

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Introduction to Biblical Studies, Session 13, Selected Dead Sea Texts Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Phillips, Introduction to Biblical Studies, Session 13, Selected Dead Sea Texts, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from Dr. Elaine Phillips' "Introduction to Biblical Studies" examines three Dead Sea Scrolls: the Community Rule (1QS), and the Nahum and Habakkuk Pesharim. The lecture analyzes the theological themes, key figures, and historical context of these texts, exploring their perspectives on covenant, purity, and the conflict between the Qumran community and other Jewish groups, particularly the Pharisees. Furthermore, the lecture compares and contrasts the Qumran community with early Christianity, highlighting similarities and differences in their beliefs and practices. Finally, the lecture emphasizes the scrolls' significance for understanding the diversity of Judaism in the first century.

2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Phillips, Introduction to Biblical Studies, Session 13 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Introduction & Languages → Introductory Series → Introduction to Biblical Studies).



**Phillips_IBS_Session
13.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Phillips_IBS_EN_Session13.pdf":

Briefing Document: Selected Dead Sea Texts

Introduction:

This document summarizes Dr. Elaine Phillips' lecture on selected Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), focusing on the Community Rule (1QS), the Nahum and Habakkuk commentaries (pesharim), and 4QMMT (Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah). The lecture aims to understand the community that produced these texts and their theological and historical context.

Key Themes and Ideas:

- **Context and Community:**
 - The Qumran community, while often labeled "Essenes," is more accurately understood as a dynamic group evolving over time, starting around 150 BC.
 - They were appalled by the Hellenistic influences on the Jerusalem priesthood and temple, leading to their withdrawal into the wilderness.
 - Their community was eschatologically focused, perceiving themselves as an atonement for Israel, expecting an end-times event.
 - The community emphasized covenant, Torah study, ritual purity, and the expectation of a restored temple and final battle between good and evil.
- **Types of Texts:**
 - The Dead Sea Scrolls comprise biblical texts, sectarian texts specific to the Qumran community and their beliefs, and other works.
 - The lecture focuses on three primary text types:
- **Community Rule (1QS):** A text outlining the community's organization, membership, rules, and theological framework.
- **Pesharim (Nahum & Habakkuk Commentaries):** Interpretive texts applying biblical prophecies to the community's current context, using a specific method of interpretation.

- **4QMMT (Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah):** A text addressing specific issues of halakha (Jewish law), particularly related to purity, and possibly containing an earlier appeal for reconciliation with Jerusalem authorities.
- **Community Rule (1QS):**
 - **Structure:** The text includes a theological introduction, community practices, rules for joining and staying, penalties for infractions, and a final hymn of the Master.
 - **Key Figures:**
 - **The Master:** A leader with special knowledge, responsible for teaching and community leadership. He is not seen as a king, but a head.
 - **Priests and Levites:** Important figures connected to the covenant, performing blessings and curses, with the Sons of Zadok being a significant group.
 - **Prince of Light/Angel of Darkness:** Dualistic figures leading the Sons of Light and Darkness in a coming eschatological battle.
 - **Theological Concepts:**
 - **Predetermination/Determinism:** A strong belief that events are predetermined.
 - **Anthropological Dualism:** Humans have both a spirit of truth and a spirit of falsehood within.
 - **Covenant:** A central emphasis, believing they are part of a new covenant.
 - **Atonement:** The community's role as atonement for Israel, without burnt offerings.
 - **Multiple Messiahs:** A Messiah of Aaron (priestly) and a Messiah of Israel (kingly) are mentioned as separate figures, and they anticipate a prophet figure.
 - **Purification:** Cleansing by sprinkling with purifying waters is mentioned.
 - **Community Practices:** Emphasis on communal meals, prayer, deliberation, and Torah study.
 - Two-year probation for membership, with strict rules of conduct and penalties for infractions. Some examples: lying, slander, pronouncing the tetragrammaton incorrectly, speaking foolishly, sleeping during assembly, going naked before a companion, and guffawing foolishly. Penalties varied from not participating in the community meal, food rations, or expulsion.

- The passage from Isaiah 40:3, "a voice calling in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord," is significant, as the Qumran community considered Torah study the preparation.
- **Pesharim (Nahum & Habakkuk Commentaries):**
 - **Pesher Method:** This method involves citing a biblical verse and interpreting its contemporary significance using the phrase "pishro" (its interpretation). Biblical texts are reinterpreted to represent the Qumran's own context.
 - **Nahum Pesher: Historical Context:** Interprets Nahum's prophecy against Assyria as applying to the community's time, where the Kittim (Romans) are the new encroaching enemy.
 - **Key Figures: Kittim:** Romans, a key enemy.
 - **Furious Young Lion:** An unnamed figure, potentially connected to Alexander Jannaeus, who is thought to have persecuted the "seekers after smooth things."
 - **"Seekers after Smooth Things" (Halakot):** A cryptic reference to those practicing "halakha," a kind of "walking the way" that is associated with proto-Pharisaic practices. They are depicted negatively as treacherous and false. The text suggests they led Ephraim and Manasseh astray. They are considered enemies of the community.
 - **Demetrius & Antiochus:** Hellenistic rulers. While there were multiple individuals with these names, the text is referencing some ruler and their interaction with Jerusalem.
 - **Example:** "Whither the lion goes, there is the lion's cub, carries on with none to disturb it" (Nahum 2). The *pishro* interprets this as concerning Demetrius, king of Egypt, who sought entry into Jerusalem with the advice of the "seekers after smooth things". It also references the time between Antiochus and the coming of the Kittim (Romans) when Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot.
 - **Example:** "The lion fills its caves with prey and its dens with victims" (Nahum 2). The *pishro* interprets this as the furious young lion (an unnamed figure) who executes revenge on those who seek smooth things and has people hung alive in Israel. Josephus' writing on Alexander Jannaeus is then considered as historical evidence for what that furious young lion might represent.
 - **Habakkuk Pesher: Historical Context:** Reinterprets Habakkuk's prophecy in light of the Qumran community's experiences.

- **Key Figures:****The Wicked Priest:** Initially a righteous priest, but becomes corrupt, persecuting the teacher of righteousness. Also called the liar and the spouter of lies.
- **Teacher of Righteousness (Moreh Zedek):** Opposes the wicked priest and leads the community to the wilderness.
- **Kittim:** The perceived "Babylonians" of the Qumran community's time.
- **Example:** Habakkuk 2:15, "woe to him who pours out his venom to make them drunk that he may gaze on their nakedness." The *pishro* interprets this as the wicked priest pursuing the teacher of righteousness to the house of exile, creating confusion and causing people to stumble on the day of fasting.
- **Calendar Conflict:** The text hints at the Qumran community using a solar calendar, different from the lunar calendar used by other Jewish groups. The day of atonement mentioned in Habakkuk's commentary is different from the date used by the wicked priest.
- **4QMMT (Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah):**
 - **Content:** Focuses on purity laws from Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Also has a section discussing the calendar.
 - **Structure:** The text is fragmented, likely compiled from multiple fragments. May have included a discussion of the calendar, a major purity section, and an appeal to the Jerusalem establishment.
 - **Significance:** Possibly has an earlier, more conciliatory tone compared to other texts, indicating a possible earlier origin.
 - **Appeal:** The authors appeal to the Jerusalem authorities to read the books of Moses, prophets, and David (possibly all the way to Chronicles).
 - **Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah:** Refers to an expression within the text translated as "the precepts of the Torah". This is where the text got its name.
- **Qumran Community vs. Christianity:**
 - **Similarities:** Covenant-focused, apocalyptic, scripture-based, understanding of supernatural realms, expectation of a Messiah, love for Jerusalem, emphasis on the human spirit, and the symbolism of water.

- **Differences:Qumran:** Closed, largely celibate, no missionary zeal, ascetic, admonition to hate enemies, strict community hierarchy, no focus on miracles, solar calendar.
- **Christianity:** Open, missionary zeal, community of believers and those on the margins, emphasis on love (including loving enemies), belief in miracles, Jesus as the Son of God, and a focus on the kingdom of God.
- **Additional points:**Jesus summarizes the Torah; scrolls do not, instead emphasizing interpretation.
- Jesus teaches in parables; scrolls do not.
- Resurrection is central to the faith but not explicitly in the Qumran material.
- Qumran has strict Sabbath observance; Jesus is challenged on his views of the Sabbath.
- **Conclusion:** Early attempts to reconcile Qumran beliefs with early Christianity did not succeed, primarily due to their fundamental differences.

Conclusion:

The Dead Sea Scrolls offer valuable insights into the diverse Judaism of the Second Temple period. The Qumran community was a complex group with distinct theological beliefs, community practices, and interpretations of scripture. Their texts illuminate the historical and religious context in which both Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity developed. These texts also confirm the reliability of the Masoretic text. The scrolls were discovered in 11 caves, representing 800 manuscripts and a huge number of fragments. This discovery provided a great understanding into Hebrew language development and the textual history of the Hebrew Bible.

This briefing document has attempted to capture the key elements of Dr. Phillips's lecture, providing a structured and informative review of the material.

4. Phillips, Introduction to Biblical Studies, Session 13, Selected Dead Sea Texts

Dead Sea Scrolls Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are the three main types of texts found at Qumran, and what percentage of texts found there are considered biblical?
2. According to the community rule, what is the significance of the "Master," and what role does he play in the community?
3. What is *peshet*, and how does it function in the Nahum and Habakkuk commentaries?
4. Who are the "Kittim" in the *peshet* texts, and why is their presence significant to the community?
5. Who are the "seekers after smooth things," and what does this designation suggest about the Qumran community's perspective on this group?
6. What does the Habakkuk Peshet say about the "wicked priest," and how does he interact with the "teacher of righteousness?"
7. What specific event concerning the "wicked priest" does the Habakkuk Peshet describe, and what does it reveal about his character and actions?
8. What is 4QMMT, and how does its tone and purpose appear to differ from other texts such as the *peshet* commentaries?
9. What are some of the key similarities between the Qumran community and Christianity, and how do their views of covenant and the scriptures align?
10. What are some of the key differences between the Qumran community and Christianity, and how do they differ in the emphasis on community, salvation, and the person of Jesus?

Answer Key

1. The three main types of texts found at Qumran are biblical texts (fragments thereof), sectarian texts (relating to the specific community), and interpretive

texts. About one-quarter of the texts found were some form of biblical texts or fragments.

2. The "Master" is a major figure in the community with special knowledge, serving as a teacher, a leader, and an exemplar of keeping the community's rules. He is involved in determining community membership and offering praise to God.
3. *Pesher* is a specific type of interpretation where biblical texts are viewed as applying directly to the Qumran community's current situation. These prophetic texts were reread and revised to represent events in their own day, interpreted with the idea that they lived in the last days.
4. The "Kittim" in the *pesher* texts are understood to represent the Romans and their presence was significant as they were perceived as the current major threat to the community, fulfilling prophecies related to end times events.
5. The "seekers after smooth things" are interpreted as a cryptic reference to proto-Pharisees, whom the Qumran community viewed negatively. They used the term "smooth" in connection to "Halakot," or Jewish law, and they were thought to be deceptive and treacherous.
6. The Habakkuk Pesher portrays the "wicked priest" as a corrupt figure who initially held a respected position but then defiles Jerusalem. The "teacher of righteousness" is presented as his opponent and the figure who leaves Jerusalem to found the Qumran community.
7. The Habakkuk Pesher describes the "wicked priest" pursuing the teacher of righteousness on the day of atonement to confuse and cause them to stumble. This act reveals his utter disregard for religious practices and his animosity toward the Qumran community.
8. 4QMMT, or Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah, is a text focusing on matters of purity and the application of Torah precepts, with a tone that includes an appeal for reconciliation with the Jerusalem establishment. Unlike the accusatory tone of the *pesher* texts, 4QMMT suggests a possibility of reunification.
9. Both the Qumran community and Christianity focus on covenant, shared scriptures (especially Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Psalms), an apocalyptic mindset, and a belief in the supernatural. They both expect a Messiah.
10. The Qumran community was a closed, celibate community with no missionary zeal that emphasized asceticism and ritual purity, whereas Christianity is an

inclusive movement with emphasis on evangelism and love for enemies. Qumran lacked the concept of resurrection and presented multiple messiahs, while Christians viewed Jesus as the unique Son of God and center of salvation.

Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the roles of the "Master" in the community rule (1QS) and the "teacher of righteousness" in the Habakkuk Pesher. What do these figures reveal about the community's leadership and values?
2. Analyze the Qumran community's interpretation of biblical texts in the pesher commentaries. How do they use the texts of Nahum and Habakkuk to express their own identity and purpose in their historical context?
3. Discuss the concept of purity as it is presented in the Dead Sea Scrolls, particularly the Rule of the Community (1QS) and 4QMMT. What does their emphasis on purity reveal about their views of themselves and other Jews in their time?
4. Evaluate the significance of the Qumran community's self-understanding as a covenant community, focusing on their unique interpretations of the Torah and their expectations of a restored temple, and consider the implications of their solar calendar on these expectations.
5. Explore the relationship between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the history of Second Temple Judaism, discussing the similarities and differences between the Qumran community and other groups such as the Essenes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, as well as their place in the wider Hellenistic world.

Glossary

- **4QMMT:** A Dead Sea Scroll designated as "4Q" for Cave 4 at Qumran, "M" for Miktzat, "M" for Ma'ase, and "T" for Torah, meaning "Some of the Precepts of the Torah," focusing on purity and containing what some scholars believe is a plea for reconciliation with the Jerusalem establishment.
- **Asceticism:** A lifestyle characterized by abstinence from worldly pleasures, often for religious or spiritual reasons, such as the Qumran community's focus on ritual purity and strict adherence to rules.

- **Covenant:** A sacred agreement or binding promise between God and a community, often referring to God's relationship with Israel as seen in their history and law.
- **Eschatology:** The study of end times or the final events in history, often associated with apocalyptic beliefs as seen in many Qumran texts.
- **Essenes:** A Jewish sect mentioned by Josephus, often associated with the Qumran community, and known for its asceticism, community living, and focus on ritual purity.
- **Halakot:** The plural form of *Halakah*, meaning "smooth things" in the Qumran texts, used as a critical and cryptic reference to the proto-Pharisees, whose religious practice was seen as slippery and deceptive.
- **Halakah:** Means "the way in which you walk," the manner in which one conducts themselves, and refers to the way that the proto-Pharisees of the time used to conduct themselves and establish the way that others should act.
- **Kittim:** A term in the Dead Sea Scrolls, particularly in the pesher commentaries, referring to the Romans, who were viewed as the community's major enemy in the end times.
- **Masoretes:** Groups of Jewish scholars who preserved and standardized the text of the Hebrew Bible from approximately the 7th to 10th centuries, establishing the authoritative text still used today.
- **Master (in 1QS):** A key leader and authority figure in the Qumran community as described in the *Rule of the Community*, who had special knowledge, served as teacher, and was involved in determining community membership.
- **Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah:** The Hebrew name for 4QMMT, translated as "Some of the Precepts of the Torah," reflecting the text's focus on specific interpretations of Mosaic law.
- **Pesher:** A specific type of biblical interpretation found in the Qumran texts where biblical prophecies and texts are understood as referring directly to the events and circumstances of the community's own time.
- **Pishro:** The Hebrew word meaning "its interpretation" used to introduce the interpretation of biblical texts in the *pesher* commentaries.

- **Qumran:** The archaeological site on the shores of the Dead Sea where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered.
- **Rule of the Community (1QS):** A significant Dead Sea Scroll detailing the community's rules, organization, religious practices, and beliefs.
- **Sons of Zadok:** A term used by the Qumran community to refer to themselves, connecting their priestly lineage to the priest Zadok from the biblical narratives and implying a purified, legitimate priesthood.
- **Teacher of Righteousness:** A central figure in the Habakkuk Pesher, viewed as the founder of the Qumran community, who opposed the wicked priest and his corrupt practices.
- **Wicked Priest:** A character in the Habakkuk Pesher, understood to represent a corrupt and illegitimate priest associated with the Jerusalem establishment, who persecuted the “teacher of righteousness” and the Qumran community.

5. FAQs on Phillips, Introduction to Biblical Studies, Session 13, Selected Dead Sea Texts, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran Community

- **What are the Dead Sea Scrolls, and what types of texts were found at Qumran?**
- The Dead Sea Scrolls are a collection of ancient manuscripts discovered in caves near Qumran, by the Dead Sea. The texts are varied, but they primarily fall into three categories: biblical texts (fragments of books of the Hebrew Bible), sectarian texts (writings specific to the Qumran community), and interpretive texts (commentaries on biblical books). About one quarter of the texts are some form of biblical texts. The sectarian texts provide insight into the community's beliefs and practices, while the interpretive texts offer their unique perspective on scripture.
- **Who were the people living in Qumran, and what were some of their main beliefs?**
- The people of Qumran are often associated with the Essenes, though the lecture suggests they were a community that changed over time, possibly including Essene influence later on. The community was deeply concerned with covenant and Torah study. They identified themselves as "Sons of Zadok," indicating an emphasis on priesthood and ritual purity. They were also very eschatologically focused, looking forward to a restored temple and the final battle between good and evil. They saw themselves as an atonement for Israel. They were also very strict about community life, including a rigorous process for admission, strict rules, and severe penalties for infractions.

- **What is the *Serech HaYachad*, also known as the Rule of the Community, and what does it tell us about this group?**
- The *Serech HaYachad*, or Rule of the Community, is a sectarian text from Qumran that provides an extensive outline of the community's structure and practices. It begins with a theological introduction, details the steps to join and maintain membership, outlines infractions and penalties, provides further regulations, and concludes with a hymn of someone called the Master. It reveals the community's hierarchical structure, the importance of a leader called the "Master," their belief in determinism, and their dualistic view of human nature as composed of a spirit of truth and falsehood. This text also shows the deep importance placed on covenant.
- **What is a *Pesher*, and how did the Qumran community use this type of biblical interpretation?**
- *Pesher* is a Hebrew term meaning "interpretation," and refers to a specific type of commentary found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. In *Pesher* commentaries, the Qumran community would cite a biblical verse or passage, then offer their own interpretation, seeing the text as directly applicable to their own time and circumstances. They would often retool the interpretation to reflect the context of their end-times experience and current situation. For example, enemies like Assyria and Babylon from biblical text were reinterpreted as the Kittim (often associated with the Romans) to reflect the political context of their era.
- **What is the significance of the *Pesher Nahum* and the *Pesher Habakkuk*, and how did the Qumran community see themselves in relation to the biblical text?**

In the *Pesher Nahum*, the Qumran community used the prophet Nahum's prophecies against Assyria to comment on their own era, identifying the Kittim (Romans) as the new oppressors. A "furious young lion" figure and the "seekers of smooth things" also play prominent roles. The "seekers of smooth things" are interpreted as a negative reference to the proto-Pharisee movement. In *Pesher Habakkuk*, the community applies Habakkuk's description of internal evil and coming judgement to their own time. They present a "wicked priest," the teacher of righteousness and the Kittim (Romans) are central figures in the community's historical understanding of their period as the last days. Both *Pesher* commentaries demonstrate how the community saw itself as the righteous remnant in opposition to internal and external enemies.

- **Who were the "seekers after smooth things" and why was the Qumran community critical of them?**
- The "seekers after smooth things" (*halakot* in Hebrew), mentioned in the *Pesher Nahum*, are likely a cryptic and negative reference to the early movement of the Pharisees. The Qumran community appeared to view the Pharisees negatively because they focused on halakah, which means the way in which you walk and which you conduct yourself. The community considered them to be slippery and deceitful, contrasting them with their own strict adherence to what they understood to be true law and practice. They seem to be playing on the similarity in the words *halakot* and *halakah*, indicating a pun and a way to criticize the Pharisaic emphasis on rules and practices.
- **What is 4QMMT, and how does it differ in tone from the other Dead Sea Texts?**

4QMMT (*Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah*), meaning "some precepts of the Torah", is another sectarian text from Qumran, which includes three sections that include calendar issues, Levitical rules about purity and an appeal to the Jerusalem establishment to unite. The tone of 4QMMT differs in tone from texts like the *Pesher Habakkuk*. The appeal at the end of 4QMMT suggests it may have been written at an earlier time and the more conciliatory tone contrasts with the polemics and harsh condemnations found in other scrolls, suggesting a possible shift in the community's stance over time.

- **How does the Qumran community compare to early Christianity?**
- There are some similarities between the Qumran community and early Christianity, such as a shared focus on covenant, an apocalyptic outlook, and a belief in a Messiah. Both groups used the Hebrew Bible extensively, had a concept of the supernatural, believed in forgiveness of sins, and used water for cleansing purposes. However, there are key differences. The Qumran community was closed and ascetic with no missionary zeal and seemed to promote hate for their enemies, whereas Christianity was open, expansive, and emphasized love. The Qumran community also had a complex hierarchical structure, a unique solar calendar, and did not emphasize miracles or resurrection, unlike early Christianity.