

SPECIAL LECTURE

# Qumran: Founded for Scripture. The Background and Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls

HARTMUT STEGEMANN  
*Georg-August-Universität Göttingen*

ONCE UPON A TIME there was a beautiful young princess who—together with all her staff and all the animals within her palace—fell asleep for a long period of time. An angry fairy had put a curse on her to cause her to die by pricking her finger with a spindle. But afterwards, another more gracious fairy had turned her fate into a long sleep until one day a bold prince should enter her chamber and wake her. Meanwhile, her castle became surrounded by a great number of trees, interlaced with brambles and thorns, a hedge so thick that neither man nor beast could penetrate it.

There are several possible ways to identify the leading figure of this fairy tale with Qumran topics. There are three suitable candidates for an identification with Sleeping Beauty, namely the scrolls hidden in the caves, the often neglected reports by some ancient writers on the Essenes, and the ruins of Chirbet Qumran, lonely for almost a hundred generations. Each of these possible identifications also includes a well-known rescuing prince, even if none of those first heroes succeeded in becoming the decisive saviour of Sleeping Beauty.

Meanwhile, half a century of research since the discovery of the first Qumran scrolls has produced more than ten thousand manuscript editions, scholarly books, and learned articles on this subject. Nevertheless, many of the basic riddles of these unexpected findings are still unresolved. Some helpful suggestions in earlier stages of Qumran research are again overwhelmed by new thorns, and the younger generation of Qumran scholars seems to be occupied much more with mistaken results of earlier research than with

*Proceedings of the British Academy*, 97, 1–14. © The British Academy 1998.  
Read at the Academy 5 November 1997.

the genuine evidence from the scrolls. Another century of Qumran research will be needed to resolve all the riddles and to clear up several important oddities. But instead of lamentations let us see what is on the stage and in which directions the signposts at our present cross-roads point.

The first candidate for the role of the helpful prince of our fairy tale is clearly Muhammad edh-Dhib, 'the wolf'. This summer he died, aged about 67, as a poor refugee in Jordan. At the beginning of the year 1947 he was a bold Beduin boy aged seventeen who entered through a light-shaft in its ceiling a cave still blocked by stones in the rocky mountain slope of the Judaeen Desert hills close to the Dead Sea. There he found many jars containing old scrolls. He belonged to the famous tribe of Ta'amireh Beduin who have lived for more than two millennia in that region between Bethlehem and the Dead Sea. According to 1 Maccabees 9: 58–73, support by this tribe—once called Odomera (9: 66)—enabled Jonathan and Simon, the Maccabees, in 157 BCE finally to defeat the Seleucid general Bacchides in the battle of Bethbasi—about two miles south-west of Bethlehem—and to free their country from its pagan rulers. In our days, the Ta'amireh discovered between 1947 and 1956 five of the eleven Qumran caves with most of the scrolls. After they had brought seven of them in the spring of 1947 to Kando, a Christian cobbler in Bethlehem, he sold four to the Syrian Metropolitan in Jerusalem, Mar Athanasius Samuel, and three others to a professor of archaeology at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the late Eliezer Lipa Sukenik, the father of the late Professor Yigael Yadin. These events caused the start of Qumran research, which became a breakthrough to a very new—otherwise impossible—modern understanding of ancient Judaism.

There is still a vivid debate on the relationship between the Qumran settlement and the scroll-caves surrounding it. Professor Norman Golb is of the opinion that Qumran was a government military post, while the scrolls were brought to its vicinity from Jerusalem. Pauline Donceel-Voûte argues that the settlement was a lonely villa without a library, wherever the scrolls may have come from and arrived there one day. Almost every year a new theory of this kind spreads all over the world. But already during his Qumran excavations from 1952 to 1958 the late Père Roland de Vaux had convincingly established the fact that the pottery in all the relevant caves was clearly manufactured within the Qumran settlement. Therefore, the scrolls too must once have belonged there. Indeed, the three 'scroll-caves' 7, 8, and 9 were really nothing else but the living-rooms of some people staying at Qumran. They were an integral part of the settlement, a fact that is ignored by almost all scholars.

The best explanation for the findings in all the other caves is still that of Père de Vaux. According to a report by Flavius Josephus, on 21 June 68 CE the Roman legio X Fretensis occupied the town of Jericho—about seven miles

north of Qumran—and they destroyed the Qumran settlement a few days later. Meanwhile, the inhabitants had safeguarded all the contents of their library in the surrounding caves, finally putting the huge mass of remaining scrolls and documents in Cave 4, which is only 50 yards distant. This theory fits the evidence best and should no longer be doubted.

Initially, all the eleven scroll-caves together may have contained about 1000 scrolls and documents. Some of them decayed during the millennia without leaving any remnants. What today are called ‘the Dead Sea Scrolls’ are, indeed, just nine scrolls of which at least half of their former contents have survived, and only one of them—a scroll of the Book of Isaiah from Cave 1—is preserved almost completely. The remnants of all the other scrolls and documents, nearly 900 in number, are fragmentary. Often only one or two fragments of a formerly long scroll survived. The remains of about 200 scrolls are so poor that nobody is any longer able to identify their contents or to relate them to other known texts from the ancient past. Sometimes, it is even impossible to make out whether the square-script letters on such fragments once belonged to a Hebrew or to an Aramaic composition. Nevertheless, the remains of almost 700 scrolls and documents are still more or less decipherable. Often several copies of the same composition still exist, all of them fragmentary, but mutually completing one another. This kind of scholarly puzzle, which can only in part be tackled with infra-red photographs and which otherwise requires work on the originals of the scrolls in Jerusalem, still continues, while in some cases the results of such scholarly reconstructions are already published.

As a matter of fact, the present bad condition of most of the Qumran scrolls is only in part due to the climatic conditions in the caves where they were found. In March 1952, Père de Vaux and his staff discovered Cave 3, more than one mile north of Qumran. The famous Copper Scroll, with an inventory of sixty-three places containing rich treasures, was still well preserved hidden under rocks. On the other hand, the archaeologists found the sherds of about thirty-four jars scattered around, as well as many unwritten cover-sheets of former scrolls and the extremely fragmentary remains of about thirty manuscripts, usually only one or two fragments of each scroll, which had mostly fallen off their beginnings or their top- and bottom-edges. The remains of twenty of them are so poor that a textual identification is no longer possible. All the fragments from this cave fill just two pages in their final edition. How can this strange evidence be explained?

The mass of the former scrolls in Cave 3 must have disappeared already in the past. About 800 CE the Nestorian patriarch Timotheus I of Seleucia, today Baghdad, told his colleague Sergius of Elam in a letter that the dog of a hunting Arab had disappeared ten years before in a cave not very far from Jericho. When the Arab entered that cave, he found there plenty of old ‘books’.

He informed the Jews in Jerusalem about his discovery, and many of them came and took the books home. There is no other Qumran cave that fits this description. Some of those Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem at that time may have been Karaites. At least, the Karaites later on reported that many of their special teachings were due to some 'people of the cave', and from the genizah of the Karaite synagogue in Cairo, edited by Schechter in 1910, we know about half of the original text of the so-called Damascus Document, ten copies of which have now been found in different Qumran caves. In future, many more copies from former Qumran scrolls may become identified within the huge mass of medieval manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah, and also within the almost unexplored rich collection of the Karaite Firkovitch in St Petersburg. For the moment it may be sufficient to offer a plausible suggestion why no real scrolls could any longer be found in Cave 3 when scholars first came across this place in modern times.

A similar fate befell the scrolls in what were formerly four living and study rooms of the Qumran inhabitants at that southern edge of the marl terrace, which is today occupied by the ruins of the Qumran settlement. In 1955, the excavators still found in the ruins of those rooms the sherds of at least eight jars. But the poor remains of many scrolls written in Greek from Cave 7 fill just one page in the edition, while from Cave 8—apart from a phylactery and the mezuzah of the last inhabitant—only petty fragments of three scrolls could be rescued, from Cave 9 just one tiny fragment, from a fourth apartment nothing. Reports by Eusebius of Caesarea and Epiphanius of Salamis inform us that in the third century CE Origen could reproduce—as an additional column in the Psalter of his Hexapla—a Greek scroll which had been found, together with other Greek and Hebrew scrolls, in jars not far from Jericho shortly before in the year 217 CE. The only other Qumran cave with Greek and Hebrew manuscripts at the same time is Cave 4, which was not emptied until 1952. Therefore, Origen's additional text may very likely have come from Qumran's Cave 7. All the other scrolls from Caves 7, 8, and 9 seem to be lost for ever.

Furthermore, Caves 2 and 4 were entered some time in the Middle Ages by people who did not take away the scrolls which they found there, but destroyed most of them and scattered the remains on the floor, where they were rotted by humidity, or the wind blew them away. Also in better protected caves like Cave 1 and Cave 11 about half of the scrolls were glued by humidity or decayed in such a way that up to half of the former number of scrolls in those caves disappeared apart from some tiny fragments. Finally, the Beduin are said to have destroyed some scrolls in the early days, before they knew of their value. Some scrolls were hidden as illicit property in wet places and suffered from rain. Many fine fragments may be lost for ever, as they were acquired by tourists during the fifties and spread all over the world, and only very few of them have become known meanwhile to scholars or museums. You see,

Sleeping Beauty looks like the scattered remains of a very old mummy if we compare her today to the originally beautiful Dead Sea Scrolls' library at Qumran. But this is only a superficial impression. Everything will change at the moment when we recognise the contents of that evidence which finally survived in spite of so much loss.

All the Qumran scrolls were written within the period from the final decades of the third century BCE down to the destruction of Qumran in the year 68 CE. About 200 of them are usually designated as 'biblical manuscripts', but this large number includes thirty-six phylacteries or mezuzoth with only their traditional excerpts from Exodus and Deuteronomy. A scroll of the 'Pentateuch' contained only the 'Song of Moses', Deuteronomy 32, and some 'Psalter scrolls' only collections of some psalms. The twelve Minor Prophets were usually copied on one scroll, while on the other hand the books of the voluminous Pentateuch were generally distributed among several scrolls, sometimes two of them being written on a single scroll. The true number of biblical scrolls that contained the full text of at least one book is less than 140. But often the fragmentary state of preservation no longer allows us to state the former content of the whole scroll. On the other hand, sometimes different parts of the same scroll have been published separately from one another, as their contents appeared to belong to different books. Only after the full evidence has been published in the future will scholars be able to have a second look at such confusions.

The main profit we can gain from the biblical Qumran manuscripts is that we have now for the first time authentic evidence of those versions of the biblical books which were current in Palestine within the Second Temple period. The Masoretic Text of our Hebrew Bible is based on medieval manuscripts. The only 'Bible manuscript' before the Qumran discoveries was the so-called Nash Papyrus from the second or first century BCE with the text of the decalogue and of the Shema Israel. Only indirectly could early versions like the Septuagint or quotations by ancient authors help scholars to speculate on divergent readings behind them. Now we have at least fragmentary evidence of all books of the Hebrew Bible (except only for the book of Esther) which is about a millennium older than the Masoretic Text. The result is surprising. There are several scrolls which provide us with almost the same text that we already knew from the Middle Ages. But there are other scrolls which offer for the first time the divergent Hebrew text underlying the Septuagint. They demonstrate that the Greek translators used their Hebrew *Vorlage* less freely than is usually supposed. There are also scrolls of the Pentateuch with a text rather close to the so-called Samaritan version, which now turns out to be an old Palestinian form of text, which was only secondarily adopted by the Samaritans and slightly revised by them.

Some more evidence is exciting. There is a text of 1 Samuel which has not

yet been finally published, and which is thought to be perhaps older than that of the masoretes. There are more than thirty copies of the Psalter which inform us that (a) the Psalter was already divided into its five traditional books in Qumran times, and that (b) books one to three—i.e., Psalms 1–89—were textually almost finally established at a time when the arrangement and contents of its final two books were still fluid. Whenever this period was during the third or second century BCE, this evidence at least refutes all still current assumptions that a final redaction of the whole Psalter, including also its opening Psalm 1, was completed as late as Maccabean times.

These are only a few examples of fresh approaches to our biblical text thanks to the Qumran discoveries. Within a few years from now, all the relevant evidence will be finally published. But Jewish and Christian Bible scholars will still need some decades of research to work out the manifold relationships between all these divergent manuscripts and the versions of the biblical books that have long been known, like the Masoretic Text or the Septuagint.

Another case of innovation resulting from the Qumran discoveries is the field of studies of apocalyptic. Since J. T. Milik published most of the Enoch evidence from Qumran's Cave 4 in 1976, everybody knows that the 'Astronomical Book' of the Enoch collection and its 'Book of the Watchers' are remarkably older than the biblical Book of Daniel, which was completed 164 BCE. Now we have copies of both Enoch apocalypses which are palaeographically dated about 200 BCE or into the beginning of the second century. The literary compositions themselves may come from the Persian period, or from the third century BCE at the latest. Nevertheless, current research in Jewish apocalyptic studies continues to be much more influenced by the later apocalyptic books of Daniel, of John in the New Testament, or of 4 Ezra than by those earlier Enoch sources.

Let me mention some other interesting findings. Before the Qumran discoveries, the Greek text of the Book of Tobit was our oldest version of it. Now we have four fragmentary manuscripts which demonstrate that this book was originally written in Aramaic. The Book of Jubilees was mainly known by Ethiopic manuscripts from the Middle Ages. Now we have at least fourteen fragmentary Hebrew copies of it which demonstrate *inter alia* that the author of this book still used the Tetragrammaton freely. This finding suggests that the Book of Jubilees may have been composed earlier than Ben Sira, who about 190 BCE totally avoided the Tetragrammaton. Nevertheless, almost all scholars continue to date the Book of Jubilees about the middle of the second century BCE.

Last but not least, the Qumran discoveries have provided us with about 120 literary works—or some fragments of them—which were previously quite unknown to modern scholarship. Only about forty of them were clearly

composed by contemporaries of the inhabitants of Qumran, e.g., some rule-books, several pesharim, two midrashim, or hymns like the Hodayot. On the other hand, two thirds of these 'new' books seem to have been traditional to them, i.e., they may have been composed before the middle of the second century BCE in earlier Hellenistic times, or even in the Persian period. This kind of evidence includes some collections of prayers, liturgies, non-biblical psalms, the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, the New Jerusalem composition, some calendrical works, even the text of the famous Temple Scroll or the first draft of the War Scroll. Those earlier centuries were at the same time the formative period for most of the books of the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless, many Old Testament scholars still continue to regard all the new Qumran evidence as basically 'post-canonical' and without any bearing on their research. For them our Beauty is still sleeping. This is only a small selection from the broad field of innovation resulting from the Qumran discoveries, but enough to show its impact on previous interpretations and its challenges for further research.

My second identification of Sleeping Beauty includes some literary sources, especially the reports of Philo of Alexandria, of Flavius Josephus, and of Pliny the Elder on the Essenes. In this case, the saving prince of our fairy tale was the late Professor Eliezer Lipa Sukenik who bought his three scrolls in Bethlehem on 29 November and 22 December 1947. He also learned that those scrolls were found in a cave close to the north-western shores of the Dead Sea. After a glimpse also into the Serekh ha-Yachad scroll of the Syrian Metropolitan, which Sukenik had insufficient money to buy, he suggested in the first scholarly publication on the Dead Sea Scrolls (his *Oṣar ha-Megilloth ha-Genuzoth* [1948], written in Hebrew), that the scrolls might come from the Essenes, since according to Pliny the Elder 'the Essenes' had settled in just that region. This identification has been shared since then by most scholars. The problem is that it does not lead into the chamber of Sleeping Beauty, but only into the cellar of her castle.

Extremely rarely do we meet in the field of historical scholarship a contrast like that between the descriptions of the Essenes by Philo and Josephus on the one hand, and their understanding by Qumran scholars on the other. Philo and Josephus once agreed that the Essenes were a mighty group with more than 4,000 members, i.e., adult men who lived in their time in almost all towns and villages of Judaea. Compared to them the Pharisees had—according to Josephus—more than 6,000 members, only about half of them living in Judaea and most of the others in Galilee, while the élite Sadducees had at best a few hundred members. Therefore, the Essenes represented the most important of all the religious organisations in Judaea.

Both ancient authors also agree that the Essenes were regarded at that time as an unrivalled model of Jewish piety. Philo praised them in two long sections

of his treatises, taking no notice of the Pharisees or of the Sadducees. Josephus not only mentions the Essenes frequently, but dedicates to their praise the long passage in paragraphs 119 to 161 in the second book of his description of the Jewish war, adding there just five short paragraphs (162–6) to describe also the Pharisees and the Sadducees, in spite of the fact that he himself was a Pharisee. Both Jewish writers of that time clearly shared the opinion that if you want to know the best of all Jews, you should look at this important group of the Essenes all over the country. Finally, the first Essene in history mentioned by Josephus was a man named Judah who taught his Essene students in the Jerusalem temple in the year 103 BCE, while any special settlement of the Essenes like that at the Dead Sea is mentioned neither by Josephus nor by Philo. The first time Josephus makes mention of the Essenes—together with the Pharisees and Sadducees as separate groups—is in a context where he depicts events about the middle of the second century BCE.

Qumran scholars who identify the Yachad, the religious organisation of the Dead Sea Scrolls, with the Essenes take a quite opposite view of them. They think of a small group of priests and laymen who—guided by the Teacher of Righteousness—left the temple in Jerusalem about the middle of the second century BCE because of a schism about the calendar and settled at Qumran, which became their headquarters. There they lived through more than two centuries in splendid isolation an ascetic, celibate life-style like monks. Only a few of them returned after some time to the towns and villages all over the country to marry and to continue a family life. This way, most Qumran scholars are accustomed to speculate, two kinds of Essenes came into being, the celibate main group in Qumran and several minor splinter-groups of married Essenes all over the country.

Indeed, according to Philo and Pliny the Elder all Essenes were unmarried, while Josephus seems to suggest that most of them never married, while some of them—‘another order of the Essenes’—did so. The main problem is that in none of the many Dead Sea scrolls is there any hint of celibacy, while all rule-books from the Qumran caves—including Serekh ha-Yachad, the so-called ‘Community Rule’—mention the idea of marriage as a matter of course. This fact is very important, as traditionally minded Judaism never could tolerate celibacy. The background is that, according to Genesis 1, God’s first command to all mankind, who had just been created, was: ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth’ (1. 28). It was impossible to follow this command otherwise than by marrying and begetting children. What God commanded to all mankind must be obeyed at least by Jews. All ‘the people of the Dead Sea scrolls’, as John Marco Allegro once called them, clearly did so. Were the ‘people of the scrolls’ not the unmarried Essenes as depicted by Philo, Josephus, and Pliny?

The solution is simple, but has not yet been accepted by most Qumran

scholars. Every male Essene must marry at the age of twenty years. But he was prohibited from marrying more often than once in his life. If his wife died, if he divorced her, or if she turned out to be sterile, he could not marry a second wife after her or in addition to her. In Palestinian Judaism of that time girls were usually given in marriage aged about thirteen years. Every year they gave birth to a child. Because of these continual pregnancies in the early years of their lives they died at an average age of about twenty years, while their husbands so often became very old that the Qumran rule-books had to ordain that everybody must resign from all his offices at the age of sixty. This was the Essenes' regular pension age. Josephus was even of the opinion that 'most of them remain alive over a hundred years'. This statement is clearly exaggerated. On the other hand, Pharisees and other Jews used to marry at the age of about seventeen years. The result is that young Essenes remained unmarried for three to four years at an age when others were already husbands, and most adult Essenes were no longer married after their only wife died, or they had divorced her. This way no Essene was celibate, but at least eighty per cent of the Essenes were not yet married or no longer married.

This would have been the reality behind the ancient writers' praise of the Essenes as unmarried people in general, a Jewish group with more than 4,000 members who really lived according to the model of the Pythagoreans, while at the same time the Greek world was not able to present an equivalent to such an impressive school of philosophers who devoted their whole lives solely to study, not to women and taking care of children. The pure existence of the Essenes, as they depicted them, was an outstanding opportunity to demonstrate that the often insulted Jews were much better than the rest of the world. The Essenes offered the most brilliant example for this demonstration, even if the reality was slightly refined by Philo and Josephus.

The assertion of a lifelong celibacy of all Essenes is the only major discrepancy between 'the people of the Dead Sea scrolls' and the Essenes as depicted by the ancient Jewish writers. If they did not mention particularities like calendrical orientations or messianic hopes, which are important in the scrolls, this reserve was due to the supposed interests of their Hellenistic, partly even pagan readers. Sometimes scholars point to other more or less apparent discrepancies, but there is no need to discuss them here in detail. Cambridge University Press deserves thanks for having published in 1988 an extremely helpful book on *Josephus' description of the Essenes illustrated by the Dead Sea Scrolls* by Todd S. Beall, who also takes into account other authors like Philo. He convincingly concludes that none of the alleged 'discrepancies is serious enough to put into question the identification of' what he calls 'the Qumran community with Josephus' Essenes' (p. 129).

The best evidence for the identification of 'the people of the Dead Sea scrolls' with the Essenes is some findings in the Qumran manuscripts which

clearly agree with peculiarities of the Essenes mentioned by Josephus, partly also by Philo, which at the same time distinguish them from the other Jewish organisations. The most impressive example is that both Josephus and the scrolls state that at least three years were needed to become a full member of the organisation—with a strict test at the end of every year of admittance.

To become a Pharisee demanded only basic knowledge of the most important prescriptions regarding ritual purity and giving the tithe and the promise to keep to them, while the Sadducees co-opted new members according to their own choice without any special entrance examination. Further Essene peculiarities of this kind were the daily assemblies of all full members of their local groups for their common prayers and for their common meals: no other groups shared those customs. Not only the sessions of their courts, but every kind of assembly must be presided over by a priest, while the Pharisees no longer kept to the traditional hierarchical order: in their group laymen could gain the very same privileges as the priests in the past. The Essenes immersed themselves in their ritual baths much more often and on more occasions than all other Jews of their time. Last but not least, only they had ‘everything in common’: the scrolls now demonstrate that this ‘having in common’ was related only to all property including labour and personal abilities, while the produce still belonged to the members like the inheritance—the ‘nachalah’—of the country in the Torah: only the tithes of all produce—including even wages—must be delivered to the administrative authorities.

These many and basic peculiarities evidently demonstrate that ‘the people of the scrolls’ were none other than those Essenes who were described by Philo and Josephus, who lived in almost every village and town of Judaea including Jerusalem, and who were the most important religious organisation in this territory. But curiously, most scholars are still far from using those ancient reports on the Essenes as an important clue to a better understanding of the scrolls. This is best attested by the book of Todd S. Beall. The author discusses Josephus’ description of the Essenes, sentence after sentence. For almost every detail he identifies and adduces at least one Qumran scholar who had commented on it during the decades of previous research. But significantly Beall could not adduce even one Qumran scholar who, during forty years of Qumran research, had commented on the number of ‘more than 4000’ Essenes (see pp. 48 and 120)—in spite of the fact that most scholars had always identified ‘the people of the Dead Sea scrolls’ with the Essenes.

There is only one explanation for this curious fact. Qumran scholars continue to start basically not from Philo and Josephus, who both mention this large number of Essenes, but from Pliny the Elder according to whom ‘the Essenes’ lived almost exclusively at a place close to the north-western shore of the Dead Sea (*Naturalis historia*, v. 15). There can no longer be any doubt that

this information referred to no other place but Qumran. But it is impossible that more than 4,000 people—or at least most of them—lived there together through more than two centuries. Even if they had lived there in caves, tents, and huts, so many people could not gather for common worship and common meals within the Qumran buildings. Also there are about 1,200 graves in the Qumran cemeteries, a large number, but not sufficient for so many inhabitants for more than a century. In fact, Qumran scholars usually speculate on a number of only 150–200—or, as a maximum, of 300—people living there at the same time. Therefore, the real number of Essenes—including those in the towns and villages of the country—would never have exceeded 300 or even 500. The large numbers of Philo and Josephus must have been immoderately exaggerated and need no discussion. This is the impression one gains from earlier Qumran studies.

Indeed, from the very beginning of research on the Dead Sea Scrolls the special conditions of the Qumran settlement became the decisive criterion for all possible realities behind the findings, including the relevant idea of the Essenes. They were reduced to ‘the Qumran community’, to a small sectarian splinter-group of ancient Judaism, which would have had little importance for understanding the broader orientations of Judaism in late Second Temple times. A few years ago, a Jewish colleague did much research on one of the Qumran texts, 4QMMT, with a characteristic result: ‘The two largest groups, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, represent the two main streams of ancient Judaism. . . . Somewhere between these two main groups stood the small, pietistic, zealous Qumran sect.’ This is just the opposite of the idea of the Essenes propagated by their Jewish contemporaries, Philo and Josephus. It still needs much research and more developed suggestions before a final awakening of their highly interesting reports after a sleep of almost two millennia.

My third and final candidate for an identification with Sleeping Beauty is the Qumran settlement itself, including En Feshkha less than two miles south of it and once an integral part of the whole architectural ensemble. The prince is in this case Père Roland de Vaux who—together with his staff—dug and surveyed the whole area from 1952 to 1958. Today, Qumran is again a vivid site, now as a tourist attraction. Before the scrolls were discovered in the surrounding caves nobody was interested in these ruins, but since the last century the cemeteries had attracted the attention of some archaeologists as all the Qumran graves—except one—are orientated in a north-south-direction, which is strange compared to the other graves in Palestine. Thanks to the scrolls we now know that the dead in those graves face the Garden of Eden, the paradise, which according to Genesis 2 is situated around the sources of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris in what is today eastern Turkey, north of Qumran. This is a clear hint of the Essenes’ belief in bodily resurrection at the end of days. Almost all the men who are buried there died at

an age of twenty-five to thirty-five years. The exceptional grave at the western border of the main cemetery is that of a man who died aged about sixty, and who alone was buried facing the temple in Jerusalem.

When Père de Vaux excavated Qumran he found that at this place existed at first a small settlement in the late monarchical period, which was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BCE. The Qumran settlement, as we know it, was established at the same place—according to de Vaux—in the second century BCE and destroyed in the year 68 CE. Père de Vaux suggested that the Teacher of Righteousness came there with his adherents about the middle of the second century BCE. At first, they would have lived in tents or huts. But after some decades they started to build some small apartments, while the broader constructions were built only at the beginning of the first century BCE.

Today, this early theory is doubted by most scholars. The Qumran excavations revealed many coins. About 140 of them come from the time of Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 BCE), but only one from the time of his father John Hyrcanus, and not a single coin from the times of Jonathan and Simon, the Maccabees. This finding clearly demonstrates that the Qumran settlement was established no earlier than at the very end of the second century BCE, or in the early years of the first century BCE. At this time, the Teacher of Righteousness was no longer alive: he could never have paid a visit to this settlement or even stayed there. At this time all the rule-books of the Serekh ha-Yachad scroll had already been composed, as it is evidenced meanwhile by its oldest copy from the second century BCE: it was clearly not composed for the few inhabitants of Qumran, but for the Essenes all over the country, a fact that is also textually attested by three passages in the top part of column VI. Whatever the purpose behind the Qumran buildings may once have been, they never served as some kind of monastery for the Teacher and his adherents.

How many people lived at any one time at Qumran? The number of 1,200 graves in the cemeteries after about 170 years of settlement, combined with the fact that the men died there aged about thirty years on the average, suggests the conclusion that there was a local population of about fifty adult men. The same number results from the dimensions of the dining hall. For in the same room the common prayer services of all local members also took place, which were held according to the traditional temple ritual: all must prostrate themselves with outstretched arms. This way not more than ten rows with six men each could pray at the same time, i.e., sixty persons was the upper limit for Qumran inhabitants. This is at the very best one-and-a-half per cent of the more than 4,000 Essenes. Why did some of them start to stay there at all?

Furthermore, Qumran never served as the headquarters of the Essenes. In the scrolls several kinds of documents are mentioned which must have been available in the organisational centre, e.g. membership lists, the results of the new ranking every year, registers of the common property, administrative acts,

decisions of the courts, or records of the past heroic deeds of some members of the Essenes. Not one document of this kind could be identified within the hundreds of scrolls and other written evidence from the Qumran caves. One can only speculate on the headquarters of the Essenes: perhaps it was in Jerusalem, but certainly never at Qumran.

What we need is a new approach to the archaeological Qumran evidence beyond the former view of Père de Vaux, which will at the same time explain the huge mass of related scrolls and the striking fact that only very rarely were two, or even three scrolls written by the same scribe: why are there several hundreds of different scribal hands during the time from about 100 BCE to 68 CE, when the Qumran settlement existed?

Let me tell you in short my own explanation. According to 1Q Serekh ha-Yachad, VI. 13–23 all new members of the group had to undergo a test at the end of each of at least three years before their final admittance. Not only was their behaviour during each year tested, but more importantly their progress in Bible knowledge, particularly in Torah knowledge. To get knowledge means in this case to learn by heart. According to another passage in the Serekh ha-Yachad, V, 23 f., this kind of test was repeated every year also for full members to establish their rank within the classes of priests, Levites, and laymen: the rank of everybody very much depended on his further progress in Bible knowledge. Last but not least, every full member of the Essenes must spend a third of every night together with the other Essenes in his town or village in studying the Torah: this implies at least three hours in the summer or almost five hours in the winter every night for the rest of his life.

This way, the Essenes had not only the best Bible knowledge of all Jews, but everybody also needed several scrolls for this kind of learning and study, scrolls with the five books of the Torah, scrolls with the books of some prophets, and a Psalter scroll. According to my calculations, the more than 4,000 Essenes needed at least about 50,000, perhaps up to 200,000, scrolls through the 170 years of Qumran's existence. In my opinion, they established this settlement half a century after their coming into existence as they had discovered a new way to tan leather with the ingredients of Dead Sea water, which produced a better quality of leather (most of the Qumran scrolls from the first century BCE onwards have a much better quality than the Qumran scrolls from the third and second centuries BCE) and enabled them to manufacture much more scroll leather than by the traditional methods.

This way, Qumran would have been founded for Scripture. The rough leather tannery was in En Feshkha, at that time immediately at the edge of the Dead Sea, as much water from there was needed for that process. At Qumran the fine leather preparation was installed, also a long room for manufacturing the scrolls by sewing together their single sheets; above this room was the scriptorium, where about ten to twelve scribes wrote at the same

time guided by dictation, in the basement the central library with the master-scrolls and some others for study in the reading room. All the few further rooms and buildings at Qumran were just the equipment which the people working there needed for their daily lives. When Qumran was destroyed, this way of manufacturing scrolls ended—or continued at some other place which we do not know. But the end of Qumran was not at the same time the end of all the many Essenes, even if the Qumran findings cannot help us to detect their continued way of existence.

Please allow me a short final remark on how the Essenes once came into being. In the time of the rigid Hellenisation of Palestine by Antiochus IV and by the high priest Menelaus, thousands of Jews had left the country and settled in the surrounding territories of what are today Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. In those places of exile, they established several organisations like ‘The New Covenant in the Land of Damascus’, or the so-called Asidaioi perhaps in Jordan. About the middle of the second century the Teacher of Righteousness unified most of these groups—according to 4QPsalms<sup>a</sup>, IV. 23 f. seven of them—and led them back to the Holy Land.

This was the constitution of the Essenes, ‘the pious ones’ as they were called by others, as an All-Israel Union, which the Essenes themselves designated as their Yachad. For political reasons a few, but important, groups refused to become members of this Yachad, mainly those priests who continued to serve at the temple in Jerusalem under the high priest Jonathan—from them the Sadducees later evolved—also the ‘schismatic’ Pharisees as a splinter-group of the former Asidaioi, and finally some members of the ‘New Covenant in the Land of Damascus’ who refused to return.

Nevertheless, this way the Essenes—guided by their Teacher of Righteousness—became the most important religious organisation in Judaea, not as progressive reformers, but as traditionally orientated Jews—remember that two thirds of all the new books from the Qumran caves may come from pre-Essenes times—no heretics, but the best of all Torah-orientated Jews of their time, not only according to Philo and Josephus, but likewise according to their own testimony in the scrolls. But if you look back at half a century of Qumran research you may agree that Sleeping Beauty has not yet woken completely, however we may identify her. The fairy tale continues.

*Note.* References are available from the author on request.