. Qidd.* 4:1). The editors suggest that this is a list of blemished people unfit for marriage.¹⁰ They restore the name Tobiah in the last line, but only טב is preserved. This interpretation of the text was challenged by Shaye Cohen, who saw no

⁹ Magen Broshi and Ada Yardeni, “4QList of False Prophets ar,” DJD 19:77–79 at 79.

¹⁰ Magen Broshi and Ada Yardeni, “4QList of Netinim,” DJD 19:81–84 at 82.

polemical purpose at work.¹¹ Cohen saw the making of lists as a scholarly activity, and evidence for the Hellenization of Judaism. Whether list-making requires Hellenistic influence seems to me doubtful, but I agree with Cohen that this is scholarly activity. Insofar as the data listed are historical, it is also a kind of rudimentary historiography. At least it displays an interest in preserving and organizing information about the past. This remains true even if the compositions had a polemical purpose.

The Pesharim

Another aspect of historiography in the Scrolls is highlighted by the *Pesharim*. George Brooke has properly insisted that “the *pesharim* are not an overt form of history writing, are not outlines of past events, recent or otherwise.”¹² Nonetheless he suggests that “the *pesharim* may indeed be considered as a type of historiography.”¹³ As stated explicitly in the *Pesher Habakkuk* (6:12–7:8), the prophets did not properly understand their own oracles. These refer not to the time of the prophets, but to the time of the interpreter. Consequently, the prophecies were still unfulfilled, and could be used to shed light on the time of the interpreter. The validity of the interpretations, according to Brooke, is discernible in the use of “a variety of hermeneutical methods as keys to unlocking the present meaning of past utterances.”¹⁴

My own view of the relevance of the *pesharim* to the question of historiography in the Scrolls is somewhat different. They do convey historical information, but this is not their primary purpose, and so I would hesitate to describe them as “historiographical.” Moreover, while the *pesharim* certainly make use of “a variety of hermeneutical methods,” this is not what

¹¹ Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Hellenism in Unexpected Places,” in *Hellenism in the Land of Israel* (ed. John J. Collins and Gregory E. Sterling; Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University, 2001), 216–23 at 220.

¹² Brooke, “Types of Historiography,” 218. Whether this means that they cannot be used for modern historical reconstruction, as Brooke argues, is a different issue. Historical information can be inferred from texts that were not composed for the purpose of conveying it.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

establishes the validity of their interpretations. That validity derives from the authority of the Teacher of Righteousness, even though he personally cannot have been the author of all the *pesharim*. This is stated explicitly in the Peshier on Habakkuk 7:3–5: “And when it says, so that he can run who reads it, its interpretation concerns the Righteous Teacher, to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants the prophets.” In the early days of the interpretation of the Scrolls there was a debate as to whether the *pesharim* were guided by hermeneutical principles such as we find in the later Midrash (so Brooke’s teacher, William Brownlee)¹⁵ or rather claimed to be inspired interpretation, in the tradition of Dan 9 (so Karl Elliger).¹⁶ The dichotomy was shown to be unnecessary by Lou Silberman: even the “revealed” interpretation of Jeremiah in Dan 9 makes use of hermeneutical principles.¹⁷ But it is important to note that the *pesharim* do not base their claim to validity on hermeneutical techniques, but rather on the authority of the Teacher.

The *pesharim* are written to assure the faithful that their vindication is guaranteed by prophecy, and that prophecy is being fulfilled in their time. In order to show that prophecy is being fulfilled they identify certain historical events that have already taken place as fulfillment of prophecy, and this provides assurance that the prophecies are also reliable with regard to things that have not yet come to pass. In this regard, the logic of the *pesharim* resembles that of *ex eventu* prophecies in apocalypses. It requires that they refer to some actual events that were known to the intended readers. Fictional characters and events would provide no evidence of the reliability of prophecy.¹⁸ Moreover, the *pesharim* do not construct a full narrative of the events to which they allude. Rather, they allude to isolated events as the biblical text offers occasion. These events are primarily events in the first

¹⁵ W. H. Brownlee, “Biblical Interpretation among the Sectaries of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *BA* 14 (1951): 54–76.

¹⁶ Karl Elliger, *Studien zum Habakkuk Kommentar vom Toten Meer* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1953), 157–64.

¹⁷ Lou H. Silberman, “Unriddling the Riddle: A Study in the Structure and Language of the Habakkuk Peshier,” *RevQ* 3 (1961): 323–64 at 326–27.

¹⁸ See my articles, “Prophecy and Fulfillment in the Qumran Scrolls,” in *Seers, Sibyls and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (JSJSup 54; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 301–14; “Prophecy and History in the Pesharim,” in *Authoritative Scriptures in Ancient Judaism* (ed. M. Popović; JSJSup 141; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 209–26.

half of the first century B.C.E., not events from the biblical period.¹⁹ In order to refer to these events, the *peshtarim* have to rely on tradition, whether oral or written, and in many cases that tradition is no longer available to us. They show, however, that an account of historical events from the early first century B.C.E. was known to the authors and presumed readers of the *peshtarim*, even though that account has not been preserved apart from its secondary usage in the commentaries. Herein, I suggest, lies the main importance of the *peshtarim* for the question of historiography in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The use of history in the *peshtarim* is most clearly evident in *Pesher Nahum*, which explicitly mentions “Deme]trius King of Greece,” who sought to enter Jerusalem on the advice of the “Seekers after Smooth Things.”²⁰ There follows a statement that “[Jerusalem was not given] into the hand of the kings of Greece from Antiochus to the rise of the rulers of the Kittim, but afterwards it will be trampled” (4Q169 3–4 i 3). The reference here is to Demetrius III Akairos (94–88 B.C.E.) who was invited by the Jewish opponents of King Alexander Jannaeus. He defeated Jannaeus in battle but suffered heavy losses and withdrew from Judea.²¹ The Kittim in the *peshtarim* are universally recognized as the Romans, and the reference to the trampling of Jerusalem may well be *ex eventu*, written after the conquest of Jerusalem by Pompey. This passage is exceptional in mentioning actual names, but, as Timothy Lim has put it, it gives the reader “the clearest indication that the pesherist was indeed interested in history. His commentary was not just an exegetical and literary play on the words and oracles of the prophet Nahum, but in it was also a concern for contemporary life and events.”²²

The following passage in *Pesher Nahum* is an interpretation of Nah 2:13: “the lion tears enough for his cubs, and strangles prey for his lionesses.” This is interpreted as “concerning the Lion of Wrath, who would strike with his great ones and the men of his counsel” (4Q169 3–4 i 5). Nahum 2:13b, “and it fills up] its cave [with prey], and its den with torn flesh,” is

¹⁹ Michael O. Wise, “Dating the Teacher of Righteousness and the *Floruit* of his Movement,” *JBL* 122 (2003): 53–87.

²⁰ 4Q169 3–4 i 1–2. The commentary is on Nah 2:12–14. See Shani Berrin, *The Pesher Nahum Scroll from Qumran: An Exegetical Study of 4Q169* (STDJ 53; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 87.

²¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.372–416.

²² Timothy H. Lim, *Peshtarim* (London: Continuum, 2002), 68–69.

interpreted with reference to “the Lion of Wrath” and “the Seekers after Smooth Things,” and says that “he would hang men up alive.” The “Lion of Wrath” is almost universally identified as Alexander Jannaeus, who had eight hundred of his opponents crucified.²³ It is generally accepted that the opponents, the “Seekers after Smooth Things,” are the Pharisees. While this interpretation is prompted by the violent actions of the lion in the biblical text, it is apparent that the details of the interpretation are not derived exegetically, but allude to historical events known to the reader. In this case, we are fortunate to know what the events were, because they are described in some detail by Josephus (*Ant.* 13.379–383). The authors of the *peshar* did not have Josephus, or any other written historical narrative of these events known to us. But they evidently had a tradition about these events, whether written or oral, that corresponds in some details to the account found more than a century later in Josephus. The sectarian community evidently had historical traditions that are not preserved in narrative form in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Just as the authors of Pseudo-Daniel had information about someone called “Balacros,” so the authors of the *pesharim* had traditions about the conflicts in the reign of Alexander Jannaeus.

Historiographical Texts among the Scrolls

While we do not have the sources from which the authors of the *pesharim* drew their information, we do have some fragmentary texts that modern scholars have regarded as historiographical.

4Q248, formerly identified as “Acts of a Greek King,” was published in DJD 36 as Historical Text A, by Magen Broshi and Esther Eshel.²⁴ It consists of a single fragment, translated by its editors as follows:

]Egypt and in Greece and [
] he shall magni[fy (himself)] thus they shall eat
 [of] their [son]s and daughters in the siege in [
 [and] the Lord shall cau[se] a spirit to go []their lands and [
 [And] he shall come to Egypt and sell its land. And he shall come

²³ Berrin, *Peshar Nahum*, 104–9. Gregory L. Doudna, *4Q Peshar Nahum: A Critical Edition* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 557–73, regards him as a gentile king. The “Lion of Wrath” is also mentioned in 4QpHos^b 2 2–4.

²⁴ DJD 36:192–200.

to the Temple city and seize it and al[
 and he shall overthrow lands of (foreign) nations and (then) return to
 Egyp[t]
 And when the shattering of the power of the ho[ly] people [comes to
 an end]
 [then shall] all these things [be fulfilled] the children of [Israel] shall
 return [

This text was originally dubbed “Acts of a Greek King.” In the DJD edition the editors suggest that it is “a genuine historical composition which is part of an apocalyptic work. Historical events are represented in apocalyptic works in an accurate way in order to persuade the reader that the apocalyptic vision will soon also be fulfilled.”²⁵ They understand it on the analogy of Dan 11, and take it to refer to the career of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who invaded Egypt twice. Crucial to their interpretation is their construal of the second last line, which they read as נפצ יד עם הק[דש]. Precisely this sequence of words is found in Dan 12:7: “when the shattering of the power of the holy people is complete.” Many scholars have emended the Danielic text by transposing the words יד and נפצ and translating “when the power of the shatterer of the holy people comes to an end.” Broshi and Eshel take the Qumran text as confirmation of the order of the words in Daniel, and suggest that it was a source for Daniel, written before the outbreak of persecution in Jerusalem. This ingenious interpretation, however, is highly questionable. Epiphanes besieged Alexandria twice, but neither siege was severe, and the editors have to regard the reports of cannibalism as gross exaggeration. There is no record of Epiphanes selling land in Egypt, although he did this in Jerusalem, according to Dan 11:39. The reference to the return of the children of Israel at the end is reconstructed. The text may have referred to a mundane, not eschatological, return of some group. Most crucially, however, the reading נפצ יד is problematic. Only the ligature of the *nun* of נפצ is preserved, and the *pe* looks more like a *bet*. J. T. Milik read this line as נב[ב]ציר עם הק[דש].²⁶ Michael Wise translates “[The destroyer shall fall] upon the vintage and the sum[mer fruits].”²⁷

²⁵ Ibid., 192.

²⁶ B. Z. Wacholder and M. G. Abegg, *A Preliminary Edition of the Unpublished Dead Sea Scrolls* (Washington: Biblical Archeology Society, 1995), 3:33.

²⁷ M. Wise, M. Abegg, and E. Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls, A New Translation* (San Francisco: Harper, 1996), 271.

This reading has its own problems. The fourth letter seems to be a *dalet* rather than a *resh*, and should perhaps be read as בַּצִּיד, “with provisions.” In this case, line 9 is not an eschatological turning point in the text, but simply a continuation of the prediction, whether *ex eventu* or not, and the text is related to Dan 11–12 only in a general way.²⁸

Since the events in this passage are narrated in the future tense, Broshi and Eshel are probably right that this text is a fragment of a pseudo-prophetic work. It may be an *ex eventu* account, such as we find in Dan 11. It may possibly refer to Antiochus Epiphanes. In that case, it preserves some historical tradition, notably the information that he came to Jerusalem after his first invasion of Egypt, as claimed by 1 Macc 1:20–28. It may even constitute evidence that Epiphanes sold land in Egypt. But none of this is certain. Wise suggests that the narrative relates to Ptolemy I Soter, who first captured Jerusalem and then returned there to rule. Moreover, the entire sequence could conceivably be a fantasy of future events. The designation of this composition as an “Historical Text” then seems dubious. It is more likely to be a pseudo-prophetic text, which may incorporate historical traditions, in the manner of Daniel 11 or the Pseudo-Daniel texts. It is not a primary historiographical document.

The same can be said for 4Q386, a pseudo-Ezekiel prophetic text, which contains an *ex eventu* prophecy.²⁹ The relevant passage is in col. 2:

And the Lord said: A Son of Belial will scheme to oppress my people, but I will not allow him; and his kin will not survive, nor will there be left from the impure one any seed; and from the caperbush there shall be no wine, nor will a hornet make any honey. [*vacat*]. And the wicked one I will slay at Memphis but my children I will bring forth from Memphis, and their rem[na]nt I shall return.

Devorah Dimant, in the DJD edition, argued that the “son of Belial” and the “wicked one” were two different people. She identified the former with

²⁸ See further my article, “New Light on the Book of Daniel from the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Perspectives in the Study of the Old Testament and Early Judaism. A Symposium in Honour of Adam S. van der Woude on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday* (ed. Florentino García Martínez and Ed Noort; VTSup 73; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 180–96 at 191–95.

²⁹ Devorah Dimant, *Qumran Cave 4, XXI, Parabiblical Texts, IV* (DJD 30; Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 53–69.

Antiochus Epiphanes and the latter with some historical figure active in Memphis during the reign of Epiphanes or shortly thereafter.³⁰ A more plausible interpretation was offered by Hanan Eshel, who argued that that both references are to the same figure, and that he should be identified as Pompey, who was murdered on a boat outside the port of Pelusium in 48 B.C.E.³¹ A more accurate reference to Pompey's death can be found in the *P₃. Sol.* 2, and this shows that the details of his death were known in Judea. Eshel argues that 4Q386 mentions Memphis as the place of death to make it accord with prophecy (Hos 9:6: "but Egypt shall gather them, Memphis shall bury them"). For our present purposes, the point to note is that the author was aware of, and drew on, historical traditions, even though his work was not directly historiographical.

The So-called "Annalistic Lists"

More promising for our quest for historiographical works among the Scrolls are a few fragmentary scrolls, 4Q331–333, that mention the names of historical individuals and also mention priestly courses.³² Three different manuscripts are distinguished, and they do not overlap, but it remains uncertain whether they are copies of a single text or of three similar compositions. Milik associated these fragments with the *Mishmarot* (texts relating to the priestly courses).³³ The priesthood was divided into 24 courses, which took turns serving in the Temple for a week at a time. Consequently the name of a priestly course could be used to identify a particular week.

³⁰ Dimant, DJD 30:56.

³¹ Hanan Eshel, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hasmonean State* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 157–59.

³² Kenneth Atkinson, "Representations of History in 4Q331 (4QpapHistorical Text C), 4Q332 (4QHistorical Text D), 4Q333 (4QHistorical Text E), and 4Q468e (4QHistorical Text F): An Annalistic Calendar Documenting Portentous Events?" DSD 12 (2007): 125–51; Eshel, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hasmonean State*, 133–50.

³³ See J. A. Fitzmyer, "331. 4QpapHistorical Text C," DJD 36:275–80. For the texts classified as *Mishmarot* see Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov, *Calendrical and Sapiential Texts* (The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader 4; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 2–53.

The Mishmarot texts typically co-ordinate the service of the priestly courses with other details of the calendar, including the festivals:

The (first day of the) seventh (month falls) in (the week of) Immer; this is the Day of Rememb[rance. In (the week of) Hezir, in it (falls) the Day of Atonement; in (the week of) Happi]sses, in it (falls) the Festival of Booths. (4Q329 6 9).

4Q331–333 are distinctive in mentioning names of historical figures. Consequently, they were eventually labeled “Historical Texts.” The genre and purpose of these texts, however, is still disputed, and the dispute is aggravated by the fragmentary nature of the texts.

4Q331 has ten fragments, but some of these only contain a few letters. Most notable are the names that are preserved. Fragment 1 i mentions “priest who all” and, on the next line “Yohanan to bring to.” This Yohanan is usually taken to be John Hyrcanus, but Hanan Eshel notes that all the other names in these fragments date from the first century B.C.E.³⁴ Fragment 1 ii mentions Shelamzion (Queen Salome Alexandra, widow of Alexander Jannaeus), without any indication of context. Another fragment mentions Eliashib, the ancestral name of one of the priestly courses.

4Q332 has only three fragments. They are slightly better preserved than those of 4Q331, but still have no complete sentences. The first refers to the priestly course of Jedaiah, but goes on to mention that some people were “embittered in soul,” and refers to “prisoners.” The second fragment reads:

to give him honor among the Arabs
on the ninth of Shebat, this (is)
which is the [tw]entieth in the month
with secret counsel Salome came
to confront the
Hyrcanus rebelled
to confront

³⁴ Eshel, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hasmonean State*, 137.

Michael Wise³⁵ and Joseph Fitzmyer³⁶ reconstructed the second last line as “Hyrcanus rebelled against Aristobulus.” If this is correct, the reference is to the conflict between the brothers that preceded the coming of Pompey, written from a perspective favorable to Aristobulus.

The third fragment says that [the leader of the Kit]tim killed someone. The following line refers to “the fifth in (the course) of Jedaiah.”

4Q333 has only two fragments. The first of these refers to the priestly course of Jehezkel, followed by “Aemilius killed” and to “the entrance to the priestly course of Gamul,” followed, again, by “Aemilius killed.” The Aemilius in question is Marcus Aemilius Scaurus, whom Pompey appointed governor of Syria in 66 B.C.E. Only two words are preserved in the second fragment: *איש יהודי*, “a Judean man.”

Opinion has vacillated as to whether these fragments are primarily calendrical or primarily historical. Some scholars (Michael Wise and Kenneth Atkinson) finesse the issue by referring to “an annalistic calendar.” Brooke argues that “in the light of the Mishmarot texts and the hints of the names of priestly courses in some fragments, it is likely that the mention of historical personages is entirely secondary to the overall concern in the fragments for the rotation of the priestly courses. To label this text historical is probably inappropriate.”³⁷ In contrast, Shemaryahu Talmon and Jonathan Ben-Dov argued that the fragments represented historical events and referred to the priestly courses as a way of dating them.³⁸ The latter view is also affirmed by Fitzmyer, and in my view is clearly right. The references to historical events shed no light on the succession of priestly courses;

³⁵ Michael O. Wise, “An Annalistic Calendar from Qumran,” in *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site. Present Realities and Future Prospects* (ed. Michael O. Wise et al.; Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences 722; New York; The New York Academy of Sciences, 1994), 389–408 at 397–98. See also Wise, “*Primo Annales Fuere*: An Annalistic Calendar from Qumran,” in *Thunder in Gemini and Other Essays on the History, Language and Literature of Second Temple Palestine* (JSPSup 15; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 186–221 at 208–10. Note that the numbers assigned to the texts were changed after Wise wrote. He refers to these texts as 4Q322–324c.

³⁶ DJD 36, 283–84.

³⁷ Brooke, “Types of Historiography,” 227.

³⁸ Shemaryahu Talmon and Jonathan Ben-Dov, *Qumran Cave 4, XVI: Calendrical Texts* (DJD 21; Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 12–13.

conversely, the references to the courses provide a way of dating the historical events.

Milik referred to these fragments as “an Essene calendar giving the dates of certain historical events which were celebrated annually.”³⁹ There is a well known example of such a text in *Megillat Ta’anit*, a list of memorable days associated with important historical events, on which it is prohibited to fast and, in some cases, to deliver eulogies.⁴⁰ It was written in Aramaic, and later elaborated in Hebrew. It is generally regarded as pre-Mishnaic. Vered Noam has recently argued for a date before 70 C.E., but the evidence is open to question.⁴¹ The identifiable events mostly belong to the Maccabean period, although a few appear to be later. The events in question are all causes of rejoicing: the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the departure of the (Syrian) garrison, cessation of tribute (to the Seleucids), the suspension of the decrees (of Antiochus IV), the festival of Hanukkah. In contrast, the Qumran fragments refer to some events that would have been perceived negatively (killing perpetrated by Scaurus, the “rebellion” of Hyrcanus II) or as neutral. *Pace* Milik, there is no evidence that these events were commemorated. The list does not appear to have a liturgical or halakic purpose. It is simply a record of events that are dated by reference to the priestly courses. This is a peculiarly priestly kind of historiography, but historiography it surely is.

There is also dispute as to whether these fragments are sectarian (i.e. a product of the community of the new covenant or of the *yahad*). Eshel argues that they are not, since they use personal names, and in one case use the Babylonian name for a month.⁴² If the use of personal names were a criterion, we should have to deem Peshar Nahum non-sectarian, which is plainly wrong. Brooke argues that they are sectarian, because of their presumed similarity to the *Mishmaroth*, and the fact that they date from the first century B.C.E.⁴³ The latter argument reflects an outdated assumption that “the Qumran community” was hermetically sealed once it took up

³⁹ Józef T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea* (London: SCM, 1959), 73.

⁴⁰ Noted by Wise, “An Annalistic Calendar,” 396; Eshel, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hasmonean State*, 136.

⁴¹ Vered Noam, *Megillat Ta’anit. Versions, Interpretation, History* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2003) [Heb.]. See the review by Sacha Stern in *JJS* 57(2006): 184–86.

⁴² Eshel, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hasmonean State*, 136, n.9.

⁴³ Brooke, “Types of Historiography,” 227.

residence in the wilderness. Similarity to the *Mishmarot* would be significant if we may assume that these fragments presuppose the same, solar, calendar. The historical fragments are not polemical and do not refer to events in distinctively sectarian terms. They do not, for example, refer to the Teacher or the Wicked Priest. Ken Atkinson infers that “these texts were written for insiders, who already shared the values of their authors and also accepted their calendar.”⁴⁴ This may be, but the fragments are not explicit about the calendar they presuppose, and the events they record were of interest to all Judeans. All we may infer from the presence of these fragments in Qumran Cave 4 is that they were known to the people who collected the Scrolls.

A couple of other very fragmentary works from Qumran may also have been historical records. 4Q468e is a tiny fragment that preserves the lines:

ki]lling the multitude of me[n
] Potlais and the people [

The Potlais in question is most probably Peitholaus, a Jewish officer who joined Gabinius in his war against Alexander, the son of Aristobulus in 57 B.C.E.⁴⁵ Eshel suggested that this fragment was related to 4Q331–333, but the fragment is too small to allow much by way of inference. It is, however, further evidence of the presence of historical traditions in the Scrolls. Another possibly historical text, 4Q322a, is even more fragmentary. The editor, Eibert Tigchelaar, suggests that it may refer to Aristobulus, but only the letters 78 are preserved.⁴⁶

Also uncertain is the importance of this material for the sectarians of the *yahad*. Arguably, four or five such texts were hidden in Cave 4, or alternatively, four or five copies of one text. The fact that the manuscripts are so poorly preserved is a matter of coincidence. Even if single copies of each text were deposited, this would not necessarily mean that they were of little significance. The *pesharim* only survived in single copies. To be sure, there is nothing to indicate that these texts were of central importance to the *yahad*, in the way that Isaiah or the Community Rule were. But they were not necessarily unimportant. It is apparent from the *pesharim* that the *yahad* had access to historical traditions in some form. These annalistic

⁴⁴ Atkinson, “Representations of History,” 130.

⁴⁵ Eshel, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hasmonean State*, 143, following Daniel Schwartz, John Strugnell and William Horbury.

⁴⁶ Eibert Tigchelaar, “322a. 4QHistorical Text H?” DJD 28:125–28.

fragments are, in the words of Michael Wise, “the nearest thing to historiography yet to emerge from the DSS.”⁴⁷

Conclusion

The Dead Sea Scrolls have vastly increased our knowledge of Jewish literature between the Bible and the Mishnah. We should remember, however, that these Scrolls were discovered by chance, and that they are unlikely to exhaust the Jewish literature that existed in this period, or even the literature of the community of the new covenant or the *yahad*. Historiographical writing is woefully under-represented in the Scrolls. This fact may be due in part to ideological reasons. The sectarians were not disposed to preserve the praises of the Maccabees, and they seem to have been far more interested in the niceties of halakah than in historical records. But in part it is also due to chance. The *pesharim* presuppose familiarity with historical traditions, whether oral or written, that have not survived. The so-called annalistic texts provide a glimpse of the form those traditions may have taken. These texts are not historiography on the grand scale of the books of Maccabees or Josephus, but they are historical records, however minimal, and they show that Judeans between the Maccabees and Josephus, including the sectarians known from the Scrolls, were not entirely indifferent to historical memory.

⁴⁷ Wise, *Thunder in Gemini*, 221.