CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
HELIOS IN PALESTINE

[199] 1. THE GOLD-PLATED STAIRCASE

*The Temple Scroll*, now available in Yadin’s magnificent edition,\(^1\) mostly confirms the impression of the Dead Sea Sect that has become common,\(^2\) i.e. they were a clique of sanctimonious fanatics who became sectarians primarily as a result of their severe interpretations of the Mosaic Law. Other factors—over-confidence in their own interpretations, contempt for those who did not agree with them, pretensions to hobnob with angels, consequent revelations both prophetic and legal, and ultimate remodeling even of the Law to suit their own prejudices—all these, and personal and political conflicts as well, presumably played their parts in the origin and development of the sect, but the root would seem to have been unusually strict adherence to an unusually severe set of legal interpretations, especially in Sabbath and purity law and possibly in that of the calendar.\(^3\) The resultant pattern is one familiar in the history of religions.

However, this genetic account should not be mistaken for a complete description. While the peculiar legal position of the sect was the primary cause of its separation from the rest of Judaism and thus contributed to its other peculiar developments, it can never have been more than one factor in the life of this group. Not to mention economic and emotional necessities, other intellectual interests will have been present, among them, that in supernatural beings, the angels of light and of darkness prominent in the sect’s literature. One of Professor Scholem’s innumerable discoveries was the relation of the Qumran material to the magical and mystical traditions in the Hekhaloth books.\(^4\) Such factors must have played roles of some importance in the sect’s background and development.

\(^1\) *The Temple Scroll* (ed. Y. Yadin) (Jerusalem 1977), 3 vols. and fascicle of ‘Supplementary Plates.’ Yadin’s achievement is remarkable both in consideration of his other duties, and in comparison with the records of other scholars, some of whom, without any such duties, have now withheld Qumran material from the public for over 25 years.

\(^2\) I shall not document the obvious.

\(^3\) Holding to 1 Nisan as the beginning of the year as well as of the months; unquestionably a conservative position, but perhaps in the history of the sect a secondary development.

\(^4\) *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*\(^2\) (New York, 1965), 16-19, 29-30, 48. and esp. 128, the note to p. 29 (on the parallel of Strugnell’s ‘Angelic Liturgy’ to the Hekhaloth texts).
Consequently the points at which works preserved by the sect (whether or not composed by its members) diverge from the Mosaic Law are of interest as evidence either of non-Pentateuchal elements that shaped the development or of abnormal results to which it led. The production of what were intended to be additional books of the Law (Jubilees and The Temple Scroll) will seem to many modern readers the ultimate divergence. When these books were written, however, the authors did not have behind them a bimillennial tradition of the fixity of the canon. The final redaction of the Pentateuch by the Jerusalem priesthood, probably in the mid-fifth century, was perhaps still a living memory, especially in priestly circles. The yet later revision of Pentateuchal genealogies and of the history of Kings by the authors of Chronicles was almost surely remembered, and the vocabulary of many Dead Sea writers indicates that they were much influenced by the school of the Chroniclers. It is more surprising that the Chroniclers' revision ultimately secured general acceptance than it is that other, more drastic, revisions continued to be produced.

We should therefore not consider the production of a new book of the Law as the one great innovation, but should also look at the other changes. These are of two sorts. Most are mere additions along Pentateuchal lines: The Pentateuch provides for temple vessels, the Temple Scroll, for a special structure to house them; the Pentateuch provides for a festival at the offering of the first loaves from the new grain, the Temple Scroll adds festivals for the offerings of the new wine, the new oil, and so on. The likes of these are understandable extrapolations from the earlier text.

By contrast, a radical innovation, not explained by anything in the Pentateuch, appears in columns 30-31. First we must notice its place in the structure of the text. The scroll as preserved begins with the Deuteronomic commands to obliterate all Canaanite places of worship and to worship Yahweh alone (col. 2). Then, when Yahweh gives you peace, you are to build him a temple, of which the description seems to begin with the ark (col. 3, line 9) and to move outwards, though this and the following columns are so fragmentary that it is difficult here to be precise about the structure. After the table of shew bread, the incense (col. 8), the Menorah (9), etc., we reach the altar for sacrifices (11-12) and the text turns to a description of the sacrifices, first the daily burnt offering, then special sacrifices for sabbaths, new moons,

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6 The purification basin, which should be outside, appears in col. 6, while in col. 7 we are back in the Holy of Holies discussing the cherubs above the ark.