BELIEF IN RESURRECTION AND ITS RELIGIOUS SETTINGS
IN QUMRAN AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

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1. Introduction

This article focuses on the belief in resurrection from the dead in Qumran texts and the New Testament, with a comparative interest in conceptualization and the religious setting in which resurrection figures.1 In the course of my evaluation, I will aim to highlight points of convergence and difference and attempt to provide a traditio-historical explanation for them. Resurrection is mentioned in early Enochic writings (1 En. 24–25; 90:33; 91:8–10; 103:4; 104:2.4.6)2 as well as biblical tradition represented by Dan 12:1–3. The subject of resurrection thereby presupposes a general setting of eschatological expectation, and I will not go into discussion about biblical revivification miracles and heavenly assumptions or interim states after death voiced through post-mortem visions and appearances.3

Why would comparative study of Qumran literature and New Testament writings with regard to resurrection tradition add to our understanding of this subject? Qumran literature provides first-hand evidence of pre-70 C.E. strands of Jewish thought and practice, whose completely published evidence has yet to be integrated into our picture of Palestinian Judaism in the two last centuries B.C.E. and the first

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1 This article represents some lines of argument derived from chapter four of my Leuven post-doctoral manuscript, a traditio-historical study on the development of eschatological, apocalyptic and messianic ideas in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament.

2 The “Book of Watchers” (1 En. 1–36), the “Dream Visions” (1 En. 83–90), and the “Epistle of Enoch” (1 En. 91–105) have been respectively dated to mid- or late third century B.C.E., 200–160 B.C.E., and the second century B.C.E.; see G.W.E. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch. 1. A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36, 81–108 (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, Fortress Press), 7–28; and G.W.E. Nickelsburg and J.C. VanderKam, 1 Enoch. A New Translation Based on the Hermeneia Commentary (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 3, 9–10, 12.

3 Cf. Gen 5:24; 1 Kgs 17:21–23; 2 Kgs 2:11; Sirach 48:5.
century C.E. Since the 1990s, the enormous increase in published evidence mainly from Qumran cave 4 has also led to an ongoing process of rethinking the relation between texts and social settings. Earlier studies on Qumran and the New Testament still worked with the assumption that Qumran literature reflects the setting of the sectarian Qumran community, sometimes supposing a comparison in terms of genetic relationships.

Yet the great number of Qumran texts which do not present clearly identifiable sectarian community terminology are difficult to relate to this same sectarian setting. In individual cases, non-sectarian Qumran texts may be considered “adopted texts,” but the question of social settings and origins of compositions in a time span antedating any chronology of the Qumran community’s establishment is open to debate. Among the texts, whose social setting and traditio-historical place merits further exploration, are compositions of key importance to the subject of resurrection, namely 4QPsuedo-Ezekiel and 4Q521. The monumental two-volume study La croyance des Esséniens en la vie future by Émile Puech in 1993 still worked with the supposition that these two texts as well as 4QVisions of Amram would originate from the sectarian setting of the Qumran Essene community. In an article of 2000, Devorah Dimant observed about Pseudo-Ezekiel and 4Q521 that “their origin and background as well as their precise relationship to the Qumran community are still a matter of debate.”

Pending the official edition of the Aramaic texts 4Q550–582 in the Discoveries in the Judaean Desert series, volume 37, by É. Puech, the publication of the scrolls fragments from Qumran has reached semi-completion.


6 All of the Qumran texts and fragments under discussion in this paper, 4QVisions of Amram, 4QPsEzek, 4QPsDan·ar, 4Q521, and 4Q434a (4QBarki Nafshi or “Grace after Meals”), were classified under the rubric of “Literary Works without Terminology Connected to the Community” by D. Dimant, “The Qumran Manuscripts: Contents and Significance,” in Time to Prepare the Way in the Wilderness (ed. D. Dimant and L.H. Schiffman; STDJ 16; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 23–58 at 47–8 and 53.
