THE ORIGINS OF THE TEMPLE SCROLL

by

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I. Basic Statements

About twenty years ago, on the evening of 8 June 1967, Professor Yigael Yadin\(^2\) had the — still unopened — Temple Scroll in his hands for the first time.\(^3\) Half a year later, in December 1967, he published the first article on his findings from the text of the scroll in the *Biblical Archaeologist*.\(^4\) Already this early article demonstrated his conviction that this scroll, which he "provisionally named the Temple Scroll", was composed within the Qumran community, and that especially its language pointed clearly to a date in the latter part of the Second Temple period.\(^5\) Yadin’s further papers and his edition of the scroll in 1977 bore a progressively deeper imprint of these basic ideas, which, at last, became a matter of course for him. The only development in these basic opinions was the supposition that the famous Teacher of Righteousness himself, whom he supposed to have been a man named Zadok, might have been the historical author.\(^6\)

From the very beginning of his research, Yadin inclined to the view that the composition of the Temple Scroll was specifically Qumranic. Since many distinguished scholars followed him without considering other possibilities, there seemed to be no need for investigations orientated in other directions.\(^7\) Very few scholars like Baruch A. Levine,\(^8\)

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1 I am grateful to Professor Shemaryahu Talmon for a kind revision of my paper and for some helpful hints. A thorough revision of its first draft was contributed by a visiting student at Göttingen, Mr Will Deming, M.A.


3 See *TS-H* I, pp. 3-4; *TS-E* I, p. 4; *TS-HL*, p. 40.


7 Even Ben Zion Wacholder, whose book *The Dawn of Qumran. The Sectarian Torah and the Teacher of Righteousness* (Cincinnati, 1983) contains so many criticisms of Yadin’s edition of the TS, takes all his basic ideas from Yadin, differing only in that he dates the origin of the Qumran community and the composition of the TS by the Teacher of Righteousness some decades earlier.

Lawrence H. Schiffman,9 and David Rokeah,10 have suggested that the composition of the Temple Scroll might be independent of and, perhaps, somewhat older than the Qumran community, which is assumed to have originated in the second third of the 2nd century B.C.E. But their challenge was confined mainly to a few specific aspects of the text and, therefore, did not meet with much approval.11

In the first main part of this article, I shall try to demonstrate that there is no specific connection between the Qumran community and the composition of the text represented by the Temple Scroll. In the second, I shall attempt to establish the true historical background of this text and the date of its composition. But first of all I shall mention those fundamental findings of Yadin’s investigations, with which I remain in full agreement:

1. The Temple Scroll is a sepher torah sensu stricto — not simply a collection of materials for some particular area of religious life.

2. The text represented by the Temple Scroll is, as Yadin stated, an “additional” Torah, or still better a supplementary Torah to the Pentateuch and on the same level as the Mosaic Torah.12

3. The scroll published by Yadin was written in “Herodian” times, at the end of the 1st century B.C.E. or the beginning of the 1st century C.E.13

These basic points, established by Yadin’s edition of the Temple Scroll, are well supported by reliable facts and can no longer be disputed. My own critical comments will be addressed to other points. I should add that I shall not take into account any sources other than those that were known to the late Professor Yadin and used by him. Our differences will be seen to lie only in the divergent estimation of some relevant findings.

12 Wacholder claims that the TS “may have been intended to supersede not only the canonical Pentateuch but the other books of the Hebrew Scriptures as well” ([n. 7], p. 30). The convincing evidence for Yadin’s opposite view is the fact that the TS does not cover subjects like the Creation of the World, the Decalogue, the Aaronic Blessing, or the Shema Yisrael, which were basic to all the various religious orientations of Second Temple Judaism: therefore, TS is only a “supplementary” Torah to the given Pentateuch.