One of the sharp clashes between the Qumran community and the Temple priesthood was the confrontation between the Wicked Priest and the Righteous Teacher on Yom Kippur:

Woe to him who causes his neighbors to drink, who pours out his venom to make them drunk that he may gaze on their feasts (Hab. 2:15). This concerns the Wicked Priest who pursued the Righteous Teacher to overwhelm him in the fury of his wrath at his house of exile. And at the time appointed for rest, on the Day of Atonement he made his appearance before them to overwhelm them and to cause them to stumble on the fast day, the sabbath of their rest. (1QpHab 11:4-8)

As scholars have noted, this confrontation occurred on the day when the followers of the Teacher were observing the solemn fast of Yom Kippur according to their schematic solar calendar. It apparently was not the day when the Wicked Priest, presumably a high priest, was himself occupied with the performance of the Yom Kippur rites in the Temple. The description of this incident thus served as one of the early clues about the calendar schism that separated the sect from contemporary Jewry.¹

As a result of this schism all of the biblical festivals were regularly observed by the Qumran community on days that differed from those kept by contemporary Jews. The phraseology of the Habakkuk lemma, "in order to gaze at their feasts" would therefore lend itself to being applied to any or all of the holidays affected by this schism. Yet, the clash described in the pesher occurred particularly on the sect's Yom Kippur. It is reasonable to suppose that this may have had something to do with the central place of Yom Kippur in contemporary Judaism, but the pesher, aside from stressing the

¹ See S. Talmon, "Yom Hakkippurim in the Habakkuk Scroll," Bib 32 (1951) 549-63.

© Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, 1999 Dead Sea Discoveries 6, 2
mandated fast and rest on Yom Kippur does not provide any further elaboration.

Fortunately, we have in the Hodayot a hymn, possibly attributable to the Teacher, that contains an allusion to the confrontation described in the *pesher*.

I thank you, O Lord, for you have illuminated my face through your covenant... They [the opponents] mislead your people by smoothing them with words. Preachers of deceit cause them to stray so that they grope without understanding, their deeds are in folly (ֵּיאֲנָהּ) and despicable... for they have driven me from my land as a bird from its nest... they plot wickedly against me to exchange your Torah which you inculcated in my heart for smooth things (to deceive) your people. They withhold the drink of knowledge from the thirsty, but cause the thirsty to drink vinegar in order to gaze at their error (ֵּיאֲנָהּ), to deport themselves foolishly on their festivals (לֹא מִפְּלַגְּלָהּ) and to be caught in their snares. (IQH 12:5-12).

The author of the hymn describes himself as an exile driven from his land, just as the *pesher* refers to the Teacher as being in his “house of exile.” His opponents are accused of giving the thirsty vinegar to drink in order to gaze upon them as they deport themselves in an unseemly way at the time of the festivals. This is an almost verbatim paraphrase of Hab. 2:15, the lemma on which the *pesher* account of the Yom Kippur incident is based: “Woe to him who causes his neighbor to drink; who pours out his venom to make them drunk, that he may gaze on their feasts.”

The references in the hymn to “smoothing” and “smooth things” (לֹא מִפְּלַגְּלָהּ) point to the identification of the Teacher’s opponents with the “seekers of smooth things,” the epithet used in the *pesharim* for the Pharisees. The latter are apparently charged with misleading the people by encouraging them to desecrate the somber spirit of penitence of Yom Kippur with their folly (לֹא מִפְּלַגְּלָהּ).

The paradoxical aspect of Yom Kippur as a day of fasting and purging of sin as well as a day of joyous renewal has its roots in biblical antiquity. It was on Yom Kippur that the shofar proclaiming the liberation of the jubilee year was to be sounded (Lev. 25:10). The eschatological jubilee was described in 11QMelch as a “year of grace” in which Melchizedek would bring judgment upon the forces of evil and atonement for the Sons of Light on Yom Kippur. In the second temple period, the polar tension inherent in Yom Kippur as a day of

---

2 The “error” alluded to is most probably the celebration of the holiday at the wrong time; for this connotation of מִפְּלַגְּלָהּ cf. 4Q513 44.