A NOTE ON 4Q372 AND 4Q390

BY

Michael A. Knibb

London, Great Britain

A number of writings from the Early Jewish period, despite many differences in presentation, share the view that Israel remained in a condition of exile long after the actual return from Babylon at the end of the sixth century, and within these writings the post-exilic period is depicted both as a time of oppression and suffering and also as a time of apostasy. Views such as these are to be found, for example, in Daniel 9 (see verses 24-27), in the Vision of the Animals (1 Enoch 85-90: see 89,59-90,38), or in the Apocalypse of Weeks (1 Enoch 93,1-10 + 91,11-17: see 93,8-10), and are presented, explicitly or implicitly, in a wide range of other documents. In an article published in 1976 I discussed this kind of interpretation of the exilic and post-exilic periods as it was reflected in the writings that were known at the time. However, two documents from Qumran that have only recently been published, 4Q372 and 4Q390, also contain material that deserves consideration in this context, and the purpose of this study is to offer some brief comments on these writings from the point of view of their understanding of the exilic and post-exilic periods.

The contribution to scholarship which Adam VAN DER WOUDE has made by his numerous writings, by his work as an editor, and by his encouragement of younger scholars, has been enormous and has covered many fields, including, not least, the literature of Early Judaism and the Dead Sea Scrolls. This brief note is offered to him as a token of gratitude both for the scholarly contribution he has made and for the great kindness he has shown and the encouragement he has offered over many years.

1. 4Q372

4Q372 is a manuscript of a work that is apparently also represented in three other manuscripts: 2Q22, 4Q371, and 4Q373. A brief discussion of the manuscript evidence for the work as a whole and a preliminary edition of 4Q372 1 was given by Eileen SCHULLER at the Groningen Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, and at the Madrid Conference she also provided preliminary editions of 4Q371 3, 4Q372 2, and 4Q373. The work has subsequently been discussed by GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ. As SCHULLER notes, much about this work remains obscure. But it is clear that the fragments that survive consist almost without exception of narrative and psalmic material, and it appears that the narrative sections provided a historical setting for autobiographical psalms in which heroes from the past acknowledged God's actions on their behalf. Thus, apart from the Joseph fragment discussed here, several fragments (2Q22, 4Q372 19, 4Q373), consisting of both narrative and hymnic material, are apparently concerned with David's defeat of Goliath.

Fragment 1 of 4Q372, entitled by SCHULLER 'A Text about Joseph' is the largest fragment of the manuscript to have survived and is indeed far larger than any of the fragments of the other manuscripts. It consists of a narrative section (lines 1-15a) and a psalm in the form of a lament (lines 15b-32). The psalmist is not named, but Joseph is clearly the speaker. It is, however, the narrative that is our concern, and I give this here in SCHULLER’s translation:

2 the one who does [...] ...; strangers [...]  
3 and the idol-priests, and they honoured those who serve[ idols ...]

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4 Cf. GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ, Estudios Bíblicos 49 (1991), 121-123.