

# **Qumranic ‘Light’ metaphors: a bridge to the New Testament**

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## **Abstract**

*The Dead Sea Scrolls are unique as exemplars of a singular set of literary phenomena in the Second Jewish Commonwealth. Specifically, the Hebrew language itself came to be used in new ways, to express a metaphorical sensitivity that fundamentally broke with the traditions of biblical Hebrew, and, I will argue, served as a bridge to concepts that later found expression in the New Testament. The example I will consider involves two textual fragments from Qumran Cave 4 that adopt an exegetical approach similar to 1QSb (a version of the so-called “Community Rule”) dealing with the word “light” (’or).*

*The Qumranic passages view “light” in a manner unlike anything previously referenced in the Hebrew Bible, in which the word appears as an emblem of redemption and spiritual regeneration. In the radical exegesis of the sectarian fragments, the word becomes a symbolic representation of the Qumran community itself (the Yahad) and/ or the Zadokite priesthood. It is not enough for the sectarian exegetes to suggest that the community is graced by light or protected by light; the community/ priesthood is in fact light. This interpretive phenomenon goes well beyond the mere personification of a Hebrew term. It involves the metamorphosis of language, so as to near-deify the community as a whole and priests as individuals.*

*Moreover, the sectarian corpus appeals to biblical proof texts in a way that internalizes and allegorizes their “plain sense” meaning (p’shat, in the language of the rabbinic sages) and radically reinterprets them, suggesting “secret” messages understood only by members of the Yahad. This research will hopefully shine additional “light” on the process by which this metamorphosis of the word “light” (or) transpired, anticipating its future usage in the Pauline epistles and the book of Revelation.*

## 1. Introduction

Without question, the word “light” is an important metaphor throughout the biblical text, employed frequently as an image in its poetic passages. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, however, light is more than a poetic expression; it is a central theme that appears not less than one hundred ninety-six times in the literary corpus of the community. Among the more dominant references, we find the following:

“prince of light” (1QS 3:20; 1QM 13:10; 4Q495 f2:2)

“lot of light” (1QM 13:9; 4Q495 f2:2)

“allotment of light” (CD 12:12; 4Q267 f9iv:9)

“ways of light” (1QS 3:3)

“habitation of light” (1QS 3:19)

“paths of light” (1QS 3:20)

“spirits of light” (1QS 3:25; 4Q403 f1i:42)

“spring of light” (1QHa 14:17; 4Q429 f4i:4)

“house of light” (4Q186 f1iii:6; 4Q186 f2i:7)

“flames of light” (4Q286 f1ii:3)

“mysteries of light” (4Q299 f5:2)

“presence of light” (4Q300 f3:5; 4Q301 f2b:4)

“dominion of light” (4Q408 f3+3a:8; 4Q503 f1\_6iii:3)

“portions of light” (4Q440 f1:2)

“era of light” (4Q462 f1:10)

“gates of light” (4Q503 f1\_6iii:3; 4Q503 f1\_6iii:14; 4Q503 f29\_32:10)

“flags of light” (4Q503 f10:2)

“essence of light” (11Q17 8:3)

In the literature of the Second Jewish Commonwealth we find the light-metaphor prominently employed in apocryphal works such as the book of Ben Sira:

All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law which Moses commanded us ... It makes instruction shine forth like light (Sirach 24:23-7, RSV).

G. Vermes and others point out that in later rabbinical parlance “light” is an oft-used metaphor for the Torah.<sup>1</sup> M. J. Suggs also finds a connection between light and the Law, as well as its teachers (2 Bar. 77:13-16). He highlights the description in the Psalms Scroll of David as a paragon of wisdom and as a “light” whose words were delivered prophetically (11QPs XXVII, 2-11).<sup>2</sup> Identifying David with light is bold enough a declaration. Qumranic literature, however, will take new and striking liberties with the light-metaphor, prefiguring nascent Christian approaches.

## 2. A link with Psalm 37

The heart of the current research involves two fragments from Qumran Cave 4 and their relationship to 1QS (the “Community Rule”), via the word “light” (*’or*), which in Greek rendering will become an important metaphor in the New Testament. It is well-known that there is frequent reference in the Dead Sea Scrolls to dualistic language such as “sons of light”/ “sons of darkness”.<sup>3</sup> To be a “son of light” is of course one thing; to be the light itself is something quite beyond. Yet this is precisely where the Qumranic exegete takes us. The particular exegetical methodology of the Qumranic writer *vis-à-vis* the biblical text may be glimpsed in one of these Cave 4 fragments (4Q171 f1\_2i:12, part of what has been termed “Psalm Peshier 1”), via the only word discernible in the line, *tzohoraim* (“noonday”).<sup>4</sup> It may be surmised, given the

1. Geza Vermes, *The Torah is a Light*, VT 8 (1958): 436-8; cf. *T. Levi* 14:4; *Exod. Rab.* 36:3.
2. M. J. Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology and Law in Matthew's Gospel* (1970, Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press), 124-5. For additional background on “light” as a theological motif in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament, see George J. Brooke, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (2005, Philadelphia, Fortress Press), 228-33.
3. There is of course lively debate about the roots of Qumranic dualism. While it is often asserted that Zoroastrianism was at least in part responsible for the language of dualism, it has also been argued that Zoroastrian dualism depended on Judaism and not the other way around. See Wm. H. Brownlee, *The Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls for the Bible* (1964, New York: Oxford University Press), 96; Max Wilcox, *Dualism, Gnosticism, and Other Elements in the Pre-Pauline Tradition*, in Matthew Black, William Foxwell Albright, eds., *The Scrolls and Christianity*, (1969, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge), 87. Additional background on dualism and the “two spirits” of Qumranic texts, see David Flusser, *The Dead Sea Sect and Pre-Pauline Christianity*, SH 4 (1958): 246-52.
4. *Psalm Peshier I* was initially called 4QpPs 37, though it also comments on Psalm 45 and Psalm 60. There was a degree of variation in the way the columns were numbered in

context of the fragment, that this word represents the end of a biblical quotation, from Psalm 37:6: "And He will make your righteousness to go forth as the light, and your right as the noonday" (JPS).

The word to which the Qumranic writer seems drawn (given the larger context of the reconstructed passage) is "light" ('*or*), which in the psalm itself is straightforward enough. The psalmist employs a simple simile "as" (*k'*) to equate "righteousness" (*tzedek*) with "right"/ "justice" (*mishpat*) and depicts them both, again via simile, "as" (*k'*) the brightness of midday. Put simply, good conduct is to be witnessed by others, whom it impacts "as if" it were radiant and glowing.

Psalm 37 belongs definitively to the biblical wisdom genre, bearing strong similarity with the book of Proverbs. Addressing not God, but the people, it represents the most direct declaration of divine justice in the face of evil to be found anywhere in the psalter. The reader is exhorted in verses 1, 3, 5 and 7 to trust God in spite of the apparent prosperity of the wicked. There is an additional admonition to take delight in God in verse 4, as well as a warning for the righteous in verse 8 to avoid expressing anger at such inequity. In view of such restraint and right conduct, the righteous will find justification and their good deeds will shine forth "as" (*k'*) light.<sup>5</sup>

It is significant that Psalm 37 is the subject of a separate Qumranic commentary (*pesher*), attested by several fragments from Cave 1.<sup>6</sup> The main body of the text concerns the fate of the just and the unjust as emblematic of the saga of the Dead Sea Sect and its adversaries. As we would expect, the Qumranic context relates the psalm to the end of days and the sectarian community itself,

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the early publications. The manuscript may be dated to the Herodian period and was written in a semi-formal rustic hand. The document is organized similarly to other Qumranic *pesherim*, with one or two biblical verses being quoted, with commentary following. Occasionally, there is a space between a *pesher* section and the citation that follows. However, the interpretation apparently always follows immediately after the lemma. See James Charlesworth, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts and Related Documents* (2002, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press), 6.

5. See Geoffrey Grogan, *Psalms: Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary* (2008, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 91.

6. Charlesworth points out (*The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 6) that Psalm 37 focuses on personal distress, whereas the Qumranic exegete associates "wickedness" and "the wicked" with "the Man of the Lie," "the ruthless ones of the covenant," and "the ruthless ones of the Gentiles." The "righteous" are identified with "the Righteous Teacher," "the Interpreter of Knowledge," the congregation of his chosen ones," "the congregation of the Poor Ones," and "the priest" and "the men of his counsel." No identifiable historical events are referenced, and the essence of the exegesis of Psalm 37 is eschatological.

themes oft echoed in the New Testament.<sup>7</sup> The Dead Sea Scrolls characteristically particularize biblical passages, relating them in a narrow way to *Yahad* alone. This *pesher* specifically addresses not righteous and wicked people in general, but the conflict between the Teacher of Righteousness and the Wicked Priest.<sup>8</sup> The psalm is understood to be prophetic, containing a hidden message directed solely to the Qumran community. Due to the fragmentary nature of the text, however, the first several verses of the psalm, including verse 6, are not represented in the commentary. The quotation of verse 6 in the Cave 4 fragments therefore provides a sense of how the missing portion of the sectarian *pesher* on Psalm 37 may have approached it.

### 3. A link with Isaiah 54

Of relevance to our study, “light” is also the subject of an earlier section of this fragmentary Cave 4 text, which additionally references precious gem stones, that in turn invokes a passage from Isaiah. We read:

[(Isaiah 54:11) ...] all Israel like kohl (your mouth?/ fair colors?) on the eye (inquire of you?). “I will make sap[phires your foundation.” ... (4Q164 f1:1).<sup>9</sup>

The fragmentary nature of the text and attendant difficulties discerning the Hebrew lettering makes translation particularly problematic. Will “all Israel” be like the ancient cosmetic (kohl/*eifor*) originally used as protection against eye ailments?<sup>10</sup> Should the word be read *k’fikh* (“as your mouth”)?<sup>11</sup> Or is there a link with the verse from Isaiah (54:11) subsequently quoted, in which we find the word *k’fokh* (“in fair colors”)?<sup>12</sup>

7. J. H. Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary* (2003, New York: T. & T. Clark), 45, notes that Qumranic material interprets several other psalms (2, 45, 128) in eschatological context. In the *Hodayot* scroll there is a sense of identification of the community with the troubles and deliverances of which the biblical psalms give voice.
8. Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (2004, New York: Penguin), 487. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Interpretations of the Book of Isaiah in Late Antiquity* (2006, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 126, concludes that this *pesher* relates the *midrash halakha* of the Teacher as the foundation of the community he founded. His is the “legitimate Torah,” as opposed to the *halakha* of his adversaries.
9. M. O. Wise, M. G. Abegg Jr, and E. M. Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (1996, San Francisco: Harper Collins). All English citations of Qumranic material are taken from this translation unless otherwise noted.
10. This would require reading the passage: *Kol Israel eifor b’ayin*.
11. Such a reading might lead us to read: “All Israel will by mouth inquire of you” (referring to the sect).
12. One might then read: “All Israel will be like fair colors in the eye.” Blenkinsopp, 126, noting that the first word of the line is damaged, reads: “[He will arrange/place?] all Israel as eyeliner around the eye.” He points to the oddity of this rendering, in that it rests on

In any case, the larger context of Isaiah 54 involves the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple in a post-exilic environment. The inhabitants of the city are encouraged on the cusp of the Second Jewish Commonwealth to rebuild the holy city, being told by the prophet, "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will set thy stones in fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires" (Isa. 54:11).

Isaiah personifies Jerusalem by addressing it directly, employing apostrophe as a literary device: "I will lay your foundation as/ with sapphires." Apostrophe is not unusual in the biblical text, and Jerusalem itself is often addressed directly. We find, for example:

Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem (Psa. 122:2, JPS).

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning (Psa. 137:5, JPS).

Glorify the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion (Psa. 147:12, JPS).

The Temple itself is also famously personified:

Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, everlasting doors; that the King of glory may come in (Psa. 24:7, JPS).

The Qumranic writer, however, goes well beyond the device of apostrophe. He seems to see Isaiah's poetic technique as warrant to allegorize the entire passage in terms of the *Yahad*. In its characteristic technique of *peshet*, the text implicitly declares that the actual meaning of the Isaiah passage is that Jerusalem is in fact *Yahad* itself:

This passage means] [th]at they founded the party of the Yahad on the priests, and the [...] the company of his chosen, like the sapphire among the stones ... (4Q164 f1:1-3).

Jerusalem is "spiritualized" in Qumranic literature, being framed as a community of individuals.<sup>13</sup> This should be seen as a completely new

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the writer's exploitation of the double meaning of the rare term *puk*, which means a finely ground powder that can be used as either mortar (1 Chron. 29:2) or as kohl or mascara (2 Kgs. 9:30; Jer. 4:30). Blenkinsopp goes on to note that while it may be arcane as an image, it may convey the concept that the Israelites are themselves an adornment around the "new Jerusalem." The ambiguity of the line may also have produced the reading 'y<sup>n</sup>yk ("your eyes") for 'b<sup>n</sup>yk ("your stones"). The ancient author may have considered it inappropriate to refer to mascara as adorning Jerusalem (personified as a woman); *puk*, however, was a common toiletry item for upper-class women, implements for its application having been found at Masada and Ein Gedi.

13. Vermes comments on the close association in this text between precious stones, Urim and Thummim, and the sun's light. See Geza Vermes, *Qumran Corner: The Present*

development in Hebrew literature – one that ultimately bridges the gap toward the spiritualized interpretations of the New Testament, which we will address later. This being understood, the “sapphires” referenced by the prophet not only symbolize the priests of the community; they *are* the priests, along with certain other members of the *Yahad* (“the company of his chosen”). The Qumranic fragment next returns to the text of Isaiah:

[... “I will make of rubies] all your battlements” (Isaiah 54:12a). This refers to the twelve [priests ...] who make the Urim and the Thummim shine in judgment (4Q164 f1:3-5).

Significantly, the Qumran community framed its leaders as symbolic representatives of Israel’s twelve tribes, including twelve chief priests and one representative Levite from each tribe (1QM 2:2-3).<sup>14</sup> They are, moreover, representatives of the “true priesthood”, as opposed to the “illegitimate” priests presently ensconced in the Jerusalem temple. In sectarian language, they are the “Zadokite priesthood”. When the text declares that they cause the Urim and Thummim to shine, it may well be likening the priests of the sect to the first high priest, Aaron, who wore these divinatory objects on his heart (Ex. 28:30). Moses is elsewhere quoted as beseeching God to reveal the divine will to the whole tribe of Levi through the agency of the Urim and Thummim (Deut. 33:8). Moses also charged Eleazar the high priest with revealing God’s will to Joshua by using these objects (Num. 27:21). Scripture additionally hints that only

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State of Dead Sea Scrolls Research, *JJS* 45 (1994): 51-53. Michael E. Fuller, *The Restoration of Israel* (2006, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter), 256, observes that there are several instances in Qumranic literature in which Israel’s twelve tribes are depicted as being in special relationship to the Temple and/ or Jerusalem. He points to 4Q164 as an example of interpreting Isa. 54:11-12 in terms of the “new Jerusalem” being comprised of precious stones. He finds it significant that the sectarian writer sees the Jewels of the Temple-city as the community itself, noting a parallel interpretation in 4QFlorilegium. It would appear that the author interprets the “gates of Jewels” mentioned in Isa. 54:12 as the heads of the twelve tribes (line 7). He also notes that while various early Jewish sources depict the tribes or their leaders as taking up residence in or around Jerusalem and its Temple, 4Q164 *defines* the “new Jerusalem” figuratively, in terms of the twelve tribes.

14. The sectarian community also included twelve heads of the twelve tribes, as well as the “prince” and priestly leaders (1QM 5:1-3); twelve loaves of bread offered by the chiefs of the tribes (11QT 18:14-16); and a council of the community comprised of twelve lay leaders and three priests (1QS 8:1-3). Their role is conceived in highly scribal-sapiential and covenantal terms. See Richard A. Horsley, Jonathan A. Draper, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me: Prophets, Performance, and Tradition in Q* (2000, Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International), 106.

those who are worthy may utilize the Urim and Thummim, for the unworthy Saul consults them in vain (1 Sam. 28:6). The sectarian priesthood may be understood, in contrast with Saul, as the “worthy ones,” the lineal descendants of Aaron, as suggested by the frequent Qumranic references to the “Messiah of Aaron and Israel”.<sup>15</sup>

The books of Ezra/Nehemiah reference a number of priestly clans who were unable to prove their ancestry, and consequently were not accepted as true priests. These ersatz priests were told that they were not to consume any of the offerings until a priest could be found who could make use of the Urim and Thummim (Ezra 2:61-63; Neh. 63-65). Doubtless, the Yahad understood that their own sectarian priests were of such caliber. Another interpretation of the Second Temple period is that the term Urim refers to “lights”, as in the Hebrew *’or* – a clear link with the theme of the Qumranic passage and our study. Josephus advanced such an understanding, as did many early rabbinic sages, who taught that questions would be answered by great rays of light shining forth from various jewels on the breastplate.<sup>16</sup> All such references are valuable in recognizing the impact of the assertion that it is these twelve sectarian priests who cause these divinatory objects to “shine in judgment”.

#### 4. The Near-Apoteosis of the Qumranic priesthood

It should again be stressed that this Cave 4 fragment goes well beyond declaring that the Zadokite priesthood are the “true priests” or “legitimate priests”; it declares that if the Yahad *is* the “true Jerusalem”, the priests *are* its “true foundation”, its battlements, transformed as rubies.<sup>17</sup> They pos-

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15. The elevated nature of the Qumranic priesthood is the subject of considerable scholarship, suggesting that at some point a segment of the Zadokite priesthood adopted the Enochic (Essenic?) tradition due to its eschatological characteristics. Following the High Priest Onias III's death, the Zadokites were completely excluded from the political/historical landscape. Thereafter, only Enochic eschatological concepts may have provided a glimmer of hope for the “legitimate priesthood” being restored to its rightful position. Such a shift in the understanding of the Zadokites – on an eschatological rather than historical level – is reflected in CD 3:12-4:3. See Corrado Martone, *Beyond Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: Some Observations on the Qumran Zadokite Priesthood*, in Gabriele Boccaccini, ed., *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection* (2005, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 363.
  16. Each jewel was taken to represent different letters, and the sequence of lighting thus would spell out an answer (though there were 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and only 12 jewels on the breastplate); see *Yoma* 73a-b; *Yerushalmi Yoma* 44c; *Sifre*, Num. 141.
  17. Lawrence Schiffman, *Qumran and Jerusalem: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the History of Judaism* (2010, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 247-8, notes the mention of the



sess the divinatory power to bring forth light. The subsequent phrase is badly broken, the fragmentary text containing lacunae that render reconstruction difficult. A single *lamed* is present after the word “sun” (*shemesh*), followed by a space preceding the word *b’khol* (“in all”). It has been reconstructed to read:

[... and there is nothing] missing from them, like the sun with all its light.  
“And all [your gates are shining gems.]” (Isaiah 54:12b) (4Q164 f1:6).

What can clearly be deciphered is the statement that nothing is absent, missing or excluded from them (the Zadokite priests). They are complete, whole, entire. They resemble the sun “in all its light”.<sup>18</sup> Even the oft referenced term “sons of light” is limited in comparison with the declaration of the priests of the *Yahad* as light. On a literary level, it is the virtual apotheosis of the Qumranic priesthood. To be sure, there was in the literary product of the Second Jewish Commonwealth no more sublime expression of the divine presence on earth than the Jerusalem Temple. As the Qumranic passage next returns to the verse from Isaiah, it now equates the priests with all of Jerusalem’s gates, which shine as gemstones.<sup>19</sup>

Again, there is no approach remotely similar to this in the Hebrew Bible. In many instances the prophets are known to reproach the priesthood for the corruption of their offices. Isaiah’s rebuke of the whole Temple cult is classic:

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sons of Aaron as those who maintain the covenant of the priesthood in 4Q419 (*Instruction-like Composition A*) 1 1-3. He also points to the *Rule of Benedictions* (1QSb) 3:22-30, where a blessing appears honoring the Zadokite priesthood. This text, asking God to restore “the covenant of [his] priest[hood],” suggests that the sectarians regarded the priesthood in terms of God’s covenant with the Sons of Zadok specifically. Following the language of the book of Ezekiel, these were the only priests they regarded as “legitimate.” See also S. Tanzer, in S. J. Pfann and P.S. Alexander *et al.*, *Qumran Cave 4 XXVI: Cryptic Texts and Miscellanea*, Part 1. DJD 36 (2000, Oxford: Clarendon) 322-4.

18. The Qumranic notion of an exalted priesthood may be seen mirrored in a “heavenly priesthood,” referenced in the *Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice*, where they are referred to as “priests [of the inner sanctum...], ministers of the presence in his glorious *debi*” (4Q400 I I 3-4). There is said to be “no unclean thing in their holy places” (4Q400 I I 14-16). These heavenly priests were conceived to act as a substitute for the Temple sacrifice, atoning for sins of the penitent ones. See D. Falk, F. G. Martinez, E. Schuller, eds., *Sapiential, Liturgical and Poetical Texts from Qumran: Proceedings of the Third Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Oslo 1998* (2000, Leiden: Brill), 143-4.
19. See Robert Hayward, Pseudo-Philo and the Priestly Oracle, *JJS* 46 (1995): 51-54. Hayward points out that the role played in 4Q164 by jewels and gemstones vis-à-vis Israel’s future hope is also referenced by Pseudo-Philo, who in turn relates them to the prophetic message of Isaiah 64:3. This hope for the future represents the climax of his exposition of the gemstones, when brilliant light will be bestowed on the righteous.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? says the LORD; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats (Isa. 1:11, JPS).<sup>20</sup>

Centuries later, Malachi chastises the priests for dishonoring both God and the Temple:

A son honors his father, and a servant his master; if then I am a father, where is My honor? and if I am a master, where is My fear? says the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, who despise My name. And you say: 'Wherein have we despised Your name?' (Mal. 1:6, JPS)

More positive tones are nonetheless to be found in books centering on the immediate post-exilic restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple, especially Ezra and Nehemiah.<sup>21</sup> In Ezra, for example, we find the account of the righteous elderly priests who remembered the first Temple, now weeping at the sight of the less-grand Second Temple (Ezra 3:12). The most lofty depiction of any priest to be found in the Scriptures is without question the Second Commonwealth prophet Zechariah's casting of the High Priest Joshua in messianic terms:

Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your fellows who sit before you; for they are men who are a sign; for, behold, I will bring forth My servant the Shoot (Zech. 3:8).

It should be stressed that the prophet had a politically-oriented agenda, namely, supporting a "heirocracy" that developed in a post-exilic environment.<sup>22</sup> This, however, stands at a significant remove from the language of "near-apotheosis".

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20. In Isaiah 29:9-12 we read of those "who are drunk, but not from wine, who stagger, but not from beer." The reference seems to allude to the prophet's great oracle against the priesthood and prophets, whom he depicted as being drunk when having their vision or giving their arbitration (28:7). See Jimmy Jack McBee Roberts, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays* (2002, Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns), 282.

21. While the emphasis on the priesthood is apparent in the extensive lists of priests in Ezra 7:1-5 and Nehemiah 11:10-14, the absence of the term *benei Zadok* (of obvious importance to the Qumran community) is striking. It seems clear that any elevation of the Zadokites was not a priority at this point in Israelite history and culture. See Alice Hunt, *Missing Priests: The Zadokites in Tradition and History* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 104; and J. Blenkinsopp, *Judaism, the First Phase: The Place of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Origins of Judaism*, (2009, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 325, 353-54.

22. Paul Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (1979, Philadelphia: Fortress), 280-6, and "The Matrix of Apocalyptic," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism* (1989, Cambridge Univ. Press), 524-

Trito-Isaiah speaks poetically of the inhabitants of Jerusalem at the return from exile as “Priests of the Lord”, who shall “eat the riches of the Gentiles” (61:6). It is possible that the prophet’s exegetical ploy of naming all the city’s inhabitants “priests” provided the Qumran sect justification for referring to the entire *Yahad* in priestly terms. The Isaianic verse nonetheless limits its magnification of these “priests” to the simple designation “ministers of our God”. While the earlier Isaianic passage refers to Jerusalem and its gates as studded with gemstones, these new “priests”, while glorious, are still “servants”, not gods.

## 5. “Kabbalistic” exegesis and the New Testament

In one sense the Qumranic *peshet* technique has some points in common with later kabbalistic exegesis and with modern approaches to literary criticism (including “deconstruction”), in that words are denied their literal sense in favor of an inner, “hidden meaning”.<sup>23</sup> The Scripture has, for the *Yahad*, become measure of the dynamic interplay between reader/interpreter and the text itself. The adoption of this approach, I argue, forms a bridge between all earlier exegetical approaches common to the Hebrew Bible and the evolving, often allegorical, symbolism of the New Testament.

A conspicuous example of this may be found in the concept that a single sect of individuals not only symbolize but are in fact, on a spiritual level, both the city of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. The Apostle Paul famously writes:

Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God shall destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which you are (1 Cor. 3:16-17, MKJV).

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33, argues that those returning to Judea from Babylonian exile formed a heirocracy, supported by the Persians, and inspiring Zechariah, as well as Ezekiel 40-48, Haggai, and Chronicles. The apocalyptic genre, he suggests, was by contrast developed by a group of “visionaries,” mostly Levites. The people as a whole were drawn to the visionaries’ literary product, until Zechariah and Haggai appealed for popular legitimization of the agenda of the heirocrats. He sees Trito-Isaiah (along with Malachi and Nehemiah) as the product of the “visionaries,” having developed out of prophetic (largely Deuteronomic) streams who opposed the heirocracy. The visionary tone of Trito-Isaiah is particularly striking.

23. See Cecil Roth, *The Subject Matter of Qumran Exegesis*, VT 10 (1960): 51-65; L. Schiffman, “Hekhalot Mysticism and Qumran Literature,” in J. Dan, ed., *Early Jewish Mysticism* (1987, Magnes: Jerusalem), 121-37; C. A. Newsom, *Merkabah Exegesis in the Qumran Sabbath Shirot*, JJS 38 (1987): 11-30.

The context here deals with building a foundation for the growth of the new community. The intent is to boldly declare that the new sect of *Christionoi* have *become* the residence of the Divine Presence, perhaps even replacing Holy House that occupied the ancient heart of Jerusalem.<sup>24</sup> Beyond the obvious, Paul may well be playing on the same language of Isaiah (54:11) that forms the “proof text” of the Qumranic fragments, equating the Temple and the gates of the city with precious gemstones:

And if anyone builds on this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, each one's work shall be revealed. For the Day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try each one's work as to what kind it is (1 Cor. 3:12-13, MKJV).<sup>25</sup>

In an approach reminiscent of Qumranic *peshet*, Paul turns Isaiah's triumphant message of hope on its head, with a warning of a soon-coming *eschaton*. The message is in a sense reminiscent of the prophet Zephaniah, who had earlier inverted the Isaian image of the Day of the Lord, as a day of “darkness and gloom” rather than light (Zeph. 1:15). Paul, however, employs the image of fire – emanating light – to convey universal judgment, not only on evildoers, but on the company of the righteous (Paul's community) as well.<sup>26</sup>

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24. This passage contrasts with 1 Cor. 6:19 (“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?”) in envisaging the temple as a corporate body: “you” [plural] comprise God's “temple” [singular]; cf. 3:9b: “you [plural] are ... God's building.” The aspect of the temple highlighted by Paul is its “holiness” (*hagiasmos*), which demands stringent ritual purity, a theme further developed by Paul in 1 Cor. 5:6-8. See Brian S. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5-7* (1994, Leiden: Brill), 77. See also Michael Newton, *The Concept of Purity at Qumran and in the Letters of Paul* (2005, Cambridge Univ. Press), 89.

25. Many have commented on the fact that Paul quotes Isaiah more than any other source and that Isaiah's influence is more profound even than explicit quotations in Paul's epistles. See Steve Moyise, M. J. J. Menken, *Isaiah in the New Testament* (2005, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), 133; J. R. Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul “in Concert”* *NovTSup* 101 (2002, Leiden: Brill); H. Hübner, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments, Band 2: Die Theologie des Paulus und ihre neutestamentliche Wirkungsgeschichte* (1993, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), 317, notes a semantic field common to both Paul and Deutero-Isaiah.

26. See Duane Frederick Watson, *The intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament* (2003, Leiden: Brill), 111. The Isaianic concept of a “new exodus” emphasizes the motifs of restoration and renewal. The judgmental imagery of plagues is rare in this tradition, exceptions being Isa. 66:24 (regarding judgment by fire) and passages containing similar concepts, which might relate to the plagues upon Israel in the Sinai Desert. Paul, however, reworks Isaiah's “new exodus” to depict a hypothetical category of “new plagues,” including fire. For Paul the positive tones of Isaiah's restoration have become a negative depiction of rebellion, carrying with it dire consequences. See also

In any case, the most compelling image linking the Qumranic material with the New Testament is a depiction of the righteous, not shining “like” light, but *as* light themselves. In a manner again akin to later kabbalistic approaches, the Community Rule suggests that when Genesis 1:16 references the sun as the “greater light”, its deeper meaning has to do with the members of the *Yahad*:

[all] His [pr]ecepts are truth! May He establish you as holy among His people, as the “greater [light]” (Gen. 1:16) to illumine] the world with knowledge, and to shine upon the face of many ... (1QSb 4:27).

The Qumranic fragments previously cited compare the *Yahad* to the sun’s light (*k’shemesh*), but this remarkable passage goes a step further, in actually calling the community “the greater light” (*l’mē’or gadol*) of Genesis 1:16. The very creation of the world now becomes a metaphor for the genesis of the Qumran sect. There could not be a bolder statement of the exalted self-conception of the sectarians regarding their own identity. Nowhere in the entire biblical canon do we find even poetic comparisons of this nature. We do, however, find yet another New Testament reference that is relevant to the theme of “light”:

And he ... showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal ... (Rev. 21:10-11, MKJV).

Is this a depiction of an idealized physical Jerusalem, or of the covenantal sectarian community itself, as the city of Jerusalem, which in turn emanates divine light?<sup>27</sup> If so it may be argued that the book of Revelation adopts an exegetical approach akin to Qumranic *peshet*, in denying literal sense to the city of Jerusalem.<sup>28</sup> The city is instead cast as an emblem of

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Samuel E. Loewenstamm, *The Evolution of the Exodus Tradition*, trans. Baruch J. Schwartz (1992, Jerusalem: Magnes), 69-188.

27. The future glorification of Jerusalem is of course a common theme in Jewish literature of antiquity, e.g. Isa. 54:11-12; 60:1-22; Jer. 31:38-39; Ezek. 40-48; Mic. 4:1-2; Zech. 8:1-23; 14:10-11; Tob. 13:16-17; Bar. 5:1-3; *Psalms of Sol.* 17:30-31; 11Q 30-45; 2!24; 4Q554-555; 5Q15; 11Q18; 4 Ezra 13:35-36; 2 Bar. 4:3; 4 Bar. 5:35. See Joseph Trafton, *Reading Revelation: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (2005, Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing), 205-6.
28. David Flusser, *Judaism of the Second Temple* (2007, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 247, notes that in the book of Revelation the Jerusalem typology of Qumran, as well as the specific interpretation of the Isaiah *Peshet*, are highlighted by the twelve foundations of the heavenly city, on which are “the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev. 21:10-14).

a new Israel, comprised of the adherents of a new religious philosophy. We are certainly reminded of Isaiah's glowing description of the rebuilt city as festooned with precious stones, and it has in fact been noted that Revelation 21 depends on eschatological motifs adapted from Isaiah.<sup>29</sup>

Another verse from the same chapter suggests that the light of the "Lamb"/ the Messiah will become the light of this spiritualized Jerusalem, replacing both the sun and the moon, the greater and lesser lights of Genesis 1:16.

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof (Rev. 21:23, MKJV).

David Flusser pointed out that later rabbinic midrash gave voice to the idea that there will be no need of the light of the Temple in the world to come, that God will be the eternal light of Jerusalem, and that the Messiah will be like a lamp:

Because of the merit of the regular mounting of the lamp (Lev. 24:2), you will benefit from the lamp of the King Messiah. Why? Because "there I will make a horn to sprout for David, I have prepared a lamp for my Messiah" (Psa. 132:17).<sup>30</sup>

Nonetheless, it is instructive to point out that the midrash never actually calls the Messiah the lamp/ menorah of the Temple, only that he will possess such a lamp. In this sense it builds on "traditional" biblical exegesis. The book of Revelation is, by contrast, more "Qumranic" in its approach, inasmuch as a community and its leader(s)/ Messiah become light itself and arguably comprise the spiritualized holy city.

## 6. Conclusion

In sum we have seen a "progression" of sorts, from the traditional poetic imagery of the Hebrew Bible, that speaks of Jerusalem in glowing terms, especially on the cusp of its rebuilding, to the virtual apotheosis of Jerusalem as the Qumranic *Yahad*, who now emanate light and who are indeed the light of the sun at the world's creation. The Qumranic material became in a real sense a "bridge" to the exegetical methodology of the New Testament, for it opened the door to "spiritualizing" that which was

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29. See D. Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (1988, Jerusalem: Magnes), 460.

30. See Flusser, 457-59; *Lev. Rab.* to Lev. 24:2, ed. M. Margoules (1958, Jerusalem: Mag-

previously “concrete”, denying words their literal meaning and sublimating meaning to the imaginings of newly fabricated contexts. When the New Testament community, whether in the letters of Paul or the book of Revelation, is seen as a “spiritual” Temple and a “new Jerusalem”, there is no lack of literary precedent, for the language of the Dead Sea Scrolls had already been engaging in this exact kind of “radical exegesis”. The question remains: Was the line of influence from the Scrolls to the New Testament writings direct or indirect? The issue of interconnectedness of the two bodies of literature is at the very least tenuous. But the commonality of approach, I argue, is sufficient to establish that the New Testament is indeed indebted to the literary corpus of Qumran.