A Critical Assessment of the Portrayal of Women in the Dead Sea Scrolls Sectarian Rule Texts, and of the Evidence for the Presence of Women in the Qumran Community

by

Diane Stankaitis

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The Dead Sea Scrolls were found between 1947 and 1956 in eleven caves close to the site of Qumran, which lies in the north-west area of the Dead Sea. The scrolls date from between the 3rd century BCE and the 1st century CE, and had remained in the caves untouched for some 2000 years.

The aims of this study are, firstly, to examine the portrayal of women in three sectarian scrolls: the Rule of the Community; the Rule of the Congregation, and the Damascus Document, although other sectarian texts, and a Wisdom text, Wiles of the Wicked Woman (4Q184) will be consulted where relevant, and, secondly, to uncover archaeological evidence for the presence of women at the Qumran site itself.

There is general consensus that Qumran was occupied by an Essene sect during the Second Temple period, although its exact function, and whether it comprised only celibate males, or included marrying sect members, remains uncertain. The ancient authors, Philo, Josephus and Pliny, all provided information about the Essenes, including the celibacy issue, but their writings, as well as the scrolls themselves, and the early reception history of the scrolls, were all androcentric in nature.

This research analysed the portrayal of women in the Rule texts using a multi-disciplinary approach, focusing on Reception History and recent Feminist-Critical and Gender Studies methodologies, to ascertain their involvement in communities linked to the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS communities), concluding that they did play an active role, although to a lesser extent, and with less authority, than men. Following this analysis, archaeological evidence that women formed part of the community from the Qumran site itself, including its architecture, the cemetery, and the nearby caves, was scrutinised, concluding that there is evidence for their presence, although this is limited.

INTRODUCTION

The site of Qumran lies some eight miles south of Jericho, in the north-west region of the Dead Sea, bordering the Judaean Desert. It is located on a marl plateau, with deep ravines to the south and west. It could only be accessed from the north and east, via an enclosure wall, some one-third of which comprises the site's architecture, with the remainder free-standing.[1]

Qumran is considered one of the most significant sites in the Ancient Near-East, mainly because of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls nearby between 1947 and 1956.[2] Some 900 manuscripts, in full or fragmentary form, were found in eleven caves, untouched for some 2000 years.[3] Possible reasons for the scrolls being deposited in the caves are that they were used by the DSS communities as a library and/or archive facility, or to preserve the manuscripts ahead of the Roman invasion of 68CE.[4] Many of the texts were imported from other locations, and were neither copied nor composed at Qumran.[5]

The scrolls date from between the 3rd century BCE and the 1st century CE, and comprise all books in the Hebrew Bible, except the book of Esther, plus a number of literary, as opposed to documentary, texts.[6] They are significant because, until their discovery, no Israeli literary works written in either Hebrew or Aramaic had survived dating to between the mid-2nd centuries BCE and CE. They therefore have the capacity to shed light on Judaism in the Second Temple period.[7] Father Roland de Vaux, the original excavator of the site, identified three phases for the site during this period, using archaeological, palaeographical and numismatic evidence: Period Ia, dated to the third quarter of the 2nd century BCE; Period Ib, dated to the last quarter of the 2nd century BCE to 31BCE, and Period II, dating from 4-1BCE to 68CE.[8] This chronology is still considered valid.[9]

The scrolls have been split into a number of categories: Jewish literature pre the 3rd century BCE; sectarian and non-sectarian; biblical, non-biblical and

[1] Kenneth Atkinson & Jodi Magness, 2010, p.323; Geza Vermes, 2011, p.1; Joan Taylor, 2012, p.323
[2] Dennis Mizzi, 2017a, p.93; Maxine Grossman, 2018, p.88; Magness, 2021, p.33
[3] Geza Vermes, 2011, pp.1, 10; Grossman, 2018, p.88
[4] Magness, 2021, p.37
[5] Magness, 2021, p.37
[6] John Collins, 2016, p.1
[7] Collins, 2016, p.1
[8] Roland de Vaux, 1973, pp.5, 19-24, 33-41
[9] Sidnie White Crawford, 2003b, p.140

apocryphal.[10] Sectarian texts are a common category.[11] The scrolls provide little information concerning history or philosophy.[12]

Sectarian texts account for some 25% of the total, and were either composed or revised by members of the Qumran community itself.[13] They include three Rule texts: the Rule of the Community (1QS), the Rule of the Congregation (1QSa) and the Damascus Document (CD, 4Q265-273, 5Q12, 6Q15), plus the War Scroll (1QM, 4QM), 4QMMT, the Temple Scroll (11QT), and the Thanksgiving Hymns (1QH^{a}, 1Q35, 4Q427-432).[14] Two incomplete copies of the Damascus Document, dated to between the 10th and 12th centuries, were previously discovered in the Cairo *Genizah* in 1896.[15] Two further scrolls, the Ritual of Marriage (4Q502) and 4QTohorotA (4Q274) could be considered sectarian, although are not universally accepted as such.[16]

The aims of this research are, firstly, to examine the portrayal of women in the three sectarian Rule texts, although other sectarian texts, and a Wisdom text, Wiles of the Wicked Woman (4Q184) will be consulted where relevant, and, secondly, the archaeological evidence for the presence of women at the Qumran site. The focus of the first aim is on the Rule texts, as they contain sermons, rules and norms for the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS forthwith) communities, therefore rendering them the most appropriate for study.[17]

Chapter 1 discusses the concept of a sect, and the identification/nature of the sect most likely to have formed the Qumran community itself, as sect ideology should provide information concerning both the textual portrayal of women and their presence at the site. Chapter 2 analyses the portrayal of women in the Rule texts. Chapter 3 analyses the archaeological evidence for the presence of women at Qumran. Conclusions concerning the portrayal of women in the Rule texts, and their presence at Qumran, will be drawn in Chapter 4.

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[10] Crawford, 2003b, pp.127-150; Edna Ullman-Margalit, 2006, pp.58, 59; Devorah Dimant, 2009, pp.7-18; Magness, 2021, p.34
[11] Magness, 2021, p.34
[12] Collins, 2016, p.119; Grossman, 2018, p.88
[13] Dimant, 2009, p.8; Vermes, 2011, p.11 n.30
[14] Vermes, 2011, p.12; Magness, 2021, p.36
[15] Solomon Schechter, 1910
[16] Eileen Schuller, 1994, p.122; Crawford, 2003b, p.137; Emanuel Tov, 2004, p.90; Jessica Keady, 2019, pp.296, 297
[17] Grossman, 2018, p.89

A multi-disciplinary approach will be adopted, with Reception History, Feminist-Critical, Gender Studies and Archaeological methodologies featuring prominently, although others, including Lived Ancient Religion, Embodiment, Sociological, and Anthropological, will also be consulted when needed. The purpose and use of the various Methodological underpinnings will be discussed in more detail in the relevant chapters. Evidence from ancient authors, particularly Philo, Josephus and Pliny, and from modern scholarship, will be analysed throughout.

CHAPTER 1
SECTARIANISM/THE ESSENES

Sectarianism

In the Second Temple period, "sect" pertained to a 'small religious group or community'.[18] Although sect members may enjoy a common heritage with other groups, they may follow different social practices.[19] Tensions could exist within individual sects, resulting from the complexities of the society concerned, and changing beliefs over time.[20] Sects require allegiance from their members in all aspects of their lives, with failure an ever-present possibility.[21]

Recently, the sociological features of sectarianism have featured prominently.[22] In this context, the word "sect" indicates the severance of a particular group from the conventional.[23] The sect described in the sectarian scrolls, for instance, presents itself in opposition to Second Temple Period Judaism as practised in Jerusalem.[24] Jokiranta presents a strong argument for adopting a social-identity approach, which explores how a sect member regards his/her social identity within the sect, concluding that members identify as group members more than as individuals.[25] However, whilst the various sociological approaches are indispensable when studying both the Qumran site and the scrolls, care needs to be exercised when converting textual evidence into evidence for sects.[26]

The Essenes

Following the discovery of the scrolls, the Qumran site was linked to the Essene sect, known from the ancient authors Pliny, Philo and Josephus, writing in the first-century CE.[27] The information they provide about the Essenes, and any issues contained therein, is detailed below. Archaeological evidence linking the Qumran community to the caves where the scrolls were found is also provided.

Early modern scholarship, particularly that focusing on the Rule of the Community, highlighted parallels between this text and the Essenes, giving rise to

[18] Grossman, 2017, p.225; 2018, p.90
[19] Grossman, 2017, p.226
[20] Grossman, 2017, p.243
[21] Grossman, 2019, p.346
[22] Eyal Regev, 2018; Dimant, 2014, pp.101-111
[23] Grossman, 2017, pp.235-239; David Chalcroft, 2018, pp.235-239
[24] Katharina Galor, 2014, p.23
[25] Jutta Jokiranta, 2010, pp.261-262
[26] Philip Davies, 2005, p.82; Ida Fröhlich, 2011, p.68
[27] Eleazar Sukenik, 1948, 1955; Taylor, 2012, p.vii; Timothy Lim, 2017, p.65; Nicholas Meyer, 2020, pp.279-280

the “Essene hypothesis”, which links it to an isolated celibate male community at Qumran, whereas the Rule of the Congregation and the Damascus document concern marrying groups throughout Judaea.[28]

Ancient Sources

Philo (c.30-15BCE–45CE)

Philo, writing in Greek, was the first ancient source to discuss the Essenes. He was from a prominent family, a figurehead in Alexandria’s Jewish community during the late 30s/early 40s CE. Taylor considers that Philo considered the Essenes an excellent example of Judaism because of their devotion to the community and their self-control.[29] He lived concurrently with the Essenes, and his information concerning their ideology may have been correct, particularly because he had visited Judaea.[30] Moreover, Taylor argues that much of his readership could have verified or repudiated what he wrote, therefore being against his best interests to provide incorrect information.[31] Magness, however, is not convinced that Philo ever visited Judaea, or had personal information concerning the Essenes.[32]

In his work *Every Good Man is Free* (c.25CE) women are not mentioned. The Essenes inhabit villages, avoiding cities because of the inhabitants’ immorality. They live in communities, welcoming outsiders with the same beliefs.[33] In his *Apology for the Jews* (c.40CE), however, Philo states that the Essenes inhabit many cities and villages in Judaea.[34] This could relate either to sect ideology changing over time, or to Philo’s information about the sect. Their members are fully grown/elderly.[35] Taylor proposes that *Apology* 11.13 implies that some Essenes produced offspring before embracing celibacy.[36] They reject marriage, considering it a threat to their communal lifestyle, viewing women as selfish and jealous, who can adversely affect their husbands’ morals. Having children can result in husbands acting in opposition to Essene ideology.[37] They live a communal life in all respects.[38] The *Apology* should

[28] Vermes, 1997, pp.34-35; Wassén, 2005, p.2, 2016b, p.103; Collins, 2016, p.152, 2021, p.114; Grossman, 2017, pp.229-230
[29] Taylor, 2012, p.48
[30] Taylor, 2012, p.22
[31] Taylor, 2012, p.22
[32] Magness, 2021, p.41
[33] Philo, *Prob.* XII 76
[34] Philo, *Hypoth.* 11.1
[35] Philo, *Hypoth.* 11.13
[36] Taylor, 2012, p.44
[37] Philo, *Hypoth.* 11.14-17

be treated cautiously, however, as it only exists preserved in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* (c.312-322CE).[39]

Josephus (37/38–100CE)

Josephus, also writing in Greek, was a historian from Jerusalem, a Jew, who wrote about the Essenes some 50-70 years after Philo.[40] Josephus came from an elite, priestly background, and was a commanding officer in the Jewish army during the first Jewish revolt against the Romans, but, after the 67CE surrender, went to live in Rome.[41] In *Life*, Josephus claims personal knowledge of the Essenes, although his main discussions are in *The Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*.[42]

In the *The Jewish War* (c.76CE), Josephus states that the Essenes live all over the land, and, like Philo, that they welcome Essenes from elsewhere.[43] The Essenes scorned pleasure, viewing temperance and self-restraint as virtues. Marriage was treated contemptuously, they chose to adopt children, rather than having their own, and, whilst marriage and having children was not categorically eschewed, they were wary of women in terms of infidelity and promiscuity.[44] This supports Philo's description.[45] However, Josephus describes an Essene group who embraced marriage for procreation, not pleasure, considering that the group would cease to exist if marriage and producing offspring were banned.[46] Crawford argues that Josephus considered marriage standard practice, if only to procreate.[47] In this respect, a number of controls were put in place, to be discussed in Chapter 2.

In the *Jewish Antiquities* (c.93CE), Josephus states that the Essene sect comprised some 4000 members, and, like Philo, that they comprised male, non-marrying groups: they are all equal, committed to serving God, living virtuous lives, and sharing possessions.[48] In this text, written after the *Jewish War*, Josephus states

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[38] Philo, *Hypoth.* 11.3-13
[39] Eusebio, *Praep. Evang.* 8.11.1-18
[40] Edward Cook, 1994, p.86; Kim, 2012, p.276; Taylor, 2012, p.49
[41] Josephus, *Vit.* 1; Taylor, 2012, p.49; Magness, 2021, p.40
[42] Josephus, *Vit.* 10, *BJ* 2.119-161, *AJ* 18-22
[43] Josephus, *BJ*2.124-125; Philo, *Prob.* XII 85
[44] Josephus, *BJ*2.121
[45] Philo, Hypoth. 11.14-17
[46] Josephus, *BJ*2.160-161; Taylor, 2012, pp.69-70
[47] Sidnie White Crawford, 2020, https://baslibrary.org/biblical-archaeology-review/46/2/5
[48] Josephus, *AJ*18.18-22; Philo, *Hypoth.* 11.4

that the Essenes do not marry, again perhaps indicating a change in sect ideology, or previous information being incorrect.[49]

Taylor identifies Josephus' sources as his own knowledge and experiences of the Essenes, arguing that both the *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities* portray his personal views concerning Jewish history, with the aim of highlighting the positive traits of Judaism to a non-Jewish, Roman audience.[50]

There are a number of correlations between the works of Philo and Josephus, leading Taylor to suggest that they may have used a common source. Although possible, *Jewish Antiquities* was written some 50 years after Philo was writing, and Josephus may have used him as a source.[51] Atkinson and Magness have also identified many parallels between Josephus' works, the sectarian texts and the archaeological remains at Qumran.[52] However, it is noteworthy that Josephus was writing some 200 years after the earliest version of the Rule of the Community, and that a number of redactions of this text, and the Damascus Document, occurred, to cater for developments over time in Essene ideology: information provided by first-century CE authors did not necessarily apply in the first-century BCE.[53]

Pliny the Elder (c.23–79CE)

Pliny, a Roman scholar from an elite background, had a distinguished military career, and was an administrator of the Roman provinces. He was stoical, traditional, a moderate thinker, naturalist and esteemed geographer.[54] His description of the Essenes is significant because of his personal status, and because he wrote in Latin, although expressing no real passion for Judaism.[55]

Pliny refers to the Essenes in one paragraph of his *Natural History*, published in 77CE, shortly after Josephus' *Jewish War*.[56] He locates the Essenes west of the Dead Sea, although neither Philo nor Josephus provides information concerning an Essene community close to the Dead Sea.[57]

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[49] Josephus, *AJ*18.20
[50] Taylor, 2012, p.58
[51] Taylor, 2012, p.39
[52] Atkinson & Magness, 2010, pp236, 329-331, 333-336
[53] Atkinson & Magness, 2010, p.341
[54] Taylor, 2012, p.130; Magness, 2021, p.41
[55] Taylor, 2012, p.13
[56] Pliny, *HN* 5.15.73; Taylor, 2012, p.130
[57] James VanderKam & Peter Flint, 2009, p.242; Taylor, 2012, p.132; Magness, 2021, p.41

Magness disputes, however, that Pliny had personal knowledge of the region, and depended on the others' sources.[58] Kim disagrees, arguing that Pliny's information was obtained whilst travelling in Judaea.[59] Taylor further argues that, as a non-Jew, Pliny would not have had access to Philo's and Josephus' sources, relying on hearsay or secondary sources.[60]

Pliny describes the Essenes as an isolated group, who practised celibacy and had no money. No children were born into the sect, with the population being perpetuated by incomers.[61] Pliny's account differs from those of Philo and Josephus, in that his Essenes are considered "oddities", and are not acclaimed.[62] Taylor describes Pliny's portrayal of the Essenes as an "exaggerated caricature", a "parody".[63] Magness, however, suggests that Pliny admired them because their asceticism rendered them "exotic and different".[64]

To summarise, whilst only Pliny places the Essenes in a location near the Dead Sea, evidence from the ancient authors, combined with evidence from the sectarian scrolls, positively supports the theory that the Essenes formed the Qumran community.

Connection Between the Qumran Community and the Scrolls

Archaeological evidence linking the Qumran community with the caves where the scrolls were discovered is also persuasive. A connection between the Qumran community and the scrolls has previously been considered problematic, because no scrolls were discovered at the site, leading some scholars to deny a connection between the site and the caves where the scrolls were found.[65] However, a positive connection has now been established, evidenced by the same types of pottery being discovered in the caves and at the site, including a type unique to Qumran, and seven caves being carved to store jars for scrolls (4Qa-b, 5Q, 7Q-10Q), with shelving installed in 4Qa and 4Qb.[66] The absence of scrolls/fragments at the site of Qumran can be explained by a fire in 68CE.[67] Moreover, some 20-40 artificial caves

[58] Magness, 2021, p.42
[59] David Kim, 2017, p.276
[60] Taylor, 2012, p.133
[61] Pliny, *HN* 5.15.73
[62] Taylor, 2012, pp.132-133
[63] Taylor, 2012, pp.132-133
[64] Magness, 2021, p.42
[65] Magness, 2021, pp.44, 45
[66] Magness, 2021, p.45; Robert Feather, 2012, p.68
[67] Magness, 2021, p.45

were carved into the marl plateau near Qumran during the Second Temple period occupation, with a network of pathways leading from Qumran to both the natural and marl caves, and with staircases to the marl caves constructed into the cliffs.[68]

There is therefore strong archaeological evidence that the site buildings and both marl and natural caves comprise one site/occupation area, within Qumran's archaeological boundaries, independent of scroll evidence.[69]

[68] Magen Broshi & Hanan Eshel, 2004, pp.321-332, 325; 1999, pp.328, 325
[69] Crawford, 2012, pp.9, 13, 22; Taylor, 2011b, p.4

CHAPTER 2

PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THE RULE TEXTS

Introduction

Crawford writes that, until recent decades, 'the juxtaposition of the words "women", "Dead Sea Scrolls" and "Qumran" in the same title would have seemed like an oxymoron'.[70]

Methodology

Before discussing the portrayal of women in the Rule texts, the methodological approaches adopted will be discussed. This research comprises multi-disciplinary methodologies, with Reception History, Feminist-Critical and Gender Studies being particularly prominent, although others, including Lived Ancient Religion, Embodiment, Sociological, Anthropological, and, in Chapter 3, Archaeological, are also included.

Reception History concerns how the study of religious texts changes across time within 'different cultures, through transmission, translation, or reading, retelling and reworking'.[71] It does not depend on the author's agenda or audience, but on an individual historian's interests and the questions posed.[72] An awareness of an individual's agendas and biases is therefore necessary when interpreting the evidence.[73] Reception History is especially useful for analysing the Dead Sea Scrolls, as it can highlight factors which may have influenced scrolls scholarship.[74]

Scrolls scholarship was the preserve of all-male, androcentric, Christian-centric scholars for several decades, who assumed that the scrolls had been written by men, for men.[75] Magness agrees strongly, noting that de Vaux, and others involved in the publication of the scrolls, were all-male, Roman catholic priests, and because Philo, Josephus and Pliny held androcentric and misogynistic views.[76] She also argues that early modern scholarship believed the Qumran community to be

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[70] Crawford, 2003b, p.127
[71] Brennan Breed, www.bibleodyssey.org/bible-baics/what-is-reception-history, accessed 21st October, 2021
[72] Cheryl Exum, 2000, p.87; Hans-Georg Gadamer, 2004, p.296; Mark Knight, 2010, p.139; Matthew Collins, 2011, p.229
[73] Grossman, 2010, p.245
[74] Collins, 2011, pp.226-269
[75] Grossman, 2010, p.230
[76] Magness, 2021, p.196

celibate, and so discouraged the inclusion of matters relating to women from gender or feminist studies.[77]

However, since the early 1990s, scholars started to incorporate references to women in the scrolls, with female scholars playing an active part in the analysis both of the scrolls and the site.[78]

Feminist-Critical methodology has contributed considerably to scrolls scholarship in recent times, by 'rethinking the basic cultural frames through which the evidence has been interpreted'.[79] It accepts that, in androcentric texts, the male is the norm, and the female the deviation from the norm.[80] However, textual references to "men" or "man" could relate to people in general.[81] Moreover, androcentric writings can hide social actualities, and the lack of references to women therein does not necessarily mean that women are not included in some way.[82] Importantly, this methodology can alter literary models/norms and stimulate the recognition that gender constructions are entangled in power dynamics associated with particular socio-cultural factors.[83] It is important, however, that, when critiquing the beliefs of others, one's own views are not imposed when interpreting the evidence.[84]

Therefore, applying a Feminist-Critical approach when reading the scrolls may reveal some remarkable possibilities, indicate that women were "hidden" therein, actively participated in, and carried out significant roles in the DSS Communities, including the Qumran community itself.[85]In addition, interpretations which account for the ever-changing and evolving nature of sects permit an awareness of alternative socio-historical factors.[86] A Feminist-Critical reader needs to heed the uncharted space existing between texts and the real lives of sect members, with gender matters apparent in texts possibly constituting tensions, not historical realities.[87]

The term "gender" represents the place an individual holds within their community, whilst a person's "sex" is generally determined biologically, although the

[77] Magness, 2021, p.196
[78] Galor, 2014, p.21
[79] Grossman, 2010, p.238
[80] Grossman, 2010, p.241
[81] Grossman, 2010, p.241; Taylor, 2011, pp.172-173
[82] Grossman, 2010, p.241
[83] Grossman, 2010, pp.231, 235
[84] Grossman, 2010, p.239
[85] Grossman, 2017, p.225
[86] Grossman, 2017, p.225
[87] Grossman, 2017, p.246

two interact throughout an individual's lifespan.[88] Anthropologically speaking, in the past, women have been considered more affiliated with nature rather than culture, because they give birth, and because of matters concerning fertility and menstruation.[89] However, anthropologists nowadays do not view gender as relating solely to women's bodily processes, but also to the ways societies are structured and organised, and how they interpret gender matters.[90] The general consensus is that gender and gender relations are social and cultural constructions, serving to perpetuate social boundaries.[91]

Gender relations are significant to sect members in terms of rules and regulations, settling tensions between sect and family, and strengthening religious dedication.[92] Moreover, gender relations within sects can fluctuate over time.[93]

Related to Reception History, Collins considers gender to be important in scrolls scholarship, arguing effectively that there may have been different interpretations if early scholars had included women: this lack of female scholars in early scrolls scholarship would have affected the marginalisation of women in the texts.[94]

Another issue concerning gender in the scrolls relates to purity. Purity matters feature prominently in the Rule texts, playing a significant role in the socio-economic-religious lives of DSS communities.[95] Keady, adopting methodologies from Gender Studies, Embodiment and Masculinity Studies, presents a strong argument that purity (and impurity) issues be addressed from both male and female viewpoints, with purity being considered a gendered topic.[96] Purity matters will be addressed when examining the individual Rule texts below.

Lived Ancient Religion is a comprehensive approach, concerning a person's religious experiences, including their relationship with objects, texts and places, and is particularly useful in revealing the social aspects of religion.[97] Embodiment links material and bodily experiences, and is useful in interpreting the live of ancient

[88] Keady, 2017, pp.9-10, 2019, p.298; Helen Hatchell, 2007, p.232
[89] Judith Basker, 2012, p.358; Keady, 2019, p.297
[90] Keady, 2019, p.298
[91] Regev, 2018, p.301; Keady, 2017, p.10
[92] Regev, 2018, p.301
[93] Grossman, 2002, p.47; Regev, 2018, p.302
[94] Collins, 2011, pp.237-238
[95] Joseph Baumgarten, 1999, p.29; Crawford, 2003b, p.135; Keady, 2017, pp.31, 38
[96] Keady, 2017, pp.2-3, 11-12, 57
[97] Janico Albrecht et al, 2020, p.2; Georgia Petridou, 2017, p.138; Valentino Gasparini et al, 2020, p.4

peoples and identifying socio-cultural differences.[98] The human body is the "subject" of culture, not the "object".[99] Keady considers the DSS communities to be embodied.[100] Sociological methodology, including socio-cultural, socio-religious, social-scientific and social identity approaches, emphasises the need to understand the sectarian texts in terms of their "social" and "text" worlds.[101] However, it is important to consider the insider's views relating to social roles, world views and group dynamics.[102] Anthropological methodology involves the comparative study of socio-cultural aspects of people, human diversity and commonalities.[103]

Methodological Issues

Crawford has identified three important issues concerning the portrayal of women in the sectarian texts.[104] Firstly, the scrolls are fragmentary and do not provide a comprehensive picture. Secondly, the texts were written by men, for men, and may reflect their ideal situation, not the reality of women's lives, and that the scrolls assume an "androcentric social order", generated by the elite. Thirdly, their androcentric language does not necessarily indicate a reality comprising males only.[105] Keady argues convincingly that, whilst elites have often been the scholarly focus when linking the ancient texts and communities, resulting in the lives of non-elite people lacking representation, the scrolls do portray communities comprising both classes, and can be informative in the context of the lives of the Essenes in the Second Temple period.[106]

Overview of the Rule Texts

As discussed previously, there has been disagreement as to whether the Essenes were celibate or marrying, and this remains a subject of debate today.[107] Several scholars have argued that Josephus' marrying group is the one represented in the Rule of the Congregation and the Damascus Document.[108] The Rule of the

[98] Christopher Tilley, 1994, p.4; Keady, 2017, p.38
[99] Thomas Csordas, 1990, pp5-47; Keady, 2017, p.11
[100] Keady, 2017, p.57
[101] Jokiranta, 2010, p.246
[102] Jokiranta, 2010, p.248
[103] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, 2017, p.3
[104] Crawford, 2003b, p.128
[105] Crawford, 2003b, pp.128-130
[106] Keady, 2017, p.1
[107] Collins, 2021, p.111
[108] VanderKam, 1994, pp.57, 91; Frank Cross, 1995, pp.70-71; Philip Davies & Joan Taylor, 1996, pp.223-235; Wassén, 2005, p.5, 2016a; Regev, 2008, pp.253-284; Taylor, 2011, pp.171-190; Joseph. *BJ*2.160-161

Community, whilst not mentioning women and children specifically, does not, however, confirm that the group was celibate.[109]

De Vaux considered it feasible that celibacy rules changed over time.[110] Grossman agrees, proposing the possible existence of tensions within the sect concerning marriage and sexual behaviour, implying social change over time.[111] Different copies of the Rule texts contain variations, indicating either change across time, or inter-group ideology differences.[112] Grossman considers celibacy and marriage as having a complex relationship, and not as complete opposites.[113]

Nati argues that textual variations may be the result of, not chronological development, but of different rules applying in different locations.[114] Collins proposes that the Qumran community has been wrongly considered an isolated community, and that the Rule texts relate to multiple communities within the Essene sect.[115] Schofield also argues that the Essene sect was widely spread geographically, with each version operating within a different cell, although concedes that her argument is conjectural.[116] Hempel proposes that texts are written for diverse reasons, with all versions applying simultaneously: they are literary products, and should not be viewed from a linear perspective.[117]

The view that the Essene sect comprised two separate groups has altered considerably, as a result of adopting Feminist-Critical and Gender Studies methodologies, and because texts published in recent decades have revealed discussions pertaining to women, their bodily functions and sexual relations.[118] Wassén therefore concludes that the Essenes should be viewed as comprising both married and unmarried members, with marriage being considered the norm.[119] Earlier, Schuller also considered that marriage was standard practice, with Kim further arguing that the Rule texts demonstrate that women were protected by the sect's laws, and that women did form part of the DSS communities, although

[109] Wassén, 2016a, p.127; Collins, 2016, p.15
[110] de Vaux, 1973, pp.128-129
[111] Grossman, 2018, p.95
[112] Grossman, 2018, p95, 2019, p.341
[113] Grossman, 2019, p.342
[114] James Nati, 2016, pp.920, 922
[115] Collins, 2016, p.3
[116] Alison Schofield, 2009, p.6
[117] Charlotte Hempel, 2013, pp.109-119
[118] Schuller, 1994, p.118; Keady, 2017, p.31, 2019, p.302; Wassén 2016a; Grossman, 2018, p.94
[119] Wassén 2016a, p.128

perhaps classified differently from men.[120] Cansdale further points out that, whilst women both formed part of, and had a role within, the DSS communities, their actions and status were controlled by its male leaders.[121] As Kim points out, women were viewed in terms of being wives, sisters, servants and seductresses, capable of being wise and wily, pure and impure.[122] Nevertheless, it remains uncertain whether the laws outlined in the Rule texts present a true reflection of a community's social reality.[123]

In addition to issues relating to celibate/marrying Essenes, two other topics relevant to the portrayal of women in the Rule texts play a significant role, and these relate to sexual relations/behaviours and purity issues.

Firstly, concerning sexual relations, Grossman argues convincingly that a specific policy concerning sexuality exists in the Rule texts, representing their social ideology, which includes heterosexuality, choice of marriage partner, vetting of potential brides, divorce, new sexual relationships after divorce or the death of a spouse, and reporting by a wife of a husband's transgressions, particularly of a sexual nature.[124] The Rule texts also concede that sect members experience problems complying with such regulations, and are always in danger of non-compliance.[125]

Secondly, concerning purity, many rules refer to female bodily functions/discharges such as menstruation and giving birth.[126] Bodily functions are ingrained in societies, and are significant concerning matters relating to purity and gender in the Rule texts.[127] Keady argues that methodologies such as Embodiment and Masculine Studies can identify issues related to both the impure male and female.[128] She further argues that female menstruation be considered empowering: when females were segregated during their periods, they probably bonded with each other, swapped anecdotes, and enjoyed long rest periods, a point which anthropological studies have neglected, linking menstruation to pollution.[129]

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[120] Schuller, 1996, pp.252-254; Kim, 2012, p.280
[121] Cansdale, 1994a, p.143
[122] Kim, 2012, p.180 n.46
[123] Moshe Bernstein, 2004, pp.119-121; Rob Kugler & Esther Chazon, 2004, p.171; Cansdale, 1994a, p.142
[124] Grossman, 2018, pp.97-98
[125] Grossman, 2018, p.98
[126] Crawford, 2003b, p.131
[127] Stevi Jackson & Susie Scott, 2001, p.9
[128] Keady, 2017, p.37
[129] Keady, 2017, pp.124-125; Eisha Penne & Étienne van der Walle, 2001, pp.viii-xxxix

In terms of purity, women have often been considered as embodying different social practices from men, and, whilst Shildrick has argued that the “leaking” female body exceeds “safe boundaries”, Keady is more convincing, arguing that, whilst female “leaking” is predictable, the “leaking” of male bodily fluids is not, rendering them insecure and not in control of their actions.[130]

[130] Magrit Shildrick, 1997, p.16; Keady, 2017, pp.126-127

The Rule Of The Community (1QS)

Introduction

Eleven comparatively intact columns of the Rule of the Community were discovered in Cave 1, ten fragments in Cave 4 (4Q255-264), and two in Cave 5.[131] It is considered one of the earliest sectarian texts, with the various versions probably written between 100BCE and 75BCE.[132] It is the only sectarian text which makes no mention of women, except in 1QS XI, 17, 21, where a male is referred to as 'the son of Thy handmaid', and 'one born of woman'. This has been considered evidence for a male, celibate community.[133]

However, recent research regarding the inclusion of women in the DSS communities has been undertaken, using Feminist-Critical and Gender Studies methodologies. Grossman has argued convincingly that women were incorporated into the sect, but, whilst excluded from the text due to its androcentric nature, were "hidden" therein.[134] Moreover, Taylor proposes that the androcentric terminology does not necessarily represent social reality, arguing that, as "man" in both English and Hebrew can mean "human", women were not necessarily excluded.[135] However, in an androcentric "text-world", a gender-inclusive approach was unlikely to have been held by the writers or their readership.[136]

Concerning "hidden" women, Taylor identifies a passage where Covenant members are ordered to refrain from looking with 'lustful eyes', concluding this to be an order not to look at women for inappropriate sexual reasons.[137] Similar instructions occur in the Damascus Document.[138] Keady stresses that the male is responsible for evading sin, with women not portrayed as the villains in this scenario.[139] She further proposes that this may relate to men not treating women as commodities, and to restraining their sexual impulses during a woman's menstrual period, not to male celibacy.[140]

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[131] Vermes, 2011, p.97
[132] Vermes, 2011, p.97
[133] Schuller, 1998, pp.117-118; Esther Fuchs, 2004, pp.1-20; Taylor, 2011a, p.173; Kim, 2012, p.195; Grossman, 2017, p.231; Keady, 2017, p.69
[134] Grossman, 2011, pp.497-512, 2015, pp.265-287, 2017, p.231
[135] Taylor, 2011a, pp.172-173; Genesis 1:27, 5:1-2
[136] Taylor, 2011a, p173; Grossman, 2015, pp.265-287; Crawford, 2003b, p.173
[137] Taylor, 2011a, p.177; 1QS I, 6
[138] Taylor, 2011a, pp.173-174; CD II:16
[139] Keady, 2017, p.71; 1QS II, 11, 17
[140] Keady, 2017, p.71

From a gender perspective, Keady proposes that, although women are not specifically mentioned in 1QS, men are set against each other, not against females, and that threats posed by women in other texts, such as Wiles of the Wicked Woman (4Q484) may be implied in 1QS.[141] Crawford suggests that the Two Spirits Treatise was influenced by 4Q484.[142] It portrays the female as a seducer of men, a formidable temptress, who causes ordinary folk to disobey God.[143] The female portrayed in 4Q484 embodies lawlessness, affecting the male's role in the community, contrary to his usual virtuous presentation.[144]

Other passages in the Rule of the Community which could include hidden references to women include 1QS I, 17-18, 24-26, II, 3-5 and X, 21, concerning Belial's reign, particularly because two of the nets of Belial, discussed in the Damascus Document concern female sexuality.[145]

Marriage/Families

Marriage is neither mentioned, nor legislated for, in the Rule of the Community. Whilst mention of marriage could be expected if a community comprised celibate males, they may not have been a concern, as marriage was irrelevant, although, again, one might have expected this to be specified.[146]

In 1QS IV, 7 "fruitfulness" is considered a blessing, which Taylor argues is androcentric language, referring to semen emission and the resultant offspring.[147] In the Rule of the Community, the Two Spirits Treatise refers to the group's descendants, and it seems unlikely that group members would not enjoy such a blessing by living in a male celibate group.[148] Moreover, the Two Spirits Treatise concerns all humanity, thereby including both men and women.[149] However, as discussed above, group members may have adopted children, or had their own before joining the group.

Purity

Unlike in the Rule of the Congregation and the Damascus Document, no rules or regulations exist in the Rule of the Community relating to menstruation or post-

[141] Keady, 2017, pp.89, 91
[142] Crawford, 1998, pp.355-366; 1QS III, 13-IV:26
[143] Raewyn Connell & James Messerschmidt, 2005, pp.829-859; Keady, 2017, pp.88-89; 4Q484 I 1,12,14,19
[144] Keady, 2017, p.89; Scott, 2009
[145] Keady, 2017, p.71; CD IV:16-19
[146] VanderKam, 2010, p.118
[147] Taylor, 2011a, p.177
[148] Taylor, 2011a, p.177; 1QS III, 13-IV,26
[149] Taylor, 2011a, p.178

childbirth bodily discharges, although neither is there mention of male bodily discharges resulting from male impurity.[150]

There is a reference to water, which is related to purity, in 1QS III, 7-9: 'when his flesh is sprinkled with purifying water and sanctified by cleansing water', which could be another hidden reference to women, as both 4Q274 I 1.7 and 11Q19 XVIII, 16 both note that women could be purified by water.[151] Furthermore, as Keady points out, Frevel & Nihan have argued effectively that purity issues are connected with both hygiene/ritual matters and gender-bias, and may therefore form a part of the daily lives of both men and women.[152]

Covenant Renewal

Individuals were obliged to adhere to the ideology and requirements of the sect.[153] Details of the Annual Assembly and Covenant Renewal ceremonies are outlined in 1QS I, 16 – III, 12, and could imply the inclusion of women.[154] 1QS II, 19-25, for instance, outlines hierarchical aspects of the Renewal ceremony, with priests entering first, the Levites second, and finally 'all the people'. Keady interprets this phrase as gender-neutral, thereby including women.[155] The content and language of this section resemble that in the Rule of the Congregation.[156]

[150] Taylor, 2011a, pp.184-185
[151] Keady, 2017, p.76
[152] Christian Frevel & Christophe Nihan, 2013, p.10
[153] Michael Knibb, 1987, p.91; Keady, 2017, p.71; 1QS I 16-18
[154] Keady, 2017, p.71
[155] Keady, 2017, p.73
[156] 1QSa 1:4

The Rule of the Congregation (1QSa)

Introduction

The Rule of the Congregation formed part of the same scroll as the Rule of the Community.[157] It is short, complete, but badly preserved, and contains scribal inaccuracies, resulting in translation issues.[158] It dates to the mid-1st century BCE, and was amongst the first to be published.[159] Some scholars consider this text to be the result of a number of redactions, perhaps indicating changes in sect ideology over time.[160] Nevertheless, Grossman considers it an ideal work for examining cultural norms and gender roles in DSS communities.[161] Contrary to the Rule of the Community, it presumes the presence of women and children in these communities, with the rules applying to all Israelites in the eschatological age.[162]

Assemblies/Renewal of Covenant Ceremony/Council Matters

1QSa opens by detailing the sect's ceremonial events, specifically mentioning women and children.[163] This follows both biblical predecessors and the Damascus Document.[164]

1QSa I:27 includes women in community assemblies, although Ilan notes that this passage, like others, has been repeatedly emended to appertain to men only.[165] No impure person can enter assemblies, or hold office in the congregation.[166]

Life-Cycle

1QSa I:6-16 concerns the life-cycle of sect members, including details about education, marriage and adult responsibilities.

1QSa I:8-9 concerns older children enrolling into the Congregation, with both Wassén and Ilan arguing persuasively that both young men and women were included, because 1QSa I:4-5 declares that women are permitted to attend the Covenant Renewal ceremony.[167]

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[157] Vermes, 2011, p.159; VanderKam, 2010, p.117
[158] Vermes, 2011, p.159
[159] Vermes, 2011, p.159; Grossman, 2010, p.232
[160] Grossman, 2010, p.232; Hempel, 1996, pp.253-267
[161] Grossman, 2010, p.232, 232 n.5
[162] Grossman, 2010, pp.231-232; 1QSa I:1-3
[163] Cansdale, 1994a, p.144; Crawford, 2003b, p.139; Wassén, 2005, p.137; Keady, 2017, p.162; Magness, 2021, p.200; 1QSa I:4-5
[164] Wassén, 2005, pp.137-138; Deuteronomy 29:10-11; 31:9-13; Nehemiah 10:28-29; CD XV; CD XV
[165] Ilan, 2010, pp.138-139
[166] 1QSa II:4
[167] Wassén, 2005, pp.142-143; Ilan, 2011, p.68

Wassén proposes that girls could attend educational classes concerning Covenant ideology, with both young men and women, at 20, being eligible to enrol into the Congregation alongside their parents.[168] Grossman points out, however, that the masculine singular is used in these passages, questioning whether daughters were included in the education system, although Wassén is probably correct in arguing for the inclusion of girls because the education passage follows immediately after that on ceremonial assemblies, which includes both sexes.[169] Wassén also cites Josephus' statement that all Essene children received instruction in holy writings, purity matters and teachings of the prophets.[170] Also, as discussed previously, "male" references could relate to both sexes, and it is feasible that, due to its poor state of preservation, the text has been emended, and male references inserted.[171]

1QSa I:10-16 is more oriented towards men, with women portrayed more passively.[172] This passage states that a man under 20 cannot have sexual relations with a woman, although no age of consent is provided for women.[173] The age of 20 is also cited in the Damascus Document, and Regev argues that setting a minimum age implies the significance given to a person's maturity, and knowing right from wrong, before marriage, indicating that marriage was taken seriously.[174] Individuals can work on behalf of the Congregation at 25, and at 30 can participate in legal proceedings and judgements.[175].

Although males are the main focus in this section, Keady argues that, post-puberty, a young female's life may already have been mapped out, pre-decided by her gender, and could account fr female impurities not featuring in the list of afflictions preventing admission into the Congregation.[176] Like in the Rule of the Community, this could relate to the "hidden" women scenario.

Testifying Against a Husband

1QSa I:11 has been much debated, with disagreement over whether women could testify against their spouses in legal matters, particularly sexual

[168] Wassén, 2005, p.142; 1QSa I:6-7; 1QSa I:8-9
[169] Grossman, 2010, p.234; Wassén, 2005, pp.141-142
[170] Wassén, 2005, pp.166-167; Joseph. *BJ*2.159
[171] Taylor, 2011a, pp.172-173
[172] Keady, 2017, p.162-165
[173] Grossman, 2019, p.352; Cansdale, 1994a, p.144; Crawford, 2003b, p.132
[174] Regev, 2018, p.310, 310 n.31: CD IX:23, X:2, XV:16-17
[175] 1QSa I:8-9; 1QSa I:13-15
[176] Keady, 2017. p.164; 1QSa II:3-10

transgressions, as men's sexual behaviour was restricted to the marital setting.[177] There are correspondences in the Damascus Document concerning sexual transgressions.[178] Although no details are provided concerning the supervision of a man's sexual behaviour pre-marriage, post-marriage it could be controlled by the prospect of his spouse testifying against him.[179] This portrays women as posing a threat, indicating that sect loyalty was more important than loyalty to a spouse.[180] Nevertheless, Keady points out that, because of their minimal roles, women's testimonies against their husbands would hardly have posed too great a threat to the society's patriarchy.[181]

Some early interpretations of the passage denied that women would be permitted to testify against men, as this was virtually unknown from Jewish writings, if at all, although, as discussed in Chapter 1, sects often opposed mainstream religious ideology.[182]. However, a Feminist-Critical approach permits a different interpretation, considering elements not accounted for by an androcentric reading.[183] Nevertheless, whilst Feminist-Critical methodology can reveal much about the portrayal of women in the context of testifying, care should be taken not to exceed the social norms/realities existing at the time.[184]

It is evident that the Reception History of 1QSa I:11 demonstrates a high degree of gender-bias. Whilst the original editors of the text accepted that women were able to testify, later, all-male scholars, denied that women could testify, considering it improbable that women had such power in the community, citing scribal error and text emendation.[185] However, another early scholar supports the view that the passage concerns women, opposing the scribal error theory.[186] Grossman also proposes that, given the poorly-preserved state of the text, there is no convincing evidence of scribal error.[187]

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[177] Grossman, 2010, pp.229-245, 2019, pp.11, 352
[178] Grossman, 2017, pp.239-240; 4Q270 VII:12-13
[179] Grossman, 2019, p.352
[180] Ilan, 2011, p.68
[181] Keady, 2017, p.164
[182] Grossman, 2019, p.234
[183] Grossman, 2010, p.234
[184] Grossman, 2017, p.240
[185] Dominique Barthélemy & Jozef Tadeusz, 1955, p.112; Baumgarten, 1957, pp.266-269; Schiffman, 1983, pp.62-63; Regev, 2018, p.324
[186] Neil Richardson, 1957, p.119
[187] Grossman, 2010, p.237

More recent scholars favour the unamended text.[188] Interestingly, some scholars consider that only women are allowed to give testimony against their husbands, not vice-versa, indicating that women could only testify concerning private, marital matters, possibly relating to sexual purity.[189] Grossman, however, proposes that their testimonies could concern any form of transgression.[190] Finally, in the context of reception history, Ilan comments that 'interpretation of this text has gone from complete disbelief to complete acceptance of its credibility'.[191]

[188] Schuller, 1999, p.133; Crawford, 2003b, p.138; Keady, 2017, p.20
[189][189] Abel Isaksson, 1965, p.7; Philip Davies & Joan Taylor, 1996, p.227; Crawford, 2003b, p.138
[190] Grossman, 2017, p.240
[191] Ian, 2010, pp.138-139

The Damascus Document (CD, 4Q266-273, 5Q12, 6Q15)

Introduction

Many fragments of the Damascus Document were discovered in the Qumran caves, although two incomplete copies were previously discovered in a Cairo synagogue *genizah*, one being compatible with the 4Q fragments.[192] Vermes argues for a composition date of around100BCE, although Hempel suggests a date somewhere between the late-2nd century BCE and the mid-1st century CE.[193] It is generally acknowledged to be a foundational text amongst the sectarian scrolls, and as relating to an Essene sect comprising men, women and children.[194] Magness argues that the Damascus Document portrays marriage and family as the norm, with Wassén noting that many of its laws relate to women, particularly concerning sect membership, oaths, purity and marriage.[195] Hempel, however, proposes that DSS communities comprised different groups at different stages of their evolution, thereby possibly affecting earlier theories that they comprised both celibate and marrying groups.[196]

The Damascus Document, including the 4Q fragments, was important to the DSS communities because it was regularly copied, both before and during Qumran's period of occupation.[197] It focuses on laws relating to families, religion, community life, and the consequences of disobeying them.[198] Similar rules and regulations relating to the inclusion of women and children in the community are evident in the Rule of the Congregation, with Hempel feasibly suggesting that both texts emanated from the same, or allied, cultural and social groups.[199]

Grossman identifies the Damascus Document as the main source of information concerning gender and women in the sectarian texts, proposing that, by examining gender issues within it, its androcentric nature, consequent effects on the communities' make-up, and relationship between the sexes, can be addressed.[200]

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[192] Vermes, 2011, p.127; Keady, 2017, p.107
[193] Vermes, 2011, p.3; Hempel, 2000, p.3
[194] Carol Newsom, 1990, pp.167-187; Dimant, 2009, pp.7-18; Wassen, 2005, p.27; Joseph Angel, 2013, p.2975
[195] Magness, 2021, p.200; Wassén, 2005, p.1
[196] Hempel, 2000, p24; Keady, 2017, p.107
[197] Keady, 2017, p.108
[198] VanderKam, 2010, p.118; Vermes, 2011, pp.128-129; Angel, 2013, p.2975
[199] Wassén, 2005, p.21; Hempel, 1996, pp.253-269; Keady, 2017, p.108
[200] Grossman, 2002, pp.42-43, 2017, p.234

She demonstrates effectively that the construct of gender, as portrayed in the texts, indicates ever-changing social, realities, a view supported by Kugler & Chazon.[201] Grossman also suggests that the same could apply to men, as the portrayals of both sexes, from a Reception History viewpoint, mirror the aims and ideologies of authors and editors, adding that concepts of gender may change over time, and that readers of the Damascus Document may have interpreted the text differently.[202]

As demonstrated below, the role/status of women in the DSS communities was complex, on occasions contradictory, with women sometimes portrayed as subordinate to men, sometimes as equals, and sometimes as protected; by adopting various Sociological, Feminist-Critical and Gender Studies methodologies, the view that Essene women were always underrated or isolated in the community can be successfully challenged.[203] The portrayal of women in the Damascus Document will now be analysed. The portrayal of men will also be considered, in order to achieve a more balanced view.

Purity

In this context, by studying the portrayal of both sexes, a wider understanding of their day-to-day lives should be achievable.[204] Male impurities could have more ramifications socially, as men participated more in community activities than women, making them more vulnerable when ritually impure.[205] Additionally, male impurities can be unpredictable, whilst those of women are more predictable, making impurities more problematic for males than females.[206] Moreover, androcentric accounts concerning female impurity may have resulted in negative emotions, with Keady proposing that, in terms of Embodiment, women may have experienced the opposite, with female impurity empowering women, noting that anthropological studies have not addressed how purity and social laws can result in female bonding.[207]

Two fragmentary texts, 4Q266 and 4Q272, address impurity issues concerning male and female genital discharges, including seminal emissions,

[201] Grossman, 2004, pp.212-239; Kugler & Chazon, 2004, p.172
[202] Grossman, 2002, pp.46-47
[203] Wassén, 2005, pp.11-14
[204] Keady, 2017, p.123
[205] Keady, 2017, p.123
[206] Keady, 2017, p.123
[207] Keady, 2017, pp.123-124; Rosemary Radford Ruether, 1990, p.10

menstruation, abnormal bleeding in females, childbirth, and discharges post-partum.[208]

Purity issues relating to genital discharges of men and women, plus childbirth, are addressed in 4Q266 6 I 14 - II 4, although the text's fragmentary nature creates problems in terms of interpretation and reconstruction, with Wassén pointing out than some ten lines relating to childbirth are missing.[209]

4Q266 II 1-4 concern sexual relations with either an impure, menstruating women or a woman with abnormal bleeding, resulting in a man's impurity if he has sexual relations with either.[210] A woman undergoes a seven-day period of impurity resulting from genital bleeding, is forbidden both from eating sacred food and entering the Temple until after sunset on the following day.[211] This is significant, because, whilst seemingly portraying women as a threat, it also implies that women could both eat sacred food and enter the Temple when ritually pure.

4Q266 6 II 5-13 concerns childbirth.[212] This passage, mainly reconstructed, states different rules, depending on whether a woman gave birth to a boy or a girl. If a boy is born, the mother is impure for 7 days, and the boy has to be circumcised on the eighth day, whereas, if a girl is born, the mother is impure for 14 days, indicating that girls are considered inferior to boys. Again, the woman is prohibited from consuming sacred food or entering the Temple.[213]

4Q266 6 I 11 concerns the use of wet-nurses. Baumgarten proposes that a baby was fed by a wet-nurse while its mother was impure post-partum.[214] Wassén disagrees, citing a number of convincing reasons: the practice is unknown in Jewish sources; health reasons (breast milk is best); a mother's milk could have dried up before her impurity period expired, resulting in a wet-nurse having to be employed for the whole nursing period; lack of availability of wet-nurses, and cost to parents.[215] Moreover, with high mortality rates in ancient times, Wassén does not accept that laws would be brought in which might increase such rates, suggesting that wet-

[208] Wassén, 2005, pp.45-46; Grossman, 2019, p.353
[209] Wassén, 2005, pp.46, 51
[210] Wass n, 2005, p.52
[211] 4Q266 6 II 4
[212] Wassén, 2005, p.51
[213] Wassén, 2005, p.55
[214] Baumgarten, 1994, pp.3-10
[215] Wassén, 2005, pp.56-57

nurses may only have been employed if there were a problem, perhaps a woman being unable to lactate, or a mother's death during childbirth.[216]

4Q272 1 II 3-18 concerns the transmission of impurity by both sexes from genital discharges.[217] Lines 3-7 relate to laws concerning the acquisition of impurity by touching, or being touched by, an impure male.[218] The discharges are, firstly, a man with an abnormal seminal discharge (a *zav*), and, secondly, seminal emission resulting from masturbation/lustful thoughts.[219]

4Q272 1 II 8, concerns acquiring impurity either by touching a menstruating woman (a *niddah*), or anything her blood may have contacted.[220] As with a *zav*, the touch of a *niddah*, and a *zavah* (a woman with an abnormal discharge), results in impurity, portraying men and women as equal concerning the laws relating to the transference of impurity by touch.[221]

The references to purity issues in 4Q272 and 4Q266 indicate their importance to the authors of the texts and contemporary Jewish ideology.

There is no mention of impure males and females being isolated, possibly signifying that those rendered impure by genital discharges or childbirth did not experience periods of exclusion, with no special places existing to accommodate the impure.[222]

The Temple Scroll also addresses purity issues. Menstruating women, and following childbirth, are excluded from the community because of their impurity.[223] The emission of bodily fluid also renders the male vulnerable in terms of 'personal, sexual, social and spatial consequences', putting him on an equal footing with the impure female.[224]

In 4QTohorot A, males and females are portrayed as being equally impure in the context of female menstruation and males with a flux.[225] Keady also argues

[216] Wassén, 2005, p.57-58
[217] Wassén, 2005, p.51
[218] Wassén, 2005, p.48
[219] Wassén, 2005, p.48
[220] Crawford, 2003b, p.136; Wassén, 2005, p.50; Keady, 2017, p.113
[221] Wassén, 2005, pp.50-51
[222] Wassén, 2005, p.104
[223] 11QT LX VI 12-16; Magness, 2021, p.200; Keady, 2017, p.155; Crawford, 2003b, p.155
[224] Keady, 2017, p.15
[225] 4Q274 I i-x; Keady, 2019, pp.305-306

persuasively that, from both a social and gendered perspective, the rules could have impacted the male more, with impurity threatening his masculinity.[226]

The Sotah (4Q270 4 1-12)

Wassén describes this as a cruel ritual, performed by a priest, involving a husband taking his wife to the Temple if he suspects her of adultery; she has to drink "water of bitterness" to ascertain her guilt or innocence.[227] Whilst Wassén considers the ritual humiliating for the wife, she accepts that she might be attributing modern views concerning women's public humiliation to those in ancient times.[228]

However, some evidence of adultery is required before a wife is brought to the Temple, and she can defend herself if she claims she has been raped.[229] Wassén further suggests that preliminary investigations might have been performed before the ritual.[230] Such controls may have existed to afford the wife protection, out of respect for the Temple institution, and to prevent a curse being used casually.[231] This could be interpreted as fair treatment of women, but also as a women being portrayed as a threat to her husband, resulting in punishment if found guilty.

Treatment of Slave Women

Several laws concern female slaves. In the Sabbath Code, it is stated that no maidservant, manservant or labourer should be reprimanded on the Sabbath.[232] Whilst females are portrayed as equal to men in this context, Wassén feasibly argues that the purpose of this law is to maintain the peace of the Sabbath, and does not necessarily concern the slaves' welfare.[233] Another law regulates the sale of both male and female slaves to gentiles, thereby treating them as possessions, although their human status is recognised by confirming that both sexes were included in the "covenant with Abraham".[234]

Female and male slaves are therefore portrayed as enjoying equal status. However, Wassén argues that it is difficult to decipher/interpret laws relating to sexual relations with female slaves, because of this passage's fragmentary nature.[235]

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[226] Keady, 2019, p.311
[227] Wassén, 2005, p.61; 4Q270 4 5-6
[228] Wassén, 2005, p.61 n.52
[229] 4Q270 4 2-3
[230] Wassén, 2005, pp.67-68, 103
[231] Wassén, 2005, p.103
[232] CD XI 10-12
[233] Wassén, 2005, p.70
[234] Wassén, 2005, pp.70-71; CD XI 10-11
[235] Wassén, 2005, p.68; 4Q270 4 12-21

Nevertheless, she proposes that 4Q270 4 14 relates to female slaves who belong to other men, resembling Leviticus 19:20-22, whereby a man is punished if he has sexual relations with another man's slave, although the crime is not adultery, but an infringement of property rights, as slaves are considered possessions.[236]

Marriage

The Damascus Document stipulates several pre-marriage requirements. Regev argues that these both safeguarded the sect's security and ideology, and underlined the importance of marriage to the sect.[237] Grossman describes marriage, as portrayed in the sectarian texts, as 'androcentric and heteronormative', with a female being portrayed based on their position in their husband's or father's household.[238] Whilst the texts assume marriage to be standard practice, they appear to distinguish between sect members who marry, live in camps and have children, and others who do not, implying that marriage is not the only option.[239]

Selection of Marriage Partner

This topic is addressed in 4Q269 9, 4Q270 5 and 4Q 271 3. In the latter, the prospective bride's father must reveal any imperfections she may have, but must forbid her from marrying any man deemed unsuitable.[240] This portrayal indicates that both the potential suitor and bride were afforded some protection from unsuitable matches. Indeed, Grossman presents a strong argument that these rules imply a desire for compatibility and a lasting marriage, noting that reference to the emotions is atypical in a mainly policy-based text.[241]

The rules for selecting a spouse highlight the need for a chaste female, portraying a patriarchal interpretation of the marriage bond between the sexes, evidenced by the stipulation that a woman's imperfections have to be specified before a marriage can take place.[242]

Divorcees are nowhere identified as potential brides.[243] Moreover, it is specified that females who have engaged in extra-marital marriage, as widows or

[236] Wassén, 2005, p.69; Lev. 19:20-22; Exod. 21:9-10; Deut. 22:23-27
[237] Regev, 2018, p.306
[238] Grossman, 2019, pp.347-348; 4Q271 3 10-15, 4Q269 9 4-8, 4Q270 5 17-21
[239] Crawford, 2003b, p.131; CD VI 6-7
[240] Grossman, 2017, p.236, 2019, p.150; Wassén, 2005, p.89
[241] Grossman, 2019, p.150
[242] Wassén, 2005, p.89; 4Q271 3 7-9
[243] Grossman, 2017, p.236

before marriage, are inappropriate bride choices.[244] This signifies that the only appropriate potential brides are virgins, or females who have not had sexual intercourse after becoming widows.[245] In this context, male sexual behaviour is not considered.[246] The portrayal of female sexual behaviour pre-marriage can therefore be considered androcentric and demeaning towards women.

Trustworthy Women

Single females of dubious character have to undergo examination by 'trustworthy and knowledgeable' women to confirm their virginity before being allowed to marry.[247] This practice is otherwise unknown in the Second Temple period.[248]

The portrayal of these trustworthy women is noteworthy. Whilst they held some authority in the group, they seemingly supported the patriarchy in terms of a woman being a virgin prior to marriage, implying their involvement in endorsing the oppression of women.[249] Nevertheless, although it is not stated whether the method of assessment was verbal, physical, or both, if verbal evidence was used, the female could be viewed as an actor in her own right.[250] Moreover, because male sect members were obliged to accept the trustworthy woman's findings, these women were influential in the patriarchy in a social context.[251] Additionally, a man was prohibited from discussing the findings.[252]

Grossman argues that, from a Feminist-Critical standpoint, whilst this practice could be interpreted as positively locating "hidden" women, it also indicates that women were subjected to contemporary power dynamics and gender norms.[253]

Marriage as a Business Transaction

CD XIII 15-16 and 4Q266 9 ii 4 indicate that marriage and divorce were considered business transactions, thereby portraying women as possessions: the

[244] Grossman, 2017, p.236, 2019, p.351; 4Q271 3 11-12
[245] Regev, 2018, p.306; Grossman, 2019, p.351
[246] Wassén, 2005, p.89
[247] Crawford, 2003b, p.138; Wassén, 2005, p.89; Regev, 2018, p.307; Grossman, 2017, p.237, 2018, p.97, 2019, p.351; 4Q271 3 13-15
[248] Grossman, 2019, p.351
[249] Wassén, 2005, pp87-89; Ilan, 2010, p.137
[250] Grossman, 2017, p.239
[251] Grossman, 2017, p.239
[252] 4Q271 3 15-16; Grossman, 2017, p.237, 2018, p.97, 2019, p.351
[253] Grossman, 2017, p.239

Examiner had to be notified about, and would oversee, such transactions. [254] Additionally, a man must seek counsel when embarking on business transactions, including marriage, although it is unclear whether the Examiner gave only counsel, or permission too.[255] However, the term "counsel" is used only in the context of business transactions and marriage, whilst the lines concerning divorce only refer to teaching, providing insight and advice, leading Wassén to conclude that divorce was taken seriously and that the Examiner had to provide his approval, with a husband not being able to divorce his wife independently.[256]

Therefore, whilst women were considered possessions in the context of marriage and divorce, it is also evident that the Examiner had great authority over males in the community.

Divorce

A group member cannot marry a second wife whilst the first is still alive.[257] There has been much debate about whether this relates to polygyny or remarriage after divorce.[258] The Temple Scroll specifies that a man can only marry once, unless his wife dies, after which he can marry again, from his father's family.[259]

Divorce is permitted, but required the Examiner's consent.[260] Grossman proposes, however, that whilst divorce cuts off the social attachment, the sexual link remains, implying that divorce is as polygynous as simultaneous marriage to another woman.[261] This emphasises the uncertainty in the phrase 'they shall be caught in fornication twice by taking a second wife whilst the first is alive'.[262]

Sexual Relations and Transgressions

Regulations concerning marriage and sexual relations are closely linked because, contemporaneously, sexual intercourse was only legal within marriage, and occurred purely to procreate; many of these regulations reflect contemporary Jewish views of correct sexual behaviour.[263] However, CD IV 6 differs from contemporary Jewish groups, specifying three sexual transgressions: fornication; close-kin

[254] Collins, 1997, pp.104-162; Wassén, 2005, pp.105, 160; Grossman, 2017, p.236
[255] CD XIII 16; 4Q266 9 III 5; Wassén, 2005, p.160
[256] Wassén, 2005, pp.162, 164
[257] CD IV20 – V6
[258] e.g. Vered Noam, 2005, pp.206-223; Grossman, 2019, p.352
[259] 11QT LVII 17-20; Crawford, 2003b, p.134
[260] Grossman, 2019, p.352; CD XIII 17
[261] Grossman, 2019, pp.352, 353; CD IV 20-V
[262] CD IV 20; Grossman, 2019, pp.352-353
[263] Crawford, 2003b, p.134

marriages, and defiling the Temple.[264] CD VII 11-17 chastises rule-breakers, but all three transgressions demonstrate tensions in Second Temple period Judaism, when ideology was changing.[265]

The Damascus Document specifies a number of controls over sexual behaviour in a number of circumstances, possibly relating to sect members having sexual intercourse for pleasure, not procreation.[266] These include the Examiner's control over marriage and divorce, intercourse with a pregnant wife, which could relate to purity issues or concern for the unborn child/mother-to-be, and the banning of sex in daylight hours and on the Sabbath.[267] Penalties for disobeying the laws were severe; a husband found guilty of fornication was permanently excluded from the community.[268]

Fornication

Two types are identified, and concern illegal marriages. The first concerns marrying a second wife if the first wife is still alive, and the second concerns uncle-niece/aunt-nephew marriages.[269] As discussed above, scholars disagree about the interpretation of the first, although there is general consensus that it concerns either polygyny or re-marrying after divorce, but possibly that a man could only marry once, even if his wife had died.[270] The Temple Scroll includes the king in this ruling.[271] Ilan proposes that only polygyny was prohibited.[272] The same topic is covered in 4Q266 9 iii 5, and could also be interpreted as either prohibiting divorce, or serial monogamy.[273]

A law prohibiting polygyny could have been welcomed by female sect members, as polygyny would presumably have created tensions amongst the wives.[274] Moreover, as the only wife, she would not have had to share her husband, or possessions, with other spouses.[275]

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[264] Grossman, 2018, p.91; CD IV 16; CD V 8-11; CD V 6-7
[265] Lutz Doering, 2009, pp.133-163; Schiffman, 2011, pp.547-569; Grossman, 2018, p.93
[266] Grossman, 2019, pp.354-355
[267] Grossman, 2018, p.96; 2019, pp.344, 354; CD XIII 16-17; 4Q270 2 ii 15-16; 4Q270 2 i 18-19
[268] Grossman, 2018, p.96; 4Q270 7 i 12-13
[269] CD IV 20-21; CD V 9
[270] Grossman, 2018, p.92
[271] Crawford, 2003b, p.133; 11QT VII 7 17-19
[272] Ilan, 2010, p.134
[273] Crawford, 2003b, p.133
[274] Wassén, 2005, p.128
[275] Wassén, 2005, p.129

Rules concerning fornication, therefore, whilst possibly restricting the sexual autonomy of the male, do appear to protect the female. Regev argues that, from a Feminist-Critical approach, such laws protected the female from being abused by her husband, although Wassen considers the rule both androcentric and patriarchal, and assumes fornication to be male-initiated.[276]

Close-Kin Marriages

CD V 9-11 prohibits both uncle-niece and aunt-nephew marriages.[277] Close-kin marriage rules are also outlined in the Temple Scroll.[278] Both Ilan and Grossman consider it notable that the text includes marriage restrictions which highlight gender-equality.[279]

Defiling the Temple

Grossman considers that this refers to a man having sexual intercourse with his wife when she is menstruating or experiencing other bleeding.[280]

Women's Oaths/Testifying Against a Husband

Sexual behaviour curbed by laws prohibiting sex for lustful purposes indicate that this could only be discovered if a wife divulged them.[281] CD XVI 10-12 concerns oaths taken by a wife, stipulating that a husband/father can only nullify an oath taken by a wife/daughter if it violates Covenant law. This portrays a woman as being empowered.[282] A husband cannot invalidate his wife's oath if 'he does not know if it should be fulfilled or annulled', contrary to the rules in both the Temple Scroll and a Wisdom text, which provide scenarios in which a wife's oath can be nullified or upheld.[283]

As in 1QSa I:8-11, a wife could testify against her spouse resulting from his inappropriate sexual behaviour, or any other transgression.[284] Whilst this portrays the woman as having authority over her husband, it more likely again demonstrates the importance of loyalty to the sect over that to her husband.

[276] Regev, 2018, p.302; Wassén, 200, p.181
[277] Crawford, 2003b, pp.132-133; Grossman, 2017, p.235
[278] 11QT LXVI 12-17
[279] Ilan, 2010, p.135; Grossman, 2019, p.349
[280] Grossman, 2018, p.92; CD V 6-7
[281] Wassén, 2005, pp.181-182
[282] Wassén, 2005, pp.92-93
[283] Schiffman, 1991, pp.206-212; Wassén, 2005, p.93; 11QT LIII 11-14a; 11QT LIII 146-LIV 7; 4Q416 2 iv 7b-10a
[284] 4Q269 12:4-5; 4Q270 11:11-13; Taylor, 2011a, p.175

The Sabbath Code

Four laws in the Sabbath Code relate to women.[285] Firstly, CD XI 4 bans "intermingling" on the Sabbath. Wassén interprets this as referring to sexual intercourse, a view supported by Qimron & Strugnell, although others disagree, with Schiffman arguing that "intermingling" prohibits individuals from entering into partnerships.[286] Wassén's view that it refers to sexual intercourse is the more convincing, as the Sabbath requires ritual purity, and does not necessarily indicate a negative perception of sexual intercourse per se.[287]

Secondly, and thirdly, CD XI 9b-11, with parallels in 4Q270 6 v 15-15 and 4Q271 5 i 5-7, specify laws prohibiting the carrying of perfume/spices, and infants, on the Sabbath. Although these laws are written in the masculine, Wassén speculates that they refer to women, although acknowledges that the law concerning carrying children could relate to any caregiver, indicating that men participated in childcare.[288]

The fourth law concerns the treatment of slaves, discussed above.

Membership of the Group

CD XV5 – XVI2 and 4Q266 8 i 1-10 pertain to membership of the group. Two factors denote full membership: swearing the oath at the initiation ritual, and participating in communal assemblies. Concerning the former, there is some debate as to whether the reference in CD XI 5-7 should be interpreted as referring to "their boys" or "their children", although Wassén argues convincingly that the latter, gender-inclusive language, is correct.[289] As she point out, 1QSa I:4-9 indicates that both male and female offspring pledged the oath of the Covenant, making it likely that this interpretation also applies to CD XV5, and also included women, particularly because women do not feature in the list of exclusions in 4Q266 8 i 6-9.[290] This list of exclusions is similar to those in 1QSa II 4-9 and 1QM VII 3-4, although the latter does exclude women from entering the war camp.[291] Both Wassén and Yadin argue

[285] CD X 14-XI 18
[286] Wassén, 2005, pp. 94-95; Elisha Qimron & John Strugnell, 1994, p.140; Schiffman, 1975, pp.109-110
[287] Wassén, 2005, pp.97, 104
[288] Wassén, 2005, p.97
[289] Wassén, 2005, p.134
[290] Wassén, 2005, pp.134-135
[291] Wassén, 2005, p.144

that women were prohibited from entering the war camp because they threatened men's purity.[292]

Education

Wassén argues convincingly that girls were included in the Examiner's teaching, supporting the instruction in 1QSa I:4 above.[293] She argues that girls are included because of the importance of all individuals understanding the laws in order to uphold group ideology and community lifestyle.[294]

Positivity re Women

CD XIV 12-17 outlines rules for supporting vulnerable individuals, including virgins without close family.[295] Both Murphy and Stegemann view this as referring to females without a dowry, and probably orphans.[296] However, the customary word for "orphan" is not used, with Vermes using the word "fatherless", interpreted by Wassén as a youth with no support.[297] This humanitarian act portrays vulnerable individuals, including women, as receiving help.[298]

However, widows do not feature. Stegemann suggests that this omission indicates that they were protected under family law, supporting the depiction of a close-knit community.[299]

The passage highlights the differing financial needs of vulnerable young males and females, with the male requiring general financial support and protection, whilst the female received money purely for a dowry.[300] This emphasises the importance of a woman marrying, with the repercussions of not finding a husband being catastrophic, as she would be unable to comply with the societal expectations of becoming a mother, possibly resulting in her becoming a slave or a prostitute.[301]

[292] Wassén, 2005, pp.152-153; Yigael Yadin, 1962, p.71
[293] Wassén, 2005, p.166; 4Q266 9 III 6-7
[294] Wassén, 2005, p.167
[295] Cansdale, 1994, p.145; Wassén, 2005, p.170
[296] Catherine Murphy, 2002, p.84; Hartmut Stegemann, 1998, p.189
[297] Vermes, 2011, p.145; Wassén, 2005, p.170
[298] Wassén, 2005, p.169
[299] Stegemann, 1998, p.189; Wassén, 2005, p.170)
[300] Wassén, 2005, p.170
[301] Wassén, 2005, p.170

Equality

Cansdale identifies occasions where males and females experienced equal treatment: both had to be respected and were prohibited from wearing each other's clothing. She also suggests that scribes could be male or female.[302]

Murmuring Against the Fathers and Mothers (4Q470)

The identity of the Fathers and Mothers is unknown.[303] Both Knibb and Baumgarten consider "Fathers" an honorary title given to senior sect members, Capper proposes that the terms concern old and vulnerable sect members who need support, whilst Ilan considers them a group of men and women holding honorific titles within the community.[304] No scholar views the terms as relating to biological parents.[305]

Wassén argues that both Mothers and Fathers held authority within the group, and protected group members, although the Fathers' authority outweighed that of the Mothers, but that the Mothers were particularly influential amongst female group members.[306] Grossman argues that, whilst 4Q270 7 i 13-15 portrays Mothers as having some equality with Fathers, they are nevertheless depicted as having no authority in the Covenant congregation, implying disagreement amongst group members, in that, whilst female witnesses safeguarded marital practices, male leaders may have disapproved.[307]

Anyone complaining about the Fathers was permanently excluded from the community, whereas those complaining about the Mothers were only excluded for 10 days.[308] This disparity highlights the difference in status accorded to Fathers and Mothers.[309] However, the fact that punishment existed at all portrays Mothers as enjoying some status and authority.[310] Nevertheless, whilst reliable and honourable women held some powers in order to promote group ideology and legislation, group tensions might have resulted.[311]

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[302] Cansdale, 1994a, p.14; 4Q159 2-4; 4Q416; 4Q418 fr.10
[303] Wassén, 2005, p.185
[304] Michael Knibb, 1999, p.1:138; Joseph Baumgarten, 1992, p.27; Brian Capper, 2003, p.103; Ilan, 2010, p.137
[305] Wassén, 2005, p.185; Crawford, 2003b, p.178
[306] Wassén, 2005, pp.196, 197
[307] Grossman, 2019, p.351
[308] Wassén, 2005, pp. 188, 189
[309] Wassén, 2005, p.197; Regev, 2018, p.322
[310] Crawford, 2003a, p.180; Schuller, 1994, p.122
[311] Grossman, 2019, p.242

Grossman considers this passage significant from a Feminist-Critical perspective because it portrays both men and women sharing roles in the DSS communities, adding to the evidence for women both as witnesses and as possessing public roles.[312] However, although the text demonstrates more inclusivity and influence for females than might be expected from an androcentric text, the evidence is still presented as both chauvinistic and misogynistic.[313]

Grossman considers that the role of the Mothers could be linked to the "trustworthy and knowledgeable women" discussed previously, with both terms relating to older, dependable women in the group, who held influence and authority.[314]

The Wiles of the Wicked Woman portrays the female differently from the Mothers in the Damascus Document. In this text, the female is portrayed as a seductress who traps men, leads them astray and causes them to self-destruct.[315]

[312] Grossman, 2010, p.244
[313] Grossman, 2010, p.244
[314] Grossman, 2017, pp.241-242
[315] 4Q184, 1-2, 17; Melissa Aubin, 2001, p.23; Kim, 2012, p.279; Cansdale, 1994a, p.147; Grossman, 2004, p.230-231

Summary

This chapter examined the portrayal of women in the Sectarian Rule Texts: the Rule of the Community; the Rule of the Congregation, and the Damascus Document. Conclusions will be drawn in Chapter 4. However, to summarise, their portrayal in these texts demonstrates women as being actively involved in DSS community life in terms of legal rulings concerning, particularly, marriage, sexual and biological issues related to impurity. Women are also portrayed as holding special administrative roles and honorific positions, indicating that, despite the communities' hierarchy being male-dominated and the scrolls being androcentric in nature, no evidence exists to indicate that women were either excluded from/did not form part of the DSS communities, or that these comprised purely celibate males.

Evidence from the Rule texts, therefore, indicates that, in the Second Temple period, there were complex attitudes towards marriage, family and sexuality, evident in the portrayal of both males and females. By adopting feminist-critical and gender studies methodologies in particular, an exploration between the texts and lived experience becomes possible, revealing "hidden" references to women.

CHAPTER 3
THE PRESENCE OF WOMEN AT QUMRAN

Introduction

This chapter analyses the archaeological evidence for the presence of women in the Qumran community.

Archaeology studies the past via 'material remains left by humans', and can complement/supplement textual evidence.[316]It cannot be considered an exact science, as it involves interpretation of the behaviours of humans, past and present.[317] Evidence for women's presence at Qumran from the site's architecture, cemetery, nearby caves, and small finds in each location will be considered. Finally, conclusions will be drawn.

Archaeological excavations at Qumran have had a complicated past, affected by the local political situation, the relationship between archaeological and scrolls scholarship, and because much research remains unpublished or partially published.[318] Regev considers Qumran to be probably the most controversial archaeological site in the ancient Levant.[319] A major issue is whether archaeological evidence corresponds with scroll evidence, or depictions of the Essenes: a complex relationship exists between textual and archaeological evidence, concerning chronological discrepancies, discrepancies between reality and archaeology, and the limitations of material remains.[320]

Methodological Issues/Considerations

Avni identifies issues with archaeological research, including determining the cultural-ethnic-religious aspects of ancient communities.[321] He argues that archaeologists need to exercise caution when deciphering/interpreting physical remains purely on archaeological evidence, without considering historical, cultural, textual/epigraphic and artistic evidence.[322] Regev, however, proposes concentrating on an analysis of archaeological remains, not anticipating a correspondence with scroll evidence.[323] He advocates using social, anthropological and historical

[316] Magness, 2021, p.5
[317] Magness, 2021, p.14
[318] Mizzi, 2017a, p.20
[319] Regev, 2009, pp.175-176
[320] Regev, 2009, p.177
[321] Gideon Avni, 2009, p.125
[322] Avni, 2009, p.125
[323] Regev, 2009, p.177

archaeology to reconstruct social aspects of ancient societies, including belief systems and social organisation, arguing that this approach provides both theoretical and practical ways of identifying and interpreting rituals, social structures and ideologies in the archaeological record.[324]

Mizzi proposes that the scrolls be considered "human" artefacts, revealing information about the daily, economic, social and religious lives of ancient communities, and should be studied like other material remains.[325] He proposes that a comprehensive archaeological exploration of Qumran could reveal socio-cultural aspects of the community who assembled, used, and stored the scrolls in the nearby caves, highlighting any inconsistencies between lived reality and that depicted in the scrolls.[326] The convergence of textual and archaeological evidence could provide new interpretations/understandings, and a more comprehensive grasp of the Essenes and Qumran.[327]

Galor argues convincingly that the importance of material remains has not been sufficiently addressed regarding gender issues, identifying archaeology as the last discipline to take these into consideration, supporting dialogue between scroll scholars and archaeologists.[328] She critiques Crawford's conclusion that the material remains at Qumran do not support women's presence, arguing that Crawford's analysis of the scrolls was more thorough than that of the archaeological and anthropological evidence.[329]

Taylor also argues persuasively that textual and archaeological evidence be combined, to permit a more holistic understanding of ancient societies, whilst acknowledging that the study of these societies can only generate feasibilities and probabilities, not certainties, although, as Galor notes, many contradictory interpretations have resulted from comparing scroll and archaeological evidence.[330]

As ever, each piece of research reflects the researcher's own biases.[331]

[324] Regev, 2009, p.179
[325] Mizzi, 2017a, p.31
[326] Mizzi, 2017a, p.27
[327] Mizzi, 2017a, p.27
[328] Galor, 2014, pp.17, 21-22
[329] Galor, 2012, pp.22-23; Crawford, 2003b, pp.141-142
[330] Taylor, 2012, p.257; Galor, 2014, p.17
[331] Mizzi, 2017a, p.24

Qumran as a Communal Site

De Vaux feasibly identified the site of Qumran not as a residential community, but as one which catered for a number of communal activities, with its architecture consisted of storerooms, a large kitchen, a dining room, a washing area, a stable, and several workshops and assembly rooms.[332] Galor identifies these activities as subsistence pursuits, gatherings, worship, ritual bathing, studying, and scribal activities.[333]

Crawford proposes that the Qumran community comprised mainly scribes and associated personnel, concluding that it was an all-male community, citing lack of evidence for female scribes in the Second Temple period (however, see Cansdale, 1994a).[334] She cites the large number of fragmentary texts found in the caves as evidence for a scribal community, and because there is evidence for scroll writing, production and restoration: inkwells, scroll tabs, writing utensils and a bronze needle possibly used to collate manuscripts, and rooms which could have functioned as libraries and for scroll repair.[335] Popović agrees that writing occurred, but considers there to be insufficient evidence for a library space, concluding that the site served as a location for producing and studying texts.[336]

A storeroom near the dining area contained a number of items used for serving and eating meals: cooking pots; jars for water distribution; drinking vessels; serving dishes, and crockery, indicating that communal meals took place. Communal eating expresses a shared identity amongst group members, solidifies an individual's place within that group, and indicates social boundaries towards outsiders, and that the importance of adhering to meal regulations in the everyday lives of sect members, at Qumran and elsewhere, cannot be overestimated.[337] Wassen argues that both men and women attended communal meals, but that not all meals were communal.[338] In Roman Palestine, wifely domestic duties included baking bread, wool-working and preparing meals, but, when carried out in communal settings, they

[332] de Vaux, 1973, p.10
[333] Galor, 2014, p.24
[334] Crawford, 2020; Cansdale, 1994a, p.14
[335] Crawford, 2012, pp.14, 15, 2020
[336] Mladen Popović, 2015, pp.155-167
[337] Wassen, 2016b, p.102
[338] Wassen, 2016b, p.105; 1QSa II:22; 1QS VII:3

became a male responsibility, indicating that women may not have performed these activities at Qumran.[339]

Schiffman proposes a different interpretation, considering it an educational centre, where sect members completed their studies before becoming full members; they would therefore have lived separately from their families temporarily, although some sect members would have been permanent residents, accompanied by their families.[340]

Alternatives to the Essene Hypothesis

Whilst many modern scroll scholars and archaeologists endorse the view that the Essene sect formed the Qumran community, whether celibate or marrying, alternative uses for the site have been proposed: a military fort; a military outpost serving to secure the Dead Sea coast; a pottery production site; a *villa rustica*/agricultural facility, or a commercial/trading centre and customs point.[341] These alternative functions have been outlined by both Meyers and Regev, with Meyers providing an excellent summary of their weaknesses, and Regev arguing that the community's function cannot be conclusively identified.[342]

[339] Mishnah Ketubot 5:5; Magness, 2021, p.212
[340] Lawrence Schiffman, 1995, pp. 53, 135
[341] Norman Golb, 1985, p.80; Yitzhak Magen & Yuval Peleg, 2006, pp.55-111; Robert Donceel & Pauline Donceel-Voûte; Yizhar Hirschfeld, 2004; Alan Crown & Lena Cansdale, 1994, pp.24-36, 73-78
[342] Eric Meyers, 2010, pp.23-27; Regev, 2009, p.176

Qumran Site - Small Finds

Small finds from the site could provide evidence for the presence of women. Fewer items made from organic materials have been found on the site than in the nearby caves, although this can be explained by a fire in 68CE.[343]

The majority of small finds can be considered gender-neutral, although some items, such as combs, mirrors, jewellery, spindle whorls and cosmetic containers, can be linked to women in the Second Temple period, and could be considered evidence for women's presence.[344] Perfume containers, both glass and ceramic, have been found at Qumran, also providing evidence for women's presence.[345] However, in Roman times, perfume was used by both sexes for erotic purposes, although Achilles Tatius associated perfumed oils with a woman's beauty.[346]

Magness considers few items to be female-gendered: one spindle whorl; four beads and, possibly, one bracelet, concluding that more evidence is required to confirm women's presence at Qumran.[347]

[343] Galor, 2014, pp.32, 33; Crawford, 2020
[344] Galor, 2014, p.36
[345] Robert Donceel, 1999/2000, p17; Galor, 2014, p.35
[346] Achilles Tatius, Leucippe and Clitophon, 2.38.2-3; Galor, 2014, p.36
[347] Magness, 2021, p.219

Cemetery

Cemeteries are important sources of evidence concerning social practices of ancient peoples, although it can be difficult to identify their ethnicity from burial practices, grave goods and grave architecture.[348]

The Qumran cemetery is located some 100m east of Qumran, separated from the site by a boundary wall, with the graves marked by stone mounds.[349] The western section forms the main part, with extensions and subsidiary cemeteries located to the north, south, and east.[350] The general consensus is that the Qumran cemetery contains the remains of members of the Qumran community, commonly acknowledged to be the Essene sect from the Second Temple era (although see below).[351]

Number of Graves

The cemetery contains some 1200 graves: single burial shafts containing few grave goods.[352] Graves in the western section (except one) are arranged in rows, heads facing south, feet facing north. However, the majority of those in the southern extension, and all in the southern subsidiary section, are oriented east-west.[353]

VanderKam considers the sample size to be problematic.[354] Only a small number of graves have been excavated, with the likelihood of more being excavated in the foreseeable future being slim, due to objections by some orthodox Jews in Israel, and the local political situation.[355] However, Magness argues that de Vaux's 43 excavated graves were a demographically representative sample.[356] Steckoll excavated 10 more.[357] An additional 2, previously opened illegally, were excavated in 2001.[358] Nine more were excavated in the southern section of the main cemetery, with a further 33 excavated by the Israel Antiquities Authority in 2016.[359]

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[348] Avni, 2009, p.125
[349] Hanan Eshel, 2009, pp.73-75; Magness, 2021, p.200
[350] Magness, 2021, pp. 200-201
[351] Avni, 2009, p.125
[352] Avni, 2009, p.126; Regev, 2004, pp.109-131, 2009, p.195; Magness, 2021, p.201
[353] Magness, 2021, p.201
[354] VanderKam (2010, p.33),
[355] Magness, 2021, p.205; Collins, 2013, p.89
[356] Magness 2021, p.205; de Vaux, 1973, pp.45-48, 57-58
[357] Steckoll, 1968, pp.323-336
[358] Magen Broshi & Hanan Eshel, 2004, pp.321-332
[359] Yitzhak Magen & Yuval Peleg, 2007, pp.45-47; Yossi Nagar, Hizmi Hanania, Yevgeny Aharonovitch & Dothan Traubman, 2022, pp.3-17; Bruce Bower, 2017

Evidence from the excavations suggests a greater percentage of male burials than female.[360] However, this is consistent with that of other Second Temple period locations.[361]

Although excavating only 43 graves, de Vaux concluded that the Qumran community comprised celibate males; however, results of his skeletal studies remain unpublished.[362] He concluded that women did not form part of the community, or that the rule concerning celibacy changed over time.[363] Likewise, Steckoll's results are unpublished. The location of the remains he excavated are unknown, although Crawford states that he identified 3 skeletons as female.[364]

Interest in the Qumran cemetery was renewed in the 1990s, focusing on possible female burials.[365] Some 50% of the bones excavated were sent for analysis to Germany, with the rest shared between the Musée de l'Homme in Paris and the École Biblique de Jérusalem.[366] Results of these investigations identified 13-14 of the skeletons as female, more than previously identified, with 23% of bones belonging to women, 63% to men, and 6% to children.[367]

Of the 33 graves excavated in 2016, 30 probably contained male skeletons, with pelvis shape and body size cited as evidence, whilst the gender of the other 3 could not be definitively determined: using radiocarbon dating methodology, the bodies were identified as being about 2200 years old, in keeping with the dates of sectarian scrolls.[368]

Dating of Burials

Dating the burials is problematic because, apart from those in the southern cemetery, most of the graves excavated lacked grave goods, except a few potsherds found in burial shafts.[369]

Furthermore, several scholars have argued that not all graves date to the Second Temple Era. Magness argues that, despite the cemetery's proximity to the

[360] Grossman, 2017, p.232; Edna Ullman-Margalit, 2006, p.80
[361] Avni, 2009, p.129
[362] de Vaux, 1973, pp.45-48, 57-58
[363] De Vaux, 1973, p.129; Edna Ullman-Margalit, 2006, p.80
[364] Crawford, 2003b, p.143
[365] e.g. Hachlili, 1993, pp.247-264; Brian Schultz, 2006, p.199; Olav Rohrer-Ertl et al, 1999, pp.3-36; Susan Guise Sheridan and Jaime Ullinger, 2006, pp.195-212
[366] Rohrer-Ertl, 2006; Sheridan & Ullinger, 2006; Galor, 2014, p.29
[367] Schultz, 2006, p.199; Jonathan Norton, 2003, p.123
[368] Nagar et al, 2022, pp.3-17); Bower, 2017, p.8
[369] Magness, 2021, p.201

Qumran site, not all remains were contemporaneous to the site.[370] Avni, too, concludes that the cemetery cannot be linked exclusively to the Qumran community because of late finds, and the possibility that some graves dated from before the Qumran sect occupied the site.[371] He proposes that graves dating from after the Second Temple period are Bedouin burials, with some grave goods, including jewellery, dating from Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman eras.[372] Zias, too, argues that the east-west facing tombs were Bedouin, with jewellery found in three tombs belonging to the Ottoman period, concluding that all graves containing female skeletons were Bedouin, with none of the north-south facing graves from the Second Temple period containing female remains.[373] Schultz proposes that it is now generally accepted that, as a result of Zias' research, both Bedouin and Second Temple period interments exist in the cemetery, and that, because burials from the two eras share common features, they could be indistinguishable.[374]

Avni, however, suggests that it cannot be convincingly alleged that all female remains were from later periods, as a study by Broshi & Eshel dated female remains to the 3rd/2nd centuries BCE.[375] It is nevertheless feasible that the Qumran cemetery continued to be used after the site's destruction.[376] Furthermore, material remains from graves cannot be accurately dated using radiocarbon dating techniques because of the lack of collagen and carbon in the human remains, nor can the wood the coffins were constructed from be dated, because paraffin was present in the wood as part of the preservation process after excavation.[377]

Marrying Essenes/Family Tombs

Rohrer-Ertl proposes that human remains from the main and southern cemeteries possess similar features, concluding that they may have represented a "marrying" community.[378] However, Hachlili notes that no family tombs have been discovered at Qumran, implying, perhaps, that the individual was perceived as more important than family, although she also points out that family tombs were

[370] Magness, 2021, pp.201, 202
[371] Avni (2009, pp.127-128); Magen and Peleg, 2007, p.45
[372] Avni , 2009, pp.127-128; Joe Zias, 2000, pp.220-253; Christa Clamer, 2003, pp.171-179
[373] Zias, 2000, pp.220-253; Schultz, 2006, p.200
[374] Schultz 2006, pp.203, 212; Zias, 2000, pp.220-253
[375] Avni, 2009, p.129; Broshi & Eshel, 2004, pp.321-332
[376] Avni, 2009, p.129
[377] Magness, 2021, p.202
[378] Rohrer-Ertl, 2006, p.193; Hachlili, 2010, p.67

associated with elites, and individual tombs with the poor.[379] In this context, Taylor presents a strong argument that members of the community chose to be buried as poor individuals, linked to their sectarian ideology.[380]

Women

Crawford argues that, whilst relatively few excavated graves contained female skeletons, these nevertheless provide evidence that women were, in some way, associated with the Qumran community.[381] She argues however, that women were only present at Qumran for a short time, with the archaeological record suggesting that the Qumran community comprised mainly men.[382] However, as Wassén points out, any female skeletons at all pose a problem for the male celibacy theory.[383]

Ullman-Margalit proposes that some Qumran residents may have adopted celibacy in later life, but could have had families before joining the community, arguing that their families lived on the edges of the Qumran site, or were brought there to be buried.[384] Vermes considers that the female skeletons could have been those of women who had died there whilst visiting Qumran to attend covenant renewal ceremonies.[385]

Hachlili suggests that women and children were buried on the edges of the cemetery, because they held a marginalised role within the community.[386] Schultz also considered that women were treated differently from men in the Qumran community.[387]

Pliny wrote that the Essenes lived without women.[388] Although scholars such as Wassén, mentioned above, considered that the presence of any female remains discredited this view, Collins notes that cemeteries associated with Christian monasteries often included female burials, even though the monks were celibate.[389] Women may have performed roles such as cooking and cleaning, or as family

[379] Hachlili, 2010, p.72
[380] Taylor, 1999, pp.312-313
[381] Crawford, 2020
[382] Crawford, 2020
[383] Wassén, 2005, p.6
[384] Ullman-Margalit, 2006, p.81
[385] Vermes, 2007
[386] Rachel Hachlili, 2010, pp.46-78; Timothy Lim, 2017, p.32
[387] Schultz, 2006, pp.219-220
[388] Pliny, HN 5.15.73
[389] Wassén, 2005, p.6; Collins, 2013, pp.89-90

members. This could have been the case at Qumran. However, Josephus identified a marrying group of Essenes.[390]

The debate around female skeletons is controversial, partly because skeletal analysis after 2000 years is problematic, and partly because some of the female skeletons excavated were later identified as Bedouin burials.[391] Additionally, the length of time which passed between the excavation of the human remains, and their subsequent analysis, renders an accurate analysis unlikely, due to the poor state of the bones and the site. Preservation and conservation of the skeletal remains is poor. Only skulls and pelvises were removed, restricting the anthropological analyses which could be performed.[392]

The only gender-related evidence relates to jewellery.[393] However, Zias, as previously discussed, considers that both jewellery and female skeletons are Bedouin, citing their location on the edges of the cemetery as evidence.[394]

Three female graves facing east-west contained jewellery: a bronze ring, an earring and beads in the southern extension; two earrings in a grave in the same part of the cemetery, and 30 beads, a bronze ring and an earring in the south cemetery.[395] Because of their orientation, burial location and types of jewellery, Clamer argues that women buried in these graves belonged to the same ethnic group, possibly Muslim, Christian merchants or nomads, proposing that they were in secondary burial from the Late Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman eras.[396] Whilst Galor supports some of Clamer's conclusions, she argues that it is hard to differentiate beads and bones from Byzantine and Islamic eras.[397]

Magness concludes that women, although present, formed a very small part of the community, and that, even if Zias' argument is not supported, it is likely that their graves were "marginalised".[398] It is noteworthy that some female graves contained jewellery, because of the paucity of female-gendered finds at the Qumran site itself. Nevertheless, the discovery of jewellery is at odds with the Essenes' ascetic lifestyle, and, whilst the lack of such objects at Qumran does not confirm the

[390] Josephus, *BJ*2:160-161
[391] Collins, 2013, p.89
[392] VanderKam, 2010, p.33
[393] Galor, 2014, p.32
[394] Zias, 2000, pp.225-234
[395] Hachlili, 2010, p.57
[396] Clamer, 2003, pp.175-177
[397] Galor, 2010b, p.395, 2014, p.32
[398] Magness, 2021, p.206; Zias, 2000, pp.220-253

absence of women, it is at variance with the classification of the female remains in the southern extension and southern cemetery as belonging to the Essene sect.[399]

[399] Magness, 2021, p.206

The Qumran Caves

De Vaux explored some 270 natural caves and crevices in the limestone cliffs to the north, south and west of Qumran, with only 40 revealing evidence of human activity.[400] He also investigated artificially-produced marl caves near the site, with Broshi and Eshel discovering more.[401]

However, only a small proportion of the caves demonstrating human activity yielded material remains, with fewer from the Second Temple period.[402] Pieces made from glass, stone and wood, personal items and small tools are particularly rare, although pottery was found in the majority of caves evidencing human activity.[403] Although found only in a small number of caves, manuscripts form the greatest amount of artefacts.[404]

The scarcity of material remains could have resulted from both natural and cultural developments, rendering the archaeological evidence both lacking and susceptible to misinterpretation.[405] Such developments could include cave collapse, Roman military occupation post 68CE, and use by other groups, possibly Byzantine and Islamic.[406] Another factor is the possibility of looting in both ancient and modern times.[407]

De Vaux proposed that both natural and artificial caves, and tents nearby, functioned as living accommodation for Qumran sect members, and that the Qumran site itself functioned as a community centre, as previously discussed.[408] He argues that, whilst the inhabitants of the Qumran site itself were celibate, marrying Essenes occupied nearby caves, tents and huts, and, whilst leading different lifestyles, their fundamental beliefs were the same, an interpretation supported by Collins.[409]

Broshi & Eshel, however, suggest that marl caves located near the Qumran site were the only ones to have been inhabited, a theory which has much scholarly

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[400] de Vaux, 1973, e.g. p.51
[401] de Vaux, 1973, pp.52, 53; Broshi and Eshel 1999, pp.328-348
[402] Mizzi, 2017, p.139
[403] Mizzi, 2017, pp.139, 140
[404] Mizzi, 2017, p.140
[405] Mizzi, 2017, p.142
[406] Mizzi, 2017, pp.142-143; Taylor, 2006, pp.140-141; Taylor, 2012, pp.277-300; Broshi & Eshel, 1999, pp.340-341
[407] Mizzi, 2017, pp.142, 143
[408] de Vaux, 1973, pp.50-57
[409] de Vaux, 1973, pp.109, 115, 137-138; Collins, 2016, p.31

support.[410] Mizzi details alternative views, such as those of Patrich, who argues that the caves, because they lack material remains, were only used as temporary, or short-term, living accommodation.[411] Cansdale suggests that they provided accommodation for travellers, shepherds or hermits.[412] Taylor favours the view that they were used to store texts and/or as workshops.[413]

The various artefacts, however, provide a clear domestic aspect to the caves, although their archaeology throws into doubt the view that they served as long-term living quarters, because both limestone and marl caves yielded only pottery items.[414] Mizzi also argues that there is no clear evidence either of daily activities or long-term use, with the majority not large enough to have accommodated families, citing as evidence the remains of a camping area close to the site.[415] There is support for the presence of a tent camping ground in the form of stones laid out in a circle, with a number of artefacts also being found, e.g. bowl, jars, a mug, coins and sandal nails.[416]

The disparity between the lack of eclectic artefacts in most of the caves compared to those at the Qumran site nearby is a paradox, given the connection between the two in terms of pathways or stairways between the two, and because caves 7Q-9Q were only accessible from the site itself, indicating that the caves served purposes other than living quarters, unless they were temporary.[417]

Mizzi offers feasible explanations for the latter, suggesting that they could have been used by individuals not yet been fully accepted into the sect, by individuals undergoing periods of exclusion for impurity reasons, or people excluded from the community temporarily.[418]

However, if the site itself functioned as a community centre, as discussed above, sect members would have inhabited nearby caves and tents, with or without women, with few artefacts being found in the caves because the majority of activities, including cooking and eating, occurred in the Qumran buildings.[419] Mizzi

[410] Broshi & Eshel, 1999, p.332; Mizzi, 2017, pp.144-145
[411] Joseph Patrich, 2000, pp.720-727
[412] Cansdale, 1997, pp.94-97
[413] Taylor, 2012, pp.272-303
[414] Mizzi, 2017, p.146
[415] Mizzi, 2017, pp.147-148
[416] Broshi & Eshel, 1999, pp.336-344; Mizzi, 2017, pp.336-344
[417] Mizzi, 2017, pp.148, 149
[418] Mizzi, 2017, p.149
[419] de Vaux, 1962, pp.11-12; Mizzi, 2017, p.150

suggests that the caves may have functioned solely as sleeping areas.[420] He also, however, argues that most caves were used to deposit scrolls, as storage facilities, temporary living accommodation, or a combination of all three; their function as permanent living accommodation cannot be definitely excluded, but only in relation to the Essene hypothesis.[421] Cave 1Q, however, is an exception, in that pieces of wood, including a comb, plus food and pottery remains, were found, perhaps indicating temporary occupation, maybe as refuge, after the 68CE Roman invasion.[422]

There is no firm evidence that women inhabited the caves. However, a linen hairnet was found in one, of a type found both locally and in the Mediterranean area as a whole.[423] Biblical evidence shows that only females wore hairnets, implying that women did inhabit the Qumran site.[424] Other linen fragments were found in caves 1, 8, and 11.[425]

Most of the material remains are gender-neutral. Evidence that women had a presence in the caves is therefore inconclusive, and is contradictory to evidence from other Judaean caves.[426] Mizzi views female presence at Qumran to be minimal, and that the lack of cave evidence could provide support for the argument that the Qumran caves did not serve as permanent living quarters. [427]

[420] Mizzi, 2017, p.151
[421] Mizzi, 2017, p.153
[422] Mizzi, 2017, p.152
[423] Galor, 2014, p.33
[424] Gospel of Thomas 41:24; Galor, 2014, p.33
[425] Mireille Bélis, 2003, pp.251-259; Galor, 2014, p.33
[426] Mizzi, 2017, p.154
[427] Mizzi, 2017, p.154

Summary

This chapter explored the archaeological evidence for the presence of women at the Qumran site in terms of its architecture, small finds, cemetery and nearby caves. Again, conclusions will be reached in Chapter 4. However, to summarise, it is now generally agreed amongst modern scholars that the sect represented at Qumran was the Essenes, and that women in some way formed part of the Qumran community, although the evidence is limited. However, whilst presence of women at Qumran is perhaps no longer contentious, the subject would benefit from combining textual and archaeological evidence. If women did form part of the Qumran community, their numbers were far fewer than men, as evidenced from, particularly, the excavated graves.

CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSIONS

Portrayal of Women in the Sectarian Rule Texts

The Rule of the Community has often been associated with a celibate community at Qumran, although celibacy is nowhere mentioned in the text, and contains no rules explicitly relating to women or marriage, probably due to the androcentric nature of the text. However, recent scholarship, adopting Feminist-Critical and Gender-inclusive methodologies, provides evidence that women were "hidden" within the text, and formed part of the DSS communities.

The Rule of the Congregation, however, portrays women as members of DSS communities. Whilst early scholars favoured text emendations to refer only to males, more recent scholarship challenged the emendations, employing the above methodologies. Women are portrayed as wives, mothers, educationalists, and participants in legal matters, rendering the Rule of the Congregation gender-inclusive. However, the evidence indicates that the ability of women to testify against their spouses indicates that loyalty to the sect took priority over that to their husbands.

The Damascus Document provides the most information concerning women in the Rule texts. It clearly supports the view that the Essene sect comprised men, women, and children. Its androcentric nature, however, may not portray women accurately in terms of actual social reality. Much of this text concerns sect ideology, and portrays men as vulnerable to perceived threats from women. There is evidence, however, of positive portrayals of women, although they are still portrayed androcentrically.

Overall, evidence from the Rule texts portrays women as being involved in many aspects of life in DSS communities. They are portrayed as holding specific administrative and honorific roles in their communities, although they did not enjoy as much authority as males. They are also portrayed as presenting a threat to men, but also, occasionally, as enjoying protection, and equality with males.

Despite the hierarchy being male-dominated, and the scrolls being androcentric in nature, scroll evidence nowhere implies the exclusion of women and that DSS communities consisted entirely of celibate males.

Presence of Women at the Qumran Site

Qumran is generally considered to be an Essene communal site, but with no consensus concerning whether women formed part of the Qumran community, or the location of their living arrangements.

There is limited evidence in the archaeological record for the presence of women at Qumran. Most of the material remains found are “gender-neutral”. However, this lack of evidence cannot be considered conclusive, because, in terms of small finds, items made from organic material may not have survived the course of time, or fires, with other items, such beads and spindle whorls not being discovered because they were so small, or may have been looted.

However, the paucity of items such as jewellery and cosmetics may not evidence a lack of women, as such items may not have been used by female sect members in order to comply with ascetic sect ideology: men and women, therefore, could have co-existed, but not in the same way as in other communities. However, there is no evidence, from either the ancient authors or the Rule texts, that women were prohibited from wearing or using such items.

Nonetheless, if women did form part of the Qumran community, it might be expected that more gendered artefacts would have been discovered. Whilst the lack of such items does not necessarily the absence of women, this is a possibility if the lack of gendered artefacts from the site, the caves, the cemetery, and the predominance of male burials in the cemetery is taken into account.

Archaeological evidence from the cemetery suggests that only small numbers of women were present at Qumran. There are many more male burials compared to those of females and children, with some of the graves probably being later Bedouin burials. Moreover, the small sample size of excavated graves is problematic.

Concerning the nearby caves, positively linked to the Qumran community, there is no firm evidence concerning their use, including whether they were used for residential accommodation, or whether women were included.

The view that women only played a small part in the Qumran community is, however, an “argument from silence”, with insufficient, conclusive archaeological evidence to prove that they played active roles. To only use archaeological evidence to decide whether women formed part of the Qumran community is unrealistic, although some of the archaeological evidence concerning burials, linen fragments, and perfume holders is useful. If women did form part of the community, it was in

smaller numbers than men, but more collaboration amongst disciplines is required in order to gain a more holistic understanding of women's presence at the Qumran site.

Whilst evidence from the sectarian Rule texts demonstrates that women did form part of the Essene sect, their presence at Qumran seems to have been minimal, and the fact that female remains were discovered at Qumran is not confirmation that women played a permanent role within the Qumran community, although this does remain a possibility.

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