
INTRODUCTION

I first heard about the Dead Sea Scrolls in the early 1970s. I was nine or ten years old, sitting in an adult Sunday school class, which my father was teaching. Dr. Thomas Edward McComiskey was a well-known Old Testament theologian, and Moody Bible Institute had contracted him to teach an early Sunday school class on the Dead Sea Scrolls and then preach later that morning. My task in this class was to advance slides of the scrolls as my father talked about them. My father had acquired these slides himself on a trip to Israel several years before, and they were among his most prized possessions.

I'm sure I wasn't very good at my job, since all I probably heard was, "Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, *slide, Bruce*. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, *slide, Bruce*."

When the Dead Sea Scrolls were first discovered in 1947, my father was an undergraduate student at Philadelphia Bible College (now Cairn University), and as the earliest scrolls were very slowly being published throughout the 1950s and 1960s, he was working to complete three master's degrees in theology at three different schools and a PhD in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis University. I remember my father explaining what it was like to be an Old Testament theologian during that time. He said that he and many of his colleagues felt a strange combination of excitement and dread each time a new biblical scroll was published: excitement

that these ancient manuscripts may be closer to God's words than any other manuscripts previously known, and dread that they might be different, not just linguistically, but theologically. As it has turned out, most of the biblical scrolls are very close to previously known manuscripts, including the standard Masoretic Text, with only a few minor differences, and none theologically salient.

For theologians like my father, the biblical texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls play a vital role in confirming existing beliefs. However, for rhetoricians like me, these biblical texts hold little interest. There is a long tradition of rhetorical criticism in studies of the Old Testament and the Hebrew Bible, and if the biblical scrolls found in the Judean desert are similar to the traditional Masoretic Text, then there is little new rhetorical work to be done on those scrolls. Thus, while there may be much work remaining in the rhetorical criticism of biblical texts, the biblical manuscripts among the Dead Sea Scrolls contribute little new material to that work.

But the biblical texts represent only some of the scrolls that were discovered in the caves above the western shores of the Dead Sea. The so-called nonbiblical or sectarian texts discovered in these caves include mostly unknown hymns, biblical commentaries, parabiblical works, rule texts, wisdom poetry, prayers, calendars, and horoscopes. These nonbiblical texts are called "sectarian" because most of them were written by a community of Israelites led by deposed Zadokite priests, whose ideas about purity and ritual were not accepted at the time as Temple orthodoxy.¹ During the late Second Temple period, the Bible as we know it was in the process of being canonized, and different sects emerged as a result of different communal interpretations of the emerging canon.² The deposed Zadokite priests were likely a faction of (or at least allies with) the Sadducees until their own interpretations of the emerging biblical canon became so conservative and apocalyptic that they exiled themselves from Jerusalem, reidentified themselves as Essenes, and began to compose scrolls that would reflect the evolution of their beliefs in relation to the shifting rhetorical ecologies in which they lived. The leadership of the Essene community wrote numerous scrolls that are (or, I will argue, *should be*) of great interest to rhetoricians because they represent strategic, sometimes suasive uses of language that are often unique to the time and place in which they were composed or are different inflections of existing genres.

Throughout this book, I interpret the intersections between the rhetoric of certain texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls and the rhetorical ecologies in which they circulated.³ Rhetorical ecologies may include material (environmental, economic), discursive (ideological, institutional), and historical (temporal, dynamic) elements, all of which condition how texts generate meaning and acquire significance.⁴ Although the elements that comprise rhetorical situations (author, purpose, audience, exigency, constraint, etc.) are critical to any understanding of historical texts, Barbara A. Biesecker (1989) explains that these categories describe only a static view of a rhetorical moment, not its socially dynamic and historically evolving character as a response to ongoing material pressures and discursive forces. But attention to rhetorical ecologies is not intended to replace the critical understanding of rhetorical situations. It is intended to emplace texts and their situations within larger structures of meaning and matter. As Marilyn M. Cooper points out, “Language and texts are not simply the means by which individuals discover and communicate information, but are essentially social activities, dependent on social structures and processes not only in their interpretive but also in their constructive phases” (1986, 366). Thus, rhetoric does not simply occur in static contexts; rather, it occurs in dynamic processes of circulation (production, distribution, exchange, and consumption) within material, discursive, and historical systems, all of which effect influence to varying degrees in a web of interaction.

Extensions of rhetorical situations into rhetorical ecologies occur most productively in discussions of public discourse. For example, Jenny Edbauer (2005) argues that public rhetorics push outside the boundaries of rhetorical situations into fluid networks of distributed social connections not visible through the elemental terministic screens of author, audience, and text. Drawing more overtly from the metaphor of ecology, Michael Weiler and W. Barnett Pearce describe public discourse as

a system [that] can be imagined most usefully as a kind of ecosystem in which various individual discursive subsystems interact in relations of conflict and mutual dependence. Rhetors are forced to act within the confines of the ecosystem, and their discourses must reflect the web of relationships among its species and their surroundings. But as the rhetorical ecosystem evolves, as any living thing must, so too do its discursive possibilities, and within the

system there is ample room for authorial creativity and cleverness. The rhetorical options available are thus constrained but not determined by the intertextuality of or “spaces” in the array of discourses that confront rhetors. Context both fits rhetorical action and is reconstructed by it. . . . To theorize the public sphere and its discourse is to suggest a kind of *rhetorical ecology* in which the intentional, strategic activities of many rhetors are in inescapable tension with, yet accommodative to, multiple patterns of intertextuality. (2006, 14–15)

And Nathaniel A. Rivers and Ryan P. Weber argue that “public discourse gets enacted through a complex system of multiple, concatenated documents and rhetorical actions produced through the combined agency of rhetors, audiences, texts, objects, history, and institutions” (2011, 195). This complex system, Rivers and Weber argue (and Cooper, Edbauer, and Weiler and Pearce would agree), is best understood as rhetorical ecology.

The Dead Sea Scrolls comprise a collection of texts produced and circulated both in response to specific rhetorical situations and within the larger networked systems of historically evolving rhetorical ecologies. The institution of the Temple and the emerging canonization of the Hebrew Bible are the earliest and most fundamental aspects of the rhetorical ecology that gave rise to the community of Essenes and the texts they copied and composed. During the First Temple period (1200–586 BCE), David’s son Solomon finished building the First Temple in the Israelite capital city of Jerusalem (circa 1000 BCE), a newly permanent site for ritual and worship, and there Solomon declared Zadok and his descendants as the only legitimate line of high priests. These Zadokite high priests and other priestly attendants administered the rites and rituals that were becoming settled orthodoxy, and they gathered together their sacred texts and compiled them into more unified works. The Jerusalem Temple as the center of Israelite worship, the high priesthood of the Zadokite line, and the process of canonizing sacred texts would continue through the destruction of the First Temple and well into the Second Temple period (516 BCE to 70 CE).

By the middle of the Second Temple period, several shifts had occurred in the rhetorical ecology of Israel, and these shifts motivated certain rhetorical responses within the emerging community of Essenes. In 332 BCE, Alexander the Great conquered Israel, initiating a long and tumultuous time

of Greek occupation in the region. Despite Greek occupation, Zadokite high priests continued to perform rites and rituals in the Jerusalem Temple, at least until Antiochus IV Epiphanes, king of the Greek Seleucid empire, installed Menelaus (a non-Zadokite Israelite) into the high priesthood in 171 BCE. In addition to economic and political oppression, Greek leaders would now have the religious influence they needed to Hellenize worship in the Temple itself. This Hellenization would defile the Temple, thus violating the covenants between God and the Israelites, a kind of “final straw” that resulted in the Hasmonean revolt against Greek rule in 167 BCE. Judah, one of the Hasmonean brothers, secured an alliance with Rome, which resulted in Greek withdrawal from the region. By midcentury, there was a period of relative independence for the Israelites, and in 152 BCE the Hasmoneans installed Jonathan as high priest. Jonathan purified the Temple of Greek (pagan) defilement and returned it to its historical status as the center of Israelite worship. With the increasing drive to record and standardize sacred knowledge in written documents, sectarian communities emerged based on ideological interpretations of these increasingly settled texts. Jonathan, who “subscribed to a Pharisaic outlook” (Eshel 2008, 51), interpreted these sacred texts liberally, increasing the times and locations of Temple rites and rituals in order to accommodate growing numbers of Israelites during this time of relative peace. However, the Essenes interpreted these same sacred texts conservatively, viewing many of Jonathan’s ritual practices as impure, thus defiling the Temple. So the Essenes exiled themselves to the desert, awaiting their return to a pure Temple and strict adherence to the regulations of Torah law.

This is the rhetorical ecology in which *Miqṣat Ma‘āseh ha-Torah* (4QMMT) was composed. 4QMMT was originally an epistle written to the reigning Hasmonean high priest and his administration around 150 BCE, so its initial audience is most likely Jonathan (152–142 BCE). While 4QMMT is considered a founding document of the exiled Essene community (who probably did not yet occupy the settlement at Qumran), it also represents a clear desire to return to the Temple in some capacity. Thus, although one rhetorical purpose of 4QMMT is to describe sectarian *distinctions* in the interpretation of Torah law between the Essenes and the Pharisaic Hasmonean priests, the other rhetorical purpose is to create *identification* between the two factions, invoking scripture as a common bond. The end of days was quickly approaching, the Essenes wrote, so the Temple must be

pure and its rituals must be executed according to the strictest interpretation of scriptural law. There is evidence that 4QMMT succeeded in its purpose of distinction but failed in its purpose of identification, since, according to the *Habakkuk Peshet*, the Hasmonean high priest tried to murder the Essene leader, the Teacher of Righteousness, on the Day of Atonement. This violent response from 4QMMT's audience would lead the Essenes to establish and define their community as the only true Israel.

Following Jonathan's death in 142 BCE, Simon (another Hasmonean and non-Zadokite) was declared high priest (142–134 BCE), and a decree was formalized that all subsequent high priests would be Hasmonean, permanently ending any hope that the Zadokites might return to power in the Temple. Three more Hasmoneans were appointed high priest during the next six decades: John Hyrcanus (134–104 BCE), Aristobulus I (104–103 BCE), and Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 BCE). During the reigns of these three Hasmonean high priests, the Essenes established a unique system of ideas that would define their community (the Sons of Light) against all other communities (the Sons of Darkness), including non-Essene Israelites. Two characteristics of this evolving rhetorical ecology became especially relevant for the development of Essene separatist ideology under Hasmonean rule: the rapid expansion of Israelite territories and the irreversible (unpurgifiable) defilement of the Jerusalem Temple.

John Hyrcanus, who is referred to in scroll 4QTestimonia as the “man of Belial” (Eshel 2008, 87), began a process of expanding Israelite territories into the surrounding Hellenized communities, thus exposing Israelites to a defiled pagan population. Hanan Eshel explains that when John Hyrcanus became high priest in 134 BCE, “he inherited a rather small kingdom.” However, “by the time he died in 104 BCE he had gained control of the Hebron Hills, Samaria, Galilee, and some areas in Transjordan” (2008, 63), including Idoumea, the region that would produce Antipater and Herod. According to Antony Kamm, both John Hyrcanus's military expansionism and his lust for political and religious power “caused members of the party of the Pharisees, who had openly supported the Maccabees [Hasmoneans], to suggest that he should give up the office of High Priest and concentrate on matters of practical government” (1999, 154), since he “may not have scrupulously observed Torah commands” (Greenspoon 1998, 337). Unfortunately for the Pharisees, John Hyrcanus “took offense and transferred his patronage to the Sadducees, whose members were largely of the rich

priestly nobility and were less likely to look askance at worldly aspirations” (Kamm 1999, 154).

Two events represent John Hyrcanus’s desire to centralize control over both religion and politics: the destruction of the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim and the construction of a Hasmonean state palace in Jericho. Early in the final decade of the second century BCE, the region of Samaria was already inhabited by Israelites, though they were deeply Hellenized, when John Hyrcanus advanced his armies to claim the land (Bourgel 2016, 506). The Samaritans living near the Israelite temple on Mount Gerizim viewed themselves as independent of the Jerusalem Temple, conducting the full range of cultic obligations with legitimate Zadokite priests and collecting temple taxes from nearby residents. The Hasmoneans, now high priests and political rulers, were not descendants of Zadok as required by Torah law. They were, according to 1 Maccabees 2:1, “members of the lower priestly family of the Jehoiarib” (Bourgel 2016, 520). In order to centralize cultic worship in Jerusalem and preserve his authority over Israelite religious practice, John Hyrcanus destroyed the Samaritan temple and did not allow the structure to be rebuilt. Jonathan Bourgel explains, “In this context, the existence of another priesthood (even if based not in Jerusalem but on Mount Gerizim), which regarded itself and was regarded by many as the legitimate Aaronide priesthood, was certainly seen by John Hyrcanus as a potential threat to his authority and legitimacy as high priest, which had to be removed” (2016, 520). So remove it he did. The Essene leadership, descendants of Zadok (the high priestly line of Aaronide priests), must have taken this event as an indication of their own fate in Jerusalem.

During the middle of the final decade of the second century BCE, seeking to represent his new political Hasmonean state materially, John Hyrcanus built a fortified palace in Jericho, about twenty-two miles northeast of Jerusalem, territory that had been won during the Hasmonean revolt several decades earlier. Unfortunately, this act of rebuilding Jericho directly violated Joshua’s curse on the city, and the Essenes believed that John Hyrcanus not only brought the wrath of the curse upon himself and his sons, Aristobulus and Antigonus, who both suffered untimely deaths, but also upon the land of Israel and the Temple sanctuary. According to Eshel, “The people of Qumran interpreted Joshua’s curse on the builder of Jericho to refer to John Hyrcanus I, who built the agricultural estate and Hasmonean palace in Jericho” (2008, 11). But neither the destruction of an Israelite temple nor

the construction of a cursed palace stopped John Hyrcanus or his Hasmonean successors from their expansionist activities.

Another one of John Hyrcanus's sons, Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 BCE), continued this process of territorial expansion until, by the turn of the century, he had extended John Hyrcanus's territory "along the coastal plain (all except for the city of Ashkelon) and across the river Jordan until it matched in extent the kingdom of David and Solomon" (Kamm 1999, 154). At this same time, more locally, Alexander Jannaeus had seen the city of Jerusalem itself grow "fivefold, from a relatively small area in the City of David with some five thousand inhabitants to a population of twenty-five to thirty thousand inhabitants" (Levine 2002, 92). Shortly before 103 BCE, Alexander Jannaeus married his brother Aristobulus's widow, Salome Alexandra, who secured for him the office of high priest. Unfortunately, it is a direct violation of Israelite law for a high priest to be married to a widow, causing a rebellion that Alexander Jannaeus crushed by executing six thousand of his own citizens (Kamm 1999, 154). Alexander Jannaeus would continue his expansionist military pursuits throughout his term as high priest, during which he lived in violation of Torah law, defiling the Temple beyond any means of purification, and he would inflict "immense cruelty" (Greenspoon 1998, 337) upon all who dared oppose him.

During the years leading up to the first century BCE, the Essenes had given up the hope of rejoining an authentic nation of Israel or returning to a pure Temple in Jerusalem. Thus, they exiled themselves to the desert, occupying the settlement of Qumran around 100 BCE (Magness 2002, 65). There they worked to develop and solidify their separatist beliefs, writing scrolls with two central rhetorical functions in the context of this Hasmonean rhetorical ecology: to establish the Essenes as the true Israel (the *Rule of the Community* and the *Damascus Document*) and to establish Qumran as the legitimate Temple (the *Purification Rules* and the *Temple Scroll*).

The *Rule of the Community*, one of the first and most central scrolls composed during the early years of the Essene occupation of Qumran, establishes specific procedures for initiation into, and annual renewal of, the Essenes' new covenant with God. The audience of the *Rule of the Community* is neither Hasmonean priests nor non-Essene Israelites, who were counted among the Sons of Darkness, along with Egyptians, Romans, and Greeks. Instead, this scroll is strictly intended for an audience of Essene priests and leaders who lived in the settlement of Qumran and called

themselves the Yahad.⁵ The Yahad's covenant described in the *Rule of the Community* is a new formulation of the old Mosaic covenant (the promise of material blessings in exchange for obedience to the law), which was continually violated by wayward Israelites and the Hasmonean priests who misled them. This new covenant recommitted members of the Yahad to strict obedience to the law, and it reformulated inclusion in the covenant from national inheritance (old covenant) to voluntary commitment (new covenant) and recast the blessings and curses of the covenant from material (old) to metaphysical (new). Since the Yahad's disputes with Hasmonean Temple priests were based on technical matters related to legal observance, the Mosaic law (which, more than any other biblical covenant, requires strict adherence to legal regulation) became the ideological emphasis in the community's formation and its covenant. The *Rule of the Community* describes this new covenant in detail and lays out specific procedures (material rhetoric in the form of performative speech acts) for initiation into, and annual renewal within, the community of the new metaphysical covenant, the new and true Israel. Material rhetoric (more than just distinction and identification) establishes a real community with defined boundaries and ranked membership, ready for the end of days. The initiation and renewal ceremonies described in the *Rule of the Community* created a material foundation for this separatist community, and they likely took place at Qumran and were administered by powerful Essene priests and leaders.

Since membership in the Essene community extended well beyond the reconstructed walls of the Qumran settlement, more rhetorical work was required than just the material establishment of the community. Common Essenes did not live at Qumran; they lived in villages and towns throughout Israel—among the very people who had become the Sons of Darkness, marked for destruction in the end of days. The audience of the *Damascus Document* (CD and its Cave 4 copies) are these Essenes, and the scroll's purpose is to mandate rhetorical dissociation in order to maintain a unified and coherent concept of *Essene* among community members who lived their daily lives surrounded by iniquity. Thus, once the Essene community was established through material rhetoric in the *Rule of the Community*, the community was then pruned and maintained through dissociative rhetoric, removing incoherent ideas that might give rise to contradiction or impurity. Throughout the *Damascus Document*, for example, *apparent Israelites* are dissociated from *real Israelites*, leaving the remaining concept *Israelites*

coherent in the context of Essene ideology. And since not all Israelites were sincere in their commitment to Essene regulations, the *Damascus Document* also dissociates *apparent Essenes* from *real Essenes*, leaving the remaining concept *Essene* unified and pure, offering punishments for insincerity or disrespect.

The rites of initiation and renewal described in the *Rule of the Community*, and the practice of rhetorical dissociation described in the *Damascus Document*, ensured an authentic Israel uninfected by pagan Hellenistic impurities. However, if the Jerusalem Temple was no longer a legitimate institution for Israelite worship, then the Essenes (now the authentic Israel) would require a different legitimate Temple in which to perform the rites and rituals required by their new covenant. Since the Jerusalem Temple was illegitimate because it was impure, the new Temple would require a new level of purity, both among authentic Israelites who worshipped there and within the new Temple itself.

In an authentic Israel, each individual Israelite is pure. The *Purification Rules* explains how ritual impurities are embodied through discourse in the flesh of Israelites and how these embodied impurities are erased through ritual practices, such as isolation, bathing, and sprinkling with a purifying liquid called *me niddah*. Through a material rhetoric of entitlement, sacred discourses, like the Hebrew Bible and the Essene scrolls, especially the *Purification Rules*, inscribe qualities of purity and impurity in the physical bodies of Israelites. These same discourses describe material practices for the ritual purification of individual impurities, leading to the status of purity required by the Essenes' new covenant. Through a material rhetoric of ritual speech acts, Israelite impurities vanish from their bodies, leaving only pure flesh.

In a legitimate Temple, both the collective nation of Israel and the physical structure of the sanctuary are pure. The *Temple Scroll* explains how moral impurities are materialized through discourse in the nation of Israel and the sanctuary itself and how these material impurities are erased through ritual practices, such as required festivals and communal sacrifices. Sacred discourses entitle the nation of Israel and the physical structure of the sanctuary with purity and impurity, and these material impurities require ritual purification in order for the new covenant to remain valid and its metaphysical blessings to remain available. If individual Israelites, the nation of Israel, and the Temple sanctuary are pure when God returns to wage the final war against the Sons of Darkness, then God will join forces with the Essenes

(the true Israel, the Sons of Light), and they will live forever in divine glory, as the new covenant promises. In the case of both the *Purification Rules* and the *Temple Scroll*, the acquisition of impurity and its purification are material processes, so they are best explained through material rhetoric.

From 100 until 63 BCE, Hasmonean high priests continued to acquire territory and wealth, and they continued to interpret Torah law liberally, leaving the Temple defiled, at least according to the Essenes. During this time, although there were some internal Israelite uprisings against perceived violations of the law by high priests (especially Alexander Jannaeus), most Israelite communities were not under direct threat of conquest, so they were able to live and worship as they wished. However, in 63 BCE, Roman armies under Pompey conquered Jerusalem, ending Israelite independence and subjecting Israelite territories to the perils of Roman political intrigue. Upon final victory, Pompey entered the Temple's holy of holies where only the high priest was allowed, thus defiling the inner sanctuary. Kamm writes, "In the meantime Hyrcanus II was confirmed as high priest (63–40 BCE) and appointed ethnarch of Judea, a term for a ruler which implies that he is subservient to another authority, in this case the governor of Syria" (1999, 157), who was Marcus Scaurus at the time, though that office changed hands frequently. During the Roman occupation, high priests were stripped of political influence, reduced to impotent administrators.

Although Rome occupied Israel, Israelite culture and religion were allowed to continue with few restrictions (Kamm 1999, 167), as long as the Israelites paid Roman tribute, accepted Roman imperial rule, and did not revolt (which they occasionally did anyway, though unsuccessfully). However, in 40 BCE, Antigonus, grandchild of the Hasmonean high priest Alexander Jannaeus, declared himself both high priest and king of Judea (174), directly challenging the hegemony of Roman governance in the region. In 37 BCE, Herod the Great, an Idoumean and an Israelite with loyalties more to Hellenistic Rome than to Jerusalem, acquired Roman armies and defeated Hasmonean Israel, installing himself as king of the region. Once in power, Herod exiled Antigonus to Rome where Antony ordered his execution, and Herod named a non-Hasmonean, Ananelus, as the next high priest from 37 to 36 BCE, effectively ending the Hasmonean dynasty of high priests and turning the position into a political appointment.

With Rome in power, Herod as king, and political appointees serving as high priests, the Essenes viewed themselves as living in the last days before

the apocalypse that was foretold by the biblical prophets. By this turbulent time, the Essenes had fully separated themselves from all other Israelites and pagans, both physically at Qumran and ideologically in the territories, awaiting the final battle between the Sons of Light (Essenes) and the Sons of Darkness (everyone else) in the coming days. This is the rhetorical ecology in which the Essenes composed their unique genre of commentaries called *peshers*, most of which date to the second half of the first century BCE, including the *Habakkuk Peshet*.⁶ For the Essenes, living under Roman occupation must have reminded them of their ancestors' fall to Babylonian forces and subsequent exile from Judah, and hermeneutics/rhetoric enabled them to codify these comparisons analogically.

The biblical prophets revealed abstract oracles from God and interpreted these oracles based on their own concrete historical circumstances. In the case of the prophet Habakkuk, those circumstances were the turbulent events in the late seventh century BCE that were leading to the Babylonian exile. In the narrative of his prophecy, Habakkuk explains that he offered up a complaint to God about internal and external strife in Judah (the Southern Kingdom) and received an oracle that predicted conquest and exile as the consequence for discord and disobedience. In prophecy, the oracle itself is universal and ahistorical, a divine message communicated directly to the prophet. Since the power of genuine oracular prophecy (or the reception of divine oracles) had been lost during the Second Temple period, the Essenes relied on what they called "mysteries" to reinterpret original oracles for a new historical circumstance.

In the *Habakkuk Peshet*, the Essenes revealed mysteries from God regarding an already-delivered oracle (the one in the book of Habakkuk) and reinterpreted the oracle analogically for their own concrete historical circumstances. In the case of the Essenes, those circumstances were the turbulent events in the late first century BCE that were leading to the Roman destruction of the Second Temple. Following are just a few of the analogies drawn by the Essenes (or provided through God's mysteries) in the *Habakkuk Peshet*: Habakkuk's evildoer equals the Essenes' Wicked Priest, Habakkuk's upright man equals the Essenes' Teacher of Righteousness, and Habakkuk's Chaldeans equal the Essenes' Kittim, or Romans. Also, the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of its people are prophesied in the book of Habakkuk and are recognized in the *Habakkuk Peshet* as present realities (or at least inevitabilities) for the Essenes. As Eshel points out,

identifying the Romans (using the thinly veiled sobriquet Kittim) in written texts about the apocalypse may have caused the need to transition from written to oral interpretation (2008, 179) and hide sacred texts that might be destroyed as heretical or confrontational.

By 66 CE, the entire region in and around the Roman province of Judea had descended into utter chaos. The Israelites revolted, but the Romans crushed every effort the Israelites made to acquire independence from Roman occupation and exploitation. In 66 CE, Roman general Vespasian marched troops into Judea and began to quell the rebellion and subdue the region, killing any who might oppose the Romans. By 68 CE, most of the province of Judea had been laid to waste, except for Jerusalem, which Vespasian was saving for last. But Vespasian returned to Rome to assume his role as emperor, leaving another Roman general, Titus, to finish the siege of the city, which he did in a most brutal fashion in 70 CE (Kamm 1999, 192–95). It is in this context of conquest and brutality that the Dead Sea Scrolls were deposited and hidden in the caves above the western shores of the Dead Sea. It is likely that some of the caves near Qumran had already functioned as a kind of library containing the Essenes' sacred scrolls for over a century. Cave 4, for example, was painstakingly carved out of the limestone cliff in a location that was near Qumran and thus more accessible than many of the natural caves; it contained around 550 different texts, over half of the total number that we now know as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Caves 1 and 2, on the other hand, were likely used as makeshift hiding places for scrolls deposited only after the revolts of 66 CE and before the destruction of Qumran in 68 CE (Schiffman 1995b, 53–54). Whatever the original functions of the caves, the fact is that the scrolls were concealed there for nearly two thousand years, until their (re)discovery.

Early in 1947, a young Ta'amireh Bedouin named Muhammad edh-Dhib was tending goats around the cliffs and hills just west of the Dead Sea.⁷ Realizing that one of his precious charges had gone missing, he scaled the craggy rock face, searching the caves and listening for bleating. Edh-Dhib stopped at one cave in particular, listened, and threw a rock into it, hoping to scare the goat into revealing its hiding place. But instead of bleating, edh-Dhib heard the sound of shattering pottery. Nomadic Bedouin tribes often supplement their meager subsistence with money exchanged for ancient artifacts they find in the desert. So edh-Dhib entered the cave, opened the clay jars he found there, and removed some ancient scrolls, taking them back to his

family for safekeeping until they could be sold. A few months later, these Bedouins traveled to Bethlehem and sold seven scrolls edh-Dhib had found to two different antiquities dealers: Faidi Salahi bought three scrolls and Khalil Iskander Shahin (known as Kando) bought four. On November 29, 1947, Professor Eleazar L. Sukenik of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem traveled to Bethlehem and purchased two of Salahi's scrolls (the *Psalms Scroll* and the *War Scroll*), acquiring the third scroll, a fragmentary copy of portions of Isaiah, a week later. These three scrolls would remain at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem for nearly twenty years.

On the very day that Sukenik returned to Jerusalem, November 29, 1947, the United Nations approved Resolution 181, the UN Partition Plan for Palestine, sparking a war between Palestinian Arabs and Jewish Zionists, who had immigrated to the region after the Holocaust of World War II. After six months of war, on May 15, 1948, Israel was declared a state. Sukenik's son, Yigael Yadin, recalled in his 1957 book, *The Message of the Scrolls*, "I cannot avoid the feeling that there is something symbolic in the discovery of the scrolls and their acquisition at the moment of the creation of the State of Israel. It is as if these manuscripts had been waiting in caves for two thousand years, ever since the destruction of Israel's independence [by the Romans in 70 A.D.], until the people of Israel had returned to their home and regained their freedom" (quoted in Shanks 1998, 15; brackets in the original). The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls would lend ideological validity to Jewish claims of rightful ownership in the land of Israel.

Intense conflicts throughout the region, from the winter of 1947 to the late spring of 1948, caused some delays in the purchase and transmission of Kando's four texts, the *Great Isaiah Scroll*, the *Habakkuk Peshier*, the *Rule of the Community*, and the *Genesis Apocryphon*. In April 1947, Kando sold his scrolls to Mar Samuel, the metropolitan of Jerusalem in the Syriac Orthodox Church, and they remained in Samuel's possession until he moved to the United States in 1949. Although Samuel's scrolls were displayed in museums throughout the United States and had generated much excitement among academics, no one came forward to purchase the scrolls. Needing funds for his church, Samuel placed a classified advertisement in the *Wall Street Journal* on June 1, 1954, announcing the sale of "The Four Dead Sea Scrolls" (Shanks 1998, 19, 21). Working through intermediaries, Yadin purchased the four scrolls for the new nation of Israel, adding them in 1955 to his father's collection at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. All seven scrolls

sold by edh-Dhib and his family were published and made generally available to scholars during the 1960s, and in 1965 the Israeli government established the Shrine of the Book to house these seven priceless documents, making the original scrolls available for study.

Since their initial discovery in 1947, both Bedouins and archaeologists have searched the caves above Qumran for more scrolls. In particular, Roland de Vaux, a French Dominican priest and director of the Catholic École Biblique in East Jerusalem (then part of Jordan), and Gerald Lankester Harding, director of the British Department of Antiquities in Jordan, excavated the area around the site of the first discoveries, finding ten new caves and thousands of fragments. They supplemented their own discoveries with thousands more fragments purchased from Bedouins (mostly with Kando as intermediary) who had beaten de Vaux and Harding to their locations, including the treasure trove of texts hiding in what is now Cave 4. In 1953, de Vaux gathered together a small group of scholars at the Palestine Archaeological Museum in East Jerusalem, including Josef Milik, John Allegro (who was later replaced by John Strugnell), Frank Moore Cross, Jean Starcky, Patrick Skehan, and Claus-Hunno Hunzinger (who was later replaced by Maurice Baillet). These scholars were mostly Catholic, and not one was Jewish or Israeli (because of the location of the museum in Jordan, and also because of overt anti-Semitism).

De Vaux, the leader of the team, assigned scrolls to scholars according to specialization, and these scholars inappropriately assumed rights of ownership over their scrolls. By 1958, almost all of the texts we know as the Dead Sea Scrolls had been discovered by archaeologists or purchased from Bedouins, and by 1961 most of the fragments, especially the huge cache from Cave 4, had been reconstructed into relatively coherent texts. However, after just a few years of enthusiastic reconstruction, de Vaux's scroll team seemed to lose some of its energy, slowing publication of the fragments to a snail's pace. Academics outside this small cadre of scholars were denied access to the fragments and their reconstructions, even as the reconstructed scrolls sat in the Palestine Archaeological Museum deteriorating from neglect.

During the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel captured East Jerusalem from Jordan, thus also taking control of the Dead Sea Scrolls housed in the Palestine Archaeological Museum, which the Israelis renamed the Rockefeller Museum. Israeli archaeologists entered the Palestine Archaeological Museum and seized control of the scrolls that were stored there. Unfortunately, these

Israeli archaeologists agreed to let de Vaux's original team publish the scrolls themselves, not realizing at the time that the pace of publication would continue to be painfully slow (Shanks 1998, 48–50). Hershel Shanks explains that “in 1985, well over half the texts from Cave 4 remained unpublished and inaccessible to scholars who were not on the team” (1998, 47). Twenty-five years had passed, and scholars from around the world, who knew very well that the scrolls existed, wondered why these texts were not being published for general examination, leading to some conspiracy theories that have proven to be unwarranted in hindsight. The refusal, or indolent neglect, to publish the Dead Sea Scrolls from the 1960s through the 1980s was not a Vatican conspiracy to conceal information damaging to Catholicism. The scrolls do not challenge any fundamental beliefs of Christianity (except, perhaps, its utter uniqueness at the time). They do, however, represent the only primary texts known to us from the late Second Temple period, which is enough, surely, to make the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls one of the greatest archaeological finds of the twentieth century.

From 1955 to 1989 (thirty-four years!), the editors in chief of the Oxford Clarendon series *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* (DJD)—first Roland de Vaux, then Pierre Benoit, and finally John Strugnell—had overseen the publication of only seven volumes of Dead Sea Scrolls manuscripts. In 1990, Strugnell made anti-Semitic comments in an interview for an Israeli newspaper. He was removed from his position as editor in chief of the DJD series by the Israel Antiquities Authority and replaced by Emanuel Tov (Vermes 1999, 6–7). Tov immediately redistributed the scroll manuscripts to around sixty new scholars and demanded faster results. Over the next nineteen years, from 1990 to 2009, Tov oversaw the publication of thirty-two more volumes in the DJD series, finally completing the task of publishing the Dead Sea Scrolls that had been discovered by 1958. Since 2009, debates have continued to rage about the accuracy of the DJD reconstructions, and new technologies have enabled scholars to see letters that were invisible to the naked eye just a few decades ago. The scrolls have also been translated into dozens of languages, making them available to scholars across the world. While theologians have created a cottage industry of criticism about the Dead Sea Scrolls, rhetoricians have taken little notice of these unique and important texts.

The rhetorical strategies described or exemplified in ancient Israelite and Jewish texts have long been of interest to communication scholars and

rhetorically minded theologians. However, despite general interest, one period of this ancient textual tradition has been ignored by rhetoricians. In “Ancient Traditions, Modern Needs: An Introduction to Jewish Rhetoric,” Samuel M. Edelman (2003) divides ancient Jewish rhetorics into three periods: the classical biblical period, the Hellenistic period, and the talmudic period.⁸ Texts from both the classical biblical period and the talmudic period have received ample attention from rhetorical critics because the texts from those periods, the Torah and the Talmud, have been well preserved and available to scholars for centuries. However, only scant research has been conducted on the Hellenistic period of Israelite and Jewish rhetorics because only scant texts have survived from that time—until fairly recently, that is.

Until the mid-twentieth century, most of what scholars knew about this tumultuous time in Israelite history, the late Second Temple period, came from the Septuagint and from later histories of Judaism written by Philo, Pliny, and especially Josephus. The Septuagint shows no clear signs of sectarianism. Philo and Pliny never favored any particular sect of Judaism. Josephus did align himself most closely with the Pharisees, though he says that he spent quite a bit of time living among Sadducees and Essenes as well. The Pharisees had taken control of the Temple through bribes to their Roman oppressors during the first century BCE, and it was their ideological interpretation of Israelite scriptures that would endure into the talmudic period. Until the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, almost all we knew about late Second Temple Judaism came through nonsectarian scriptures and histories, or through Pharisaic histories and later rabbinic (also mostly Pharisaic) interpretations. There was, in other words, a nearly four-hundred-year gap in our understanding of the evolution of Israelite and Jewish rhetorics from the end of the classical biblical period to the beginning of the talmudic period, and what we had assumed to be true was generally not, though we had no way of knowing this yet.

The dearth of primary documentary evidence from the Hellenistic period of Israelite history would be filled in just a short time during the middle and late decades of the twentieth century with the discovery and publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls. And it was the fact that the scrolls filled this gap in our understanding of Judaism’s historical trajectory that attracted some of the best-known biblical scholars to their study. Lawrence H. Schiffman writes, “What captured my attention was the opportunity to uncover the unknown missing links between the Judaism of the Bible and that of the

Talmud and to trace the links between prophet and priest on the one hand and Talmudic rabbis on the other. . . . Up until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, no contemporary documentary evidence existed for the intermediate [or late Second Temple] period” (1995b, xix).

This treasure of texts from a period of Israelite history with little other primary documentary representation should have triggered a firestorm of interest among scholars dedicated to studying ancient Israelite and Jewish rhetorics, but it has not. In 1990, Carol A. Newsom pointed out that “the rhetoric of a sectarian community is of particular interest, since such a community must be rather self-conscious about the creation of the discourse that gives it identity” (122). Thus, Newsom remarked, “It is curious that so little attention has been paid to the rhetorical dimensions of Qumran literature” (121). Twenty years later, in 2010, Newsom would conclude, again, that “the literature of a sectarian community has particular affinities for this type of analysis”—that is, rhetorical criticism—because “the Qumran community was deeply involved in using language to effect persuasion” (200). However, Newsom continued, “rhetorical criticism is as yet a little used method in Qumran studies. This near absence of rhetorical criticism is both surprising and unfortunate” (200). I do not know of any source on rhetoric in the Dead Sea Scrolls prior to the publication of Newsom’s 1990 article on rhetorical strategies in the *Hodayot (Hymns)* and *Serek Ha-Yahad (the Rule of the Community)*. To my knowledge, since 1990, fewer than a dozen articles have been published on the subject.⁹

Surely this lack of rhetorical criticism applied to the Dead Sea Scrolls in general is a missed opportunity. While it is true that the sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls present a difficult hermeneutic task for rhetoricians, it is a task worth engaging, since without a better understanding of the Dead Sea Scrolls, our knowledge of ancient Israelite and Jewish rhetorics in general remains incomplete. Reflecting on the status of scholarship about Israelite and Jewish rhetorics in 2003, Edelman explains, “We are in need of careful scholarly studies of the diachronic movement of Jewish rhetoric and case studies illuminating particular moments and theories in this tradition” (2003, 114).

The chapters of this book comprise a “case study” of rhetoric in certain texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls, thus illuminating a particular moment in Israelite rhetoric during the Second Temple period. The conclusion examines how the Dead Sea Scrolls illuminate the “diachronic movement” of

rhetoric in its transition from the classical biblical period to the talmudic period.

In chapter 1, I discuss the Dead Sea Scroll called *Miqṣat Ma'āseh ha-Torah* (or 4QMMT). This scroll was originally an epistle composed by leaders of the Essene community and addressed to the priests who administered the Temple in Jerusalem around 150 BCE (though it was also copied later for circulation and study). It is distinctly persuasive in purpose, since the Essenes, who had been deposed from Temple administration, believed that the ruling Jerusalem priests were not correctly executing Torah law, thus leading the entire nation of Israel into a state of impurity. Since purity was a requirement of the historical covenants, especially the Mosaic covenant, the Essenes believed that the imprecise rituals practiced by the Temple priests would lead the Israelites toward a fate of utter destruction in the end of days. In order to identify with their audience, thus creating an amicable relationship through their language, the Essene community emphasized their points of agreement with the Jerusalem priests by citing commonly revered scriptures introduced with the phrase “it is written.” This phrase and the citations that follow it create a common substance of beliefs between the Essenes and their audience, preparing the rhetorical ground for their statement of differences. Although the Essenes and the Temple priests could agree on aspects of Torah law, it was in their practical application (locations of sacrifices, durations of rituals) that differences emerged, and the Essenes introduced their different interpretations of Torah law with the phrases “we say” and “we think.” The exigency for articulating these differences of interpretation is the eschatological “end of days,” in which God returns to judge the Israelites and condemn them if they are impure. The rhetorical purpose of 4QMMT, at least for the Essenes, was to encourage the ruling priests to purify their practice so that the Essene community could end its self-imposed exile and rejoin the Temple cult. Unfortunately for the Essenes, despite the conciliatory and respectful tone of their epistle, it was ultimately not well received.

Chapter 2 explores the *Rule of the Community* (1QS) as a description of performative procedures for initiating and renewing membership in the community of the new covenant, the Yahad. According to the Qumran community, the old Mosaic covenant had been utterly violated, and the curses of the old covenant were upon them. Only a new covenant, emphasizing selective membership, metaphysical blessings, and personal commitment

could reverse their path toward destruction. Since the crisis of covenant is primarily based on the infelicitous performance of rituals at the Jerusalem Temple, speech act theory offers a useful rhetorical means to explain the performative response from the Essenes. The *Rule of the Community* describes two ceremonies. The first, an initiation ceremony, emphasizes commissive speech acts, including blessings, acknowledgments, confessions, curses, and oaths. The second, an annual renewal ceremony, emphasizes verdictive speech acts, including isolation, obedience, and sincerity. Through the speech acts performed in each of these ceremonies described in the *Rule of the Community*, the Yahad established a new Mosaic covenant based on personal choice and metaphysical blessings, discarding the old Mosaic covenant (with its assumption of national inheritance and material blessings) as eternally void.

In chapter 3, I explore dissociation as a rhetorical strategy in the *Damascus Document* (CD). The *Damascus Document* was a guidebook composed for members of the Essene community who lived in the camps among other Israelites and Gentiles, and were thus constantly exposed to sources of impurity and temptations to sin. The authors of the *Damascus Document* use dissociation in order to maintain ideological coherence in the Essene community by removing through argumentation sources of incoherence. Dissociation resolves ideological incoherence in communities by rhetorically carving away problematic notions that are incompatible with the concepts that represent communal ideals. These incompatible notions may arise in the natural process of linguistic change, and they may arise from shifts in historical circumstances. Once an ideal concept has become incoherent, dissociation divides the concept into a real aspect and an apparent aspect, with the real aspect maintaining the desired coherence, and the apparent aspect taking away with it the incoherence that threatens the community.

In the case of the *Damascus Document*, the authors persuade their audience to accept five key dissociations, hoping to maintain the coherence of the community in the face of rampant iniquity. First, the *Damascus Document* resolves the incoherence in the concept *humanity* by dissociating *apparent humanity* (Gentiles) from *real humanity* (Israelites), separating God's chosen people from those marked for destruction in the end of days. Second, the authors resolve the incoherence of the concept *Israelites* by dissociating *apparent Israelites* (nonremnants) from *real Israelites* (remnant), separating those who truly observe God's covenantal regulations from those

who assume their salvation as a birthright. Third, the *Damascus Document* resolves the incoherence of the concept *remnants* by dissociating *apparent remnants* (non-Essenes) from the *real final remnants* (Essenes, the Yahad), arguing that only the Essenes will remain when God returns to earth in both glory and judgment. Fourth, the authors resolve the incoherence of the concept *Essene* by dissociating *apparent Essenes* (fraudulent members) from *real Essenes* (sincere members, who considered themselves the *true* Israel), emphasizing punishments for transgression. Fifth, the *Damascus Document* resolves the incoherence of the concept *Israel* through a double dissociation, removing *apparent Israel* (Ephraim) from *real Israel* (Judah), and then removing *old Israel* (Judah) from *new Israel* (Damascus), thus returning *Israel* to its original status as a coherent ideal concept. Each year, the inspector of the Essenes judges all community members regarding their execution of each of these dissociations, elevating or demoting them in the community hierarchy accordingly.

Chapter 4 analyzes the relationships among a few different scrolls, particularly the *Purification Rules* (4QTohorot A and 4QTohorot B) and the *Temple Scroll* (11QT), in the context of ritual and moral impurity and their erasure. In the *Purification Rules*, ritual impurities are embodied through discourse in the flesh of Israelites, and these embodied impurities are then erased through specific ritual practices. In the *Temple Scroll*, moral impurities are materialized through discourse in the nation of Israel and the sanctuary itself, and these impurities are erased through required festivals and sacrifices. Since ritual and moral impurities have a material existence, material rhetoric explains how impurities are both acquired and erased. This chapter uses two theories of material rhetoric to examine the *Purification Rules* and the *Temple Scroll*, entitlement and speech act theory. First, Kenneth Burke explains entitlement as a process in which salient discourses like the Torah and the Essene scrolls inspire things, infusing them with meaning, so that these things become the signs of words (rather than the other way around). Second, J. L. Austin ([1962] 1975) explains speech acts as intentional actions that materialize effects in people and the world around them. Whereas ritual and moral impurities are acquired through entitlement, they are erased through speech acts, ensuring the holiness of God's people in the end of days.

In chapter 5, I examine the *Habakkuk Peshar* (1QPHab) as an example of hermeneutics/rhetoric, or rhetoric in which interpretation forms the

substance and structure of the work. Hermeneutics/rhetoric is most fully grounded in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, especially *Truth and Method*. For Gadamer, interpretation and the communication that is based on it emerge from the cyclical interaction of individual prejudices, historical traditions, and the fusion of horizons. The result of this fusion of horizons is the manifestation of hermeneutics/rhetoric. The *Habakkuk Peshar* is an interpretation of the book of Habakkuk in which sequential *lemmas* (quotations and paraphrases) are immediately followed by *peshers* (interpretations). I begin my critical journey in this chapter with an analysis of the book of Habakkuk, exploring the ways in which Habakkuk's prejudices interact with historical traditions in a prophetic fusion of horizons. Habakkuk's prejudices derive from internal and external Judean strife, his traditions are based on divine oracles and the Mosaic covenant, and these horizons (prejudices and traditions) are fused in the practice of prophecy and later redactions of prophetic texts. The result of this cyclical process is prophetic hermeneutics/rhetoric.

Since the book of Habakkuk is an interpretation of divine oracles, not an objective recording of them (because divine oracles would be incomprehensible to situated human understanding), the *Habakkuk Peshar* is a *double* interpretation, or an interpretation of an interpretation. Peshar methodology, then, requires interpreters to believe that true prophetic oracles remain hidden behind situated interpretations of them in the prophetic books (like Habakkuk), that these oracles are relevant for all time (not just the time of their delivery), and that the only remaining access to these original oracles is peshar interpretation. Thus, the Essenes interpret Habakkuk's First Temple prejudices (Chaldean oppression) as being different from their own Second Temple prejudices (Roman oppression) only in a situational, experiential, human sense, but not in a divine or universal sense. While Habakkuk's traditions relate to oracular revelation and covenant theology, the traditions of the Essenes relate to the loss of oracular revelation and broken covenants that must be established differently rather than simply renewed. The fusion of horizons that occurs in peshar methodology is thus a double cyclical process of interpretation, and this double process is the substance and structure of hermeneutics/rhetoric in the *Habakkuk Peshar*.

The conclusion broadens the scope of my analysis from "case studies" of specific texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls to the ways in which the Dead

Sea Scrolls inform a more general understanding of the “diachronic movement of Jewish rhetorics” (Edelman 2003, 114). When the Roman destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE is considered the single most salient rupture in Israelite and Jewish histories, then the late Second Temple period does not receive the attention it deserves. With 70 CE as the rupture, we understand the destruction of Jerusalem as the impetus for establishing synagogues as new institutions designed to replace the religious functions of the Temple. Yet then we overlook the fact that the Essenes established Qumran as an alternative Temple nearly two centuries before. With 70 CE as the rupture, we understand the dissolution of the Jerusalem priesthood as the impetus for the rise of rabbis. Yet then we overlook the fact that the Essenes were led by a community council of three priests and twelve men, who were not priests. Nearly two centuries before the destruction of the Temple, the Essenes chose primarily lay leadership, eschewing the requirement of a traditional priestly hierarchy. Finally, with 70 CE as the rupture, we understand the destruction of the Temple institution and the dissolution of its priestly administration as the cause of the loss also of the sacrificial cult, which rabbis replace with prayer, good works, and knowledge of the Torah. Yet then we overlook the fact that the Essenes had abandoned the sacrificial cult nearly two hundred years before, offering instead their prayers for purification and atonement, not animals.

The Dead Sea Scrolls complicate the history of Israelite and Jewish rhetorics because they are concrete documentary evidence that the rupture we once believed 70 CE represented is, in fact, no rupture at all. The Dead Sea Scrolls teach us that the shift from biblical to rabbinic Judaism was a slow process, a gradual transition over the course of centuries in which many rabbinic innovations now seem to have clear precedents, though they are not identical. Surely these transitional texts from Qumran should be of interest to scholars of Israelite and Jewish rhetorics, since they fill a gap in our historical understanding in some surprising ways. For this reason, I share Newsom’s concern that only a few scholars have applied rhetorical methodologies to the Dead Sea Scrolls. Nevertheless, I believe it is an intellectual journey worth taking, and I hope this book encourages others to explore rhetoric and the Dead Sea Scrolls.