

SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLE:

“PHARISEES, SADDUCEES AND ESSENES
IN PESHER NAHUM”

by

Professor David Flusser*

This article is a rich mine of information and interpretations of history and historiography of the Second Temple period, theological and ideological controversies in that period, and back-ground development of early Christian theological formulations and Biblical interpretations.

Josephus's schema of three schools of Judaism in the Second Temple period has long been challenged as his own invention. The present situation is interesting because the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were first analyzed in the light of Josephus's account of the Essenes, can now be used to check the historiography and accuracy of Josephus. From the Scrolls we can now see that the Essenes too describe the composition of major sects and groups in that time as being three in number.

In a typological interpretation of Biblical passages they identify these groups in three ways. They identify in *peshar Nahum* the Pharisees as the tribe of Ephraim, the Sadducees as Manasseh, and implicitly here, but explicitly elsewhere, the Essenes as the House of Judah. In conjunction with this typology of tribes and kingdoms, the reconstruction of *peshar Micah* by Milik states that Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom in ancient Israel, is identified with the Pharisees, and Jerusalem or Zion is hence the capital of Judah, equated with the Qumran community. Another typology is used in *peshar Nahum* in which the Sadducees are (No) Amon; the Pharisees, Nineveh, and the Essenes, Jerusalem again. From these typological exegeses we can see that in fact there were three groups at this time and Josephus's structure is not an apologetic convention.

Several historical references can be established from *peshar Nahum*. The “Seekers of Smooth Things” can be definitely identified as the Pharisees because this text states that they invited Demetrius to attack Israel. Also in retaliation the “Lion of Wrath” crucified many of this group, a thing that had previously not been practised in Israel. This also fits into the accounts of Josephus about the disputes between the Pharisees and Alexander Jannaeus.

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Published by Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1970, p. 133 - 160.

The writing of this document can be dated after Pompey's conquest of Israel because the author notes that no Greek king conquered Israel from Antiochus until the Romans. Next, reference is made to the rule of the "Seekers of Smooth Things", which must refer to the Pharisees in the reign of Alexander after the death of Jannaeus. In an attempt to reconstruct the early history of the Essenes Professor Flusser identifies the "Lion of Wrath", Alexander Jannaeus, with references elsewhere in the Qumran literature to a "chief priest", the "last priest who punished Ephraim" (the Pharisees), and the evil priest in *peshet Habakkuk* and *peshet Psalm 37* who attempted to persecute and kill the Teacher of Righteousness. He also identifies the leader of the Pharisaic opposition to the Teacher of Righteousness and his party as the "Preacher of Lies", or "Man of Lies" in *peshet Habakkuk* and elsewhere and the "Man of Mockery" in the *Damascus Document*.

Furthermore, the composition of the various parties and their polemics against one another receive further clarification from *peshet Nahum* and some others of the Scrolls. For example, it is noteworthy that the charge of hypocrisy and unrighteousness is levelled by the men of Qumran against the Pharisees. They are also described as swaying the vast majority of Israel of that time. Moreover, according to the *peshet Hosea*, the people "listened to their deceit, honoured them, and held them in awe as gods." Finally the terms of description of the Pharisaic and Essenic communities suggests that each is a religious organization, composed of members and followed by non-member admirers. Each has its own practices, beliefs, and interpretations of the Law; the Pharisees are charged both with being too lenient and aberrant in these matters of community life, belief, and practice. However, the noteworthy characteristics, given in the Scrolls, about the Sadducees are that they have, and utilize, military and political power; they are not described as a religious organization in those Scrolls discovered and published to date.

The eschatological beliefs of Pharisees and Essenes are also in contrast. The general proposition concerning salvation which the Pharisees state is that "all Israel will participate in the world to come"; following this statement, they make some qualifications of this principle (Mishnah Sanhedrin X. 1). However, the Qumran members believe that the general principle is that almost all are doomed to destruction except the members of its covenant, their followers who are not full members, and hopefully others who will turn from the Pharisees when they see their impending destruction in the last days. Moreover, in *peshet Nahum* through the typological interpretation of *Nahum* 3:1 ff the author applies the prophecy of Nineveh to the Pharisees.

Two characteristics are important in the Qumran ideology. Their movement was both separatistic and missionary. Because they believed that they had the proper interpretation of the Bible and, hence, the appropriate

way of life, they separated themselves from all Israel to form a special community. The crucial Biblical passages for them in this respect were *Isaiah* 8:11 and 40:3 and *Psalms* 1:1. They turned from walking in the way of the people and set up their community in the desert. To them the Pharisees deceived and lied to the majority of the people who were following the Pharisees. Yet their eschatology was ambivalent; in some passages they assert that only the members of the Essene community, and possibly their non-member followers, would participate in salvation; but elsewhere we see that they believed that the Pharisees would be unmasked in the End of Days and many from Israel would come to follow them. However, they also assert through the interpretation of *Isaiah* 7:17 that it is not they who separated themselves but the Pharisees who did so when they left the true way. This seems to be the earlier double typology which was later expanded to cover Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes.

The Essenes used Jerusalem of the End of Days both as a typological symbol for their community and as the image of the place in which they, the Chosen People in their double predestinational theological system, would live in salvation. Both of these applications to Jerusalem are found also in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, the *Epistle to the Ephesians*, and the *Apocalypse of John*, but of all these examples only the *Epistle to the Hebrews* explicitly combines the two ideas. The king of eschatological Jerusalem is Melchizedek, according to *11Q Melchizedek*; he is a figure who vacillates between being human and super-human, as does the Son of Man in the New Testament. At Qumran we also find the idea of the two covenants from *Jeremiah* 31:31; the New Covenant is the covenant of the community as in the New Testament. But the denigration of the First Covenant, found in *Galatians* 4:21-31 and *Hebrews*, is not there. With the elements of Qumranic typological interpretation of Scripture and a distinction between the first covenant with Israel on Sinai and the second covenant of the community it is easy to see how these New Testament ideas developed from their ideology; thus, there is no necessity to search in Hellenistic allegoric thought to understand Paul's word in *Galatians* 4:21 ff. The method, structure, and ideas with potential tension in this relation between covenants is available in Palestine in Hebrew at the time of Paul in the Qumran typological thinking. The use of the symbol of a woman for Jerusalem in the End of Days, found in *Galatians* 4:21 ff., and the *Apocalypse of John* 21, can be seen already in *pesher Isaiah* to chapter 54 at Qumran as well.

Summary by Harry Gaylord