

The Dead Sea Scrolls and Early Christianity: Introduction

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This issue of *JISMOR*, the product of the Center for Interdisciplinary Study of the Monotheistic Religions, includes the results of the studies conducted by its research fellows, as well as their activities in and outside Japan. Let me introduce the first part of it.

The Feature and Article parts include, three papers read at a workshop that took place on October 6, 2018 at the Imadegawa Campus of Doshisha University, welcoming back Professor Emanuel Tov of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, a specialist in the study of the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls, who spent a sabbatical at the School of Theology of Doshisha University back in 2006. This time it was an opportunity for CISMOR's young scholars, who in 2006 some of them were still undergraduate students, to read papers and receive comments from professor Tov. Of the five papers presented in the workshop, three are published in this issue: the keynote address by Prof. Tov himself, together with the paper by Dr. Tepei Kato in the Feature part, and the one by Dr. Koji Osawa in the articles part.¹

More than nine hundred different texts written in ink on scrolls made of leather are known today to have been found in the Judean Desert on the western side of the Dead Sea, for which they received the name "Dead Sea Scrolls" (=DSS).² The texts preserved in the dry and hot climate of the desert kept in clay containers in caves near the site known as Qumran, offer a wealth of material for the study of the Jewish and Christian Bible. Dating from the second century BCE up to the first century CE, and written in Hebrew and Aramaic, they are evidence of the development of the biblical texts and their evolution during that period into a canonical text. Within this wealth of texts scholars have distinguished between biblical canonical texts and texts that belonged to the people who lived in the region in segregated communities, and who either brought the manuscripts with them or wrote them in situ, having more composed beliefs and customs than those known from the Hebrew Bible in its Masoretic Text (=MT).

From the workshop on the Dead Sea Scrolls we are including here two papers; on the one hand, the paper by Prof. Emanuel Tov – a new interpretation of the possible way

of understanding on which manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible the early Christians based their citations and references, and on the other hand, the paper by Dr. Teppei Kato – a detailed discussion of one specific manuscript which was a product of Qumran’s scribes, and is not a canonical text.

Prof. Tov’s paper “The Biblical DSS as Representing Variety in Judaism and Early Christianity” details the possible evolution of the Hebrew Bible manuscripts, labeling the texts from the Judean Desert (texts from Murabba’at, Naḥal Ḥever, Naḥal Ṣe’elim, etc.) as Proto-Masoretic Texts (Proto-MT), while those from Qumran (labeled the Dead Sea Scrolls, and which have differing wording) as not Proto-MT; in Tov’s words: “The Qumran community believed in an open textual approach, that included popular texts and texts that reflect a free copying of the MT texts (the MT-like texts), while the Judean Desert communities strictly held on the MT.” Some of the most important pieces of evidence for this are the differing *Tefillin* found in on different sites. Tov then notes that “Proto-MT is further reflected in the *targumim*, the Jewish-Greek translations, and the Vulgate.” Furthermore “no proto-MT texts were preserved at the early site of Qumran.” Based on the assumption that the texts of the Hebrew Bible originated from and developed in Palestine, Tov has divided the manuscripts into two groups: one is the proto-MT which belonged to the intellectual elite, the other is what he termed as “popular” and includes the Septuagint (LXX) and the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP) which are similar to the Qumran texts. These variations led Tov to take further steps and look at the textual variety projected in the Greek New Testament usage of the Hebrew Bible texts. A large variety of examples discussed by him, bear witness to his conclusion that “it can be said that the textual situation in early Judaism and in Christianity developed along similar lines. Different types of texts were known in both Judaism and Christianity.”

The second paper by Dr. Teppei Kato deals with a specific text from Qumran labeled 4QMMT (standing for the text coming from Cave number 4, and its title *Miqsat Ma’ase Ha-Torah*). This text was written by the people of Qumran and was considered by scholars to be a “sectarian” text, that is to say, belonging to the people who lived in Qumran, and who adhered to a strict set of closed laws regarding communal life, which did not follow the laws of the priesthood elite in Jerusalem before the destruction of the temple nor the laws laid down by part of the Rabbis after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70CE. Dr. Kato questions the reconstruction of the entire text, suggesting that several fragments show different paleography from the main text and further denotes the fact that no special

terminology points to the sectarian characteristic of the text. He thus concludes that identifying the DSS text 4QMMT as a sectarian text is doubtful.

Both these papers offer a glimpse into the current research of the Dead Sea Scrolls, as a representation of the voice of the Qumran community as well as a forerunner to early Christian writings.

Notes

- ¹ The third paper by Dr. Koji Osawa, under the article part, offers a comparative study of the figure of the Priest Aaron in the biblical texts and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The other two papers presented in the workshop, by Dr. Tetsu Kitamura, “Ezekiel in the Dead Sea Scrolls”, and by Dr. Kaori Ozawa, “Angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls”, are to be published elsewhere. For the detailed program of the workshop see *CISMOR VOICE* vol. 28, pp. 2-3. (<http://www.cismor.jp/jp/series/voice/>).
- ² For the Digital Library of the Dead Sea Scrolls by the IAA see the “Leon Levy DSS” <https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive>.