In my presentation at our first conference, on the topic, ‘Jerusalem in the Dead Sea Scrolls’, I touched on a controversy that has now been debated for almost one hundred years regarding the meaning of הַמֶקֶדֶשׁ עִיר, translated as either “the City of the Sanctuary” or “Temple City.” I took the view in that study that this term referred to the temenos, the Temple area itself, as opposed to referring to the entire city of Jerusalem as some other scholars have observed. It was noted there that the matter was also connected with a passage in 4QMMT which required detailed investigation. Since then, the release of the full corpus of Judean Desert manuscripts, including most notably the Qumran scrolls, has made available another example of this usage as well, in addition to those already known from the Zadokite Fragments (also known as the Damascus Document) and the Temple Scroll. Accordingly, it is time for a new and complete study of this term.

1. The Zadokite Fragments

The starting point for our investigation must be the first passage to come to light, that in CD 12:1–2:

אל ישכב איש עם אשה בערי המקדש לָטְמָא אֵת עִיר המקדש נְנוֹדָה.

Let no man have sexual relations with a woman in the City of the Sanctuary so as to make impure the City of the Sanctuary with their impurity.\(^2\)

That this reading is correct is confirmed by the presence of this same text in the Qumran fragments of the Zadokite Fragments (4Q271 frg.

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2 All translations presented in this paper are by the author.
5 i 17–18).³ Already in his pioneering study, L. Ginzberg set out both of the possible interpretations.⁴ Ginzberg first argues in favor of seeing this as a law prohibiting sexual relations in the entire city of Jerusalem, understanding יָרֵי המקדש מֵעִיר to refer to the entire city. He understood the מקדש to be the Temple in Jerusalem, and the “city” to be the city as a whole. He suggested that the text had widened the prohibition known from rabbinic literature (m. Köl. 1:8)⁵ which forbids one who had a seminal emission from entering the Temple Mount. Here the prohibition, he said, had been widened to include the entire city of Jerusalem which was now endowed with a higher status of sanctity. He suggested that this law would have made life in the city of Jerusalem impossible for the sectarians of this document and that it would have led to their departure from the city—all this he suggested with no knowledge of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

But after setting down this proposal, he immediately back-tracked. “Probably, however” the true meaning of the city of the sanctuary was just the Temple Mount, in the same way thatiram עיר had this meaning as well. He then asserted that accordingly this text was in complete agreement with rabbinic halakhah which likewise forbids one who had a seminal emission from entering the Temple Mount. He saw our law as derived in this way from 2 Chr 8:11.⁶

In his commentary on this passage,⁷ C. Rabin refers to Lev 15:18 as the basis of this law, but there it only says that a man and a woman who have had sexual relations become impure until the evening, and are required to wash. Interesting is his not-so-precise reference to Josephus, War V, v, 6 (227) which says that those afflicted with gonorrhea

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⁵ Cf. b. Pesahim 67b.
⁶ The text states there, אל תשב אשה ל בַּתִּי דוֹדִי ... כ בַּתִי הָהוֹ אָשָׁר בֵּית אֶלְיָהוּ which he understands to mean: “A woman may not dwell (i.e. sexual relations are prohibited) in the House of David (i.e., the Temple Mount), for that area is sanctified as the ark of the covenant has been brought there.” Cf. Rashi and Radak ad loc.