

Dating the Scroll Deposits of the Qumran Caves: a Question of Evidence

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In the 1990s I raised the question of whether the scrolls in the caves of Qumran had been deposited as late as the first century CE. This was the first since the excavation of Qumran in 1951 that that had been questioned. I argued that the scroll deposits appeared to predate the first century CE in their entirety and had nothing to do with the First Revolt of 66-70 CE.¹ This argument was taken up by Ian Hutchesson (1999), Alan Crown (2005), Ian Young (2002, 2005, 2013), and David Stacey (2013).² However nearly two decades later the questioning of the existence of First Revolt scroll deposits remains regarded as an outlier argument, barely making a ripple in much mainstream discussion. When I consider the underlying facts and force of the argument this response puzzles me. Here I review this question, but first a preliminary point.

In looking for a correct earlier context for the scroll deposits I focused on the end of what Qumran excavator Father Roland de Vaux called Qumran's "Period Ib." This focus involved regrettable mistakes on my part at earlier stages involving the dating of the end of Ib. In the 1990s de

Vaux's date for the end of Ib of 31 BCE had been widely and long accepted. Another analysis was that of Ernest-Marie Laperrousaz who dated the end of Ib to 67-63 BCE, earlier than de Vaux. And a third date, 40-37 BCE, earlier held but abandoned by de Vaux, also retained adherents.

The publication of the pottery of the Netzer excavations of Jericho by Rachel Bar-Nathan in 2002 made it clear that all of those dates for the end of Qumran's Period Ib were incorrect: they were all too early.³ Jodi Magness was right in 1995 and 1998 in dating the end of Ib later in the reign of Herod, toward the end of the first century BCE.⁴ The present argument embraces the corrected ending of Qumran's "Period Ib" toward the end of the first century BCE. Yet fundamentally the argument is that the traditional dating of the scroll deposits of the caves of Qumran to as late as the time of the First Revolt is supported by neither evidence nor plausibility. This argument stands independently of whether a specific earlier context for the deposits is correctly identified, which is a distinct issue.

¹ Gregory L. Doudna, "Dating the Scrolls on the Basis of Radiocarbon Analysis," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Fifty Years, Vol. I* (ed. P. Flint and J. VanderKam; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 430-471 at 458-64; idem, *Redating the Dead Sea Scrolls Found at Qumran* (*Qumran Chronicle* 8 Special Issue [1999]: 1-96); idem, *4Q Pesher Nahum: A Critical Edition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 698-705, 746-53; idem, "The Legacy of an Error in Archaeological Interpretation: the Dating of the Qumran Cave Scroll Deposits," in *Qumran: The Site of the Scrolls: Archaeological Interpretations and Debates: Proceedings of a Conference Held at Brown University, November 17-19, 2002* (ed. K. Galor et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 147-57; idem, "The Sect of the Qumran Texts and its Leading Role in the Temple in Jerusalem During Much of the First Century BCE: Toward a New Framework for Understanding," in *Qumran Revisited: A Reassessment of the Archaeology of the Site and its Texts* (ed. D. Stacey and G. Doudna; Oxford: Archaeopress, 2013), 75-124 at 107-119.

² Ian Hutchesson, "63 BCE. A Revised Dating for the Deposition of the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Qumran Chronicle* 8 (1999): 177-94; Alan Crown, "An Alternative View of Qumran?" in *Samaritan, Hebrew and Aramaic Studies Presented to Professor Abraham Tal* (ed. M. Bar-Asher and M. Florentin; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2005), 1-24; Ian Young, "The

Stabilization of the Biblical Text in the Light of Qumran and Masada: a Challenge for Conventional Qumran Chronology?", *Dead Sea Discoveries* 9 (2002): 364-90; idem, "The Biblical Scrolls from Qumran and the Masoretic Text: A Statistical Approach," in *Feasts and Fasts: A Festschrift in Honour of Alan David Crown* (ed. M. Dacy et al.; Sydney: University of Sydney/Mandelbaum, 2005), 81-139; idem, "The Contrast Between the Qumran and Masada Biblical Scrolls in the Light of New Data: A Note in Light of the Alan Crown Festschrift," in *Keter Shem Tov: Collected Essays on the Dead Sea Scrolls in Memory of Alan Crown* (ed. S. Tzoref and I. Young; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013), 113-19; David Stacey, "A Reassessment of the Stratigraphy of Qumran," in Stacey and Doudna, *Qumran Revisited* (above n. 1), 7-74 at 63.

³ Rachel Bar-Nathan, *Hasmonean and Herodian Palaces at Jericho III: The Pottery* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2002).

⁴ Jodi Magness, "The Chronology of the Settlement at Qumran in the Herodian Period," *Dead Sea Discoveries* (1995): 58-65; idem, "The Chronology of Qumran, Ein Feshkha, and Ein El-Ghuweir," in *Mogilany 1995: Papers on the Dead Sea Scrolls Offered in Memory of Aleksy Klawek* (ed. Z. Kapera; Cracow: Enigma Press, 1998), 55-76.

1 *A drop in flourishing historical allusions in the Qumran texts to flat-line zero in the second half of the first century BCE suggests the scroll deposits occurred earlier than commonly supposed*

It is well recognized that there is no allusion in the Qumran texts to anything later than the second half of the first century BCE. The many allusions in the texts to figures, events, and contexts in the first century BCE drop at some point in the second half of the first century BCE to flat-line zero thereafter. In contrast to dozens of Qumran texts composed in the first century BCE, not a single text composed in the first century CE exists in the finds from the caves of Qumran.

A 2003 study of Michael Wise remains the most comprehensive attempt to inventory the historical allusions in the Qumran texts.⁵ Wise counted what he defined as “first-order” allusions, and not “second-order” allusions (allusions which depend on the correctness of a prior allusion identification), which Wise suggested would have increased—perhaps doubled—the numbers if that were done. Wise counted 6 allusions in the second century BCE, rising dramatically to 25 in the first century BCE ending at 37 BCE. Then, 0 for the final third of the first century BCE, 0 for the first century CE, 0 for second century CE, etc. Other studies have found this same pattern of distribution.⁶

Wise likened the absence of first-century CE allusions in the Qumran texts to the Sherlock Holmes dog which did not bark. Sherlock Holmes remarked in one of his cases that he was puzzled by “the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.” He was told, but the dog did nothing in the night-time. Holmes replied, “Yes, that was the curious incident.” As Wise noted, the complete absence of newly composed texts throughout the first century CE from a sect which up to that point had been prolific in composing new texts is indeed a very curious thing.

Scholars who hold to the First Revolt endpoint for the scrolls of the caves of Qumran have never satisfactorily

explained this phenomenon. Why would the people of the scrolls stop composing new texts and switch to only copying old texts for nearly a century? What kind of sense does that make? Attempts to explain this odd behavior according to the First Result assumption have the ring of “just so” *ad hoc* explanations.

The apparent oddity is an artificial creation of the premise of the First Revolt endpoint for the texts. In fact the end of allusions in the Qumran texts after a certain point in the second half of the first century BCE—the “radio silence” from that point forward—in a database the size of the Qumran cave finds is one of the clearest signals that the scroll deposits were earlier than commonly supposed. An earlier dating of the scroll deposits themselves is the simplest way to account for the total silence in those texts after late first century BCE.

2 *How did the notion of First Revolt scroll deposits at Qumran come to be believed in the first place?*

After the Dead Sea Scrolls came to light in 1947 the latest scrolls were dated palaeographically to mid-first century BCE by Solomon Birnbaum and William F. Albright.⁷ After Qumran Cave 1 was excavated in 1949 Albright assessed on ceramic typology grounds that the cylindrical, wide-mouthed “scroll jars” and two “hellenistic” lamps associated with the scrolls preceded a Romanization of pottery in Judea which started in the second half of the reign of Herod late in the first century BCE.⁸ Albright and the other archaeologists noted that a small quantity of later Roman period domestic pottery and lamps had also been found in Cave 1Q, but they considered that pottery intrusive and later, not associated with the scrolls and scroll jars. Albright considered the evidence conclusive: “We may rest assured . . . not a single piece [fragment of scroll] found in

the second century BCE, 23 for the first century BCE ending ca. 30 BCE, 0 for the final third of the first century BCE, 0 for first century CE, 0 for second century CE, etc.—despite differences on individual datapoints, the exact same shape of the graph.

⁷ Solomon Birnbaum, “The Dates of the Cave Scrolls,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 115 (1949): 20-22 at 20.

⁸ William F. Albright, “Are the ‘Ain Feshkha Scrolls a Hoax?,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 40 (1949): 41-49 at 47: “[N]one of the scrolls [of Cave 1Q] can be later than about 50-25 B.C.E. . . . It is a striking fact that we had reached the same approximate date [from palaeography] for the Habakkuk Scroll and its congeners (about the beginning of the Herodian Age, or a very little earlier) that is now imposed by the ceramic evidence.”

⁵ Michael Wise, “Dating the Teacher of Righteousness and the Floruit of his Movement,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122 (2003): 53-87.

⁶ Geza Vermes, “Historiographical Elements in the Qumran Writings: A Synopsis of the Textual Evidence,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 58 (2007): 121-39; Kenneth Atkinson, “Representations of History in 4Q331 (4QpapHistorical Text C), 4Q332 (4Q Historical Text D), 4Q333 (4Q Historical Text E), and 4Q468e (4QHistorical Text F): An Annalistic Calendar Documenting Portentous Events?,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 14 (2007): 125-51. I differ from Wise in interpretation of several of the allusions; for the same allusion passages used by Wise I count 21 agreements and 10 differences (cf. Doudna, “Sect of the Qumran Texts” [above n. 1]). Retabulating Wise’s list according to my analyses of the same text passages my counts come to 6 for

the cave is later than the early years of the Herodian Age at latest.”⁹

This changed with the excavation of Qumran in Nov.-Dec. 1951. An identical “scroll jar” was found installed in the floor of Qumran’s Locus 2. Other pottery in the same room was found identical to the Roman period domestic pottery in Cave 1Q. Coins from the first century CE were found in Locus 2. The coins of Locus 2 and neighboring loci ended at the time of the First Revolt and there had been a destruction of the site by fire at that time. It followed (so it seemed) that the scroll jars and scroll deposits of Cave 1Q were first century CE.

In his introduction to Volume I of the Discoveries in the Judean Desert (DJD) series which appeared in 1955, Jordan’s director of antiquities and co-excavator of Qumran G. Lankester Harding stated definitively: “Excavation of the settlement at Khirbet Qumran has established beyond doubt that all of the material was deposited in these caves in the late first century A.D.”¹⁰

Albright accepted the new findings, as did every known archaeologist and text scholar in the world apart from a few who argued the scrolls were later still.

One of the most significant results of the archaeological redating of 1951, which had been announced despite it being in apparent disagreement with the palaeographic datings, was its effect on those very palaeographic datings. What happened is very simple to understand: based on the archaeological findings the palaeographic datings were adjusted to be in agreement. The typologically most developed formal hands among the Qumran texts were redefined with later dates than previously published, ending at the time of the First Revolt.

In Jan.-Feb. 1952 more texts were found in caves at Wadi Murabba’at, an early second-century CE Bar Kokhba Second Revolt site. Professionally-produced biblical scrolls identical in their consonantal texts to the medieval Masoretic Text were found written in scribal hands typologically developed beyond the latest formal hands among the Qumran finds.

Therefore the Murabba’at biblical texts—with their developed *kereias* and decorative flourishes of the letters—were defined as *postdating* 70 CE in their dates of scribal copying (instead of dated earlier, before the fall of the temple), based on the premise that the Qumran texts defined palaeographical development until ca. 70 CE.

Frank Cross, Jr., became the key figure here. Cross reconstructed stages of typological development and assigned to each a successive series of date ranges, one after the other, ending for the Qumran texts at the time of the First Revolt. This culminated in Cross’s well-known study of 1961 which has been the standard used for palaeographic dating ever since.¹¹

On this basis all of the non-Qumran biblical scrolls then known (from Wadi Murabba’at and Nahal Hever) were dated post-70 CE and their scribal hands named “post-Herodian formal” and the texts were themselves presented as exemplars defining “post-Herodian formal,” in Cross’s 1961 reconstruction.¹²

To repeat and to be clear: the focus on the First Revolt as the date of the latest Qumran texts began as an archaeological correction in the dating of the scroll jars and scroll deposits in the caves. Then the palaeographic datings were secondarily adjusted to be in alignment. That was the specific direction of the logic. The archaeological correction of the scroll deposits to the First Revolt was the basis for fixing the palaeographic dates of the latest Qumran cave texts to the first century CE, and the dates of the biblical texts postdating the Qumran caves’ latest to later than 70 CE.

3 How sound was the 1951 archaeological redating?

The 1950s’ archaeological redating of the scroll deposits in the caves of Qumran to the First Revolt was entirely based upon three foundational assumptions, all three deeply flawed. The first, which arose from the first season of excavations of Qumran in 1951, was that all non-Iron Age pottery at the site of Qumran was exclusively first century CE in date, from a single period of habitation in the first century CE that ended at the time of the First Revolt.

That assumption was short-lived. Starting in the second excavation season at Qumran in 1953, the excavators were surprised to uncover evidence of extensive activity from the preceding century, the first century BCE. The room of Locus 2 with the scroll jar buried in the floor was now identified by de Vaux as having been built in the earlier period, in the first century BCE. De Vaux now explained that the floor of Locus 2 had been swept clean and reused by people of Period II in the first century CE. That was why, in de Vaux’s revised explanation, all pottery found in Locus

⁹ W. F. Albright, “The Dead Sea Scrolls at St. Mark’s Monastery,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 118 (1950): 5-6 at 6.

¹⁰ G. Lankester Harding, “Introductory, the Discovery, the Excavation, the Minor Finds,” in *Qumran Cave 1* (ed. D. Barthélemy and J. T. Milik; DJD 1; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 4.

¹¹ Frank M. Cross, Jr., “The Oldest Manuscripts from Qumran,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 74 (1955): 147-72; idem, “The Development of the Jewish Scripts,” in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* (ed. G. E. Wright; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), 133-202.

¹² Cross, “Development of the Jewish Scripts” (above n. 11), 174, 199 n. 136a.

2 was first century CE, because those were the items in use at the time of the destruction of ca. 68 CE, even though the room and its floor had actually been built much earlier, in the first century BCE.

What no one at the time seemed to consider is that the scroll jar buried in the floor of Locus 2, after it was installed, became at that point part of the floor, not loose above the floor. That scroll jar, if it was already there, would have been inherited along with the floor from the earlier period by the new people of Period II, even if all other older loose pottery on top of the floor was swept clean and removed in Period II as de Vaux reconstructed. That, and the what would later become identified as three scarce Antigonus Mattathias coins of 40-37 BCE (two certain and a third with a question mark, out of only six total Antigonus Mattathias coins found at the entire site) found close to the buried scroll jar in the floor of Locus 2—one under the floor directly against the jar—suggest that that jar could well have been installed in the floor of Locus 2 late first century BCE.¹³ At minimum that would appear to be a reasonable interpretation, such that any claim of a later or first-century CE date of installation of that jar in the Locus 2 floor would seem to call for evidence or argument to be accepted, as distinguished from uncritical reliance on the original publication of that jar's date at a time when no one knew of the existence of a first-century BCE history of that locus.

But it was that Locus 2 scroll jar which had been broadcast to the world as *the* evidence that the Qumran cave scroll jars *were first century CE instead of first century BCE*. That Locus 2 scroll jar, more than any other single reason, was *why* all of the scroll jars and scrolls deposits in Cave 1Q had been *redated later*.

Throughout his preliminary reports of the excavations of Qumran of 1951-1956 de Vaux maintained that not just that Locus 2 scroll jar but all scroll jars found both at the site and in the caves dated first century CE, "Period II." It was only in 1959 that de Vaux stated for the first time, in his Schweich Lectures to the British Academy, that the scrolls jars found in the caves of Qumran actually dated—de Vaux now said—to *both* first century BCE *and* first century CE, instead of first CE exclusively.¹⁴ De Vaux gave no specifics then or later. Similarly in DJD 3 in 1962 de Vaux stated explicitly for the first time that some scroll jars

from the buildings of Qumran were from the first century BCE, again without specifics such as which loci or scroll jars were affected.¹⁵

In other words—although there is no record that anyone at the time noticed the point—the principal argument underlying the archaeologists' announcement to the world after 1951 that the cave scroll deposits had been redated "beyond doubt" to the time of the First Revolt had just explicitly disappeared, just like that, in 1962.

Because: if some scroll jars in Qumran's buildings were in use in the earlier time (as per de Vaux now, post-1962), and those jars were not exclusive to the first century CE, that logically removes certainty that any of the same kind of jars in the caves must be first century CE. For it could not now logically be excluded that all of the scroll jars in the caves represented activity from the earlier time of Qumran (since the scroll jars were now acknowledged to have been in use at that earlier time). The *archaeological* basis for asserting that any of the scroll jars or deposits of scrolls in the caves *must* date to as late as the middle or second half of the first century CE, was *gone*.

With the first foundational assumption gone, the second and third ones took its place. The second foundational assumption was that one single group of people exclusively controlled and inhabited Qumran autonomously for an entire ca. 150-200 years from the start of the site until the First Revolt, continually through all of what de Vaux defined as three archaeological periods 1a, 1b, and II, except for a break between 1b and II when the site was uninhabited.

That, combined with a further assumption that scroll deposits in the caves would not have ended while people related to the scrolls continued at the site, functioned to prevent scholars from considering whether the deposits of scrolls in the caves might have been a phenomenon limited to some earlier subset of the site's history, not necessarily ending at the First Revolt.

As is well known, many archaeologists have rejected this second foundational assumption. That is, reject a 1a/1b

¹³ The Antigonus Mattathias coins from Locus 2 are: No. 109 ("northwest corner against the jar buried under the paved floor"); No. 110 ("?"); and No. 111, in J.-B. Humbert and A. Chambon, eds., *The Excavations of Khirbet Qumran and Ain Feshkha: Synthesis of Roland de Vaux's Field Notes* (trans. and rev. Stephen J. Pfann; Fribourg: University Press/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 12. None of these coins had been identified as Antigonus Mattathias coins at the time de Vaux published his first excavation season's preliminary report in 1953

(R. de Vaux, "Fouille au Khirbet Qumran. Rapport préliminaire," *Revue biblique* 60 [1953]: 83-106).

¹⁴ R. de Vaux, *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls: The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy 1959* (Rev. 2d ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 54.

¹⁵ R. de Vaux, "Archéologie," in *Les 'Petites Grottes de Qumran: Explorations de la Falaise les grottes 2Q, 3Q, 5Q, 6Q, 7Q à 10Q: Le rouleau du cuivre* (ed. M. Baillet et al.; DJD 3; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962): 3-36 at 14.

or Ib/II continuity in people and function at Qumran (e.g. Bar-Adon, Humbert, Hirschfeld, Magen, Peleg).¹⁶

Others have proposed a discontinuity in people inhabiting Qumran internal to Period II itself, in which earlier people in Period II were replaced by different people who continued until the end of Period II. The first to suggest this was de Vaux who proposed in 1954 that an earlier of two successive groups in II did the scroll deposits and then left the site, followed by a distinct second group at the site until the end of II.¹⁷ Going beyond de Vaux, Frederick F. Bruce and Stephen J. Pfann in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* hold that there exists sufficient *archaeological (material)* evidence indicating a difference in people between Ib and the First Revolt to justify the identification and naming of a new, distinct archaeological period representing a non-sectarian habitation at Qumran between Ib and the First Revolt, which they call “Period IIB.”¹⁸

Meanwhile, David Stacey argues that first-century BCE Qumran was linked to the Royal Estate at Jericho and used for water-intensive industrial processes which supplied the demands of the Estate; as the Royal Estate declined after the time of Herod and Archelaus so too did the demand for goods produced at Qumran. With the decline and abandonment of the Royal Estate in the first century CE there would have been an influx of new people to Qumran with a different impetus and purpose, in Stacey’s view.¹⁹

Each of these last-named (de Vaux, Bruce and Pfann, Stacey) suppose the latest inhabitants of first-century CE Qumran ending at the First Revolt postdated the major scroll deposits of Cave 1Q, Cave 4Q, etc. In this way a notion of discontinuity in principle between earlier scroll deposits and different, later, non-cave-scrolls-related first-century CE people and activity at the site before the destruction of the First Revolt has been present from the beginning in some de Vaux-aligned archaeological interpretations of Qumran (e.g. de Vaux), even though this point has not generally been appreciated. In any case, the variety of archaeologists’ conjectures concerning which of

Qumran’s pre-70 CE occupants were and were not involved with the deposits of scrolls in the caves betrays the arbitrary nature of such reconstructions.

The third foundational assumption concerned the interpretation of evidence that refugees or fugitives used caves around Qumran at the time of the First Revolt. De Vaux and others assumed that those people must have done the deposits of scrolls and scroll jars too, since both involved caves. But as has often been pointed out, there are countless examples of caves with relics of human activity from different eras of time unrelated to each other in the same cave. No good argument has been set forth for excluding this interpretation—so common in other caves—in the case of scroll-bearing caves of Qumran which also had domestic pottery from the time of the First Revolt (e.g. the scroll jars and scroll deposits date late first BCE; refugee activity dates ca. 60s CE/First Revolt).

In sum, none of the three foundational assumptions which created the claim on archaeological grounds concerning First Revolt scroll deposits was valid.

4 *Do lamps in Cave 1Q date the scroll deposits to the time of Herod?*

Two lamps found with the scroll jars and scrolls in Cave 1Q in 1949, called at the time “hellenistic” lamps, date narrowly to the time of Herod the Great (37-4 BCE). Thirty-nine more of this type of lamp were found in the excavations of Qumran according to the latest numbers of the lamp study of Jolanta Mlynarczyk of 2013.²⁰ All of these lamps found at Qumran are from the late first century BCE, without exception. Several more of these lamps were found at Jericho and Masada from the time of Herod (none first century CE).²¹ On the basis of the distributions Mlynarczyk concluded in agreement with earlier studies that all of the lamps of this type were manufactured at Qumran itself, therefore now called “Qumran lamps.” When these lamps of Qumran end, so do these lamps end

¹⁶ Pesach Bar-Adon, “The Hasmonean Fortresses and the Status of Khirbet Qumran,” *Eretz-Israel* 15 (1981): 349-52 heb.; 65 eng. summary; Jean-Baptiste Humbert, “L’espace sacré à Qumran: Propositions pour l’archéologie,” *Revue biblique* 101 (1994): 161-214; Yizhar Hirschfeld, *Qumran in Context: Reassessing the Archaeological Evidence* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004); Yitzhak Magen and Yuval Peleg, *The Qumran Excavations 1993-2004: Preliminary Report* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2007).

¹⁷ De Vaux: “On peut supposer que l’ensemble de celle-ci [la Communauté] avait en effet quitté les lieux, en mettant ses trésors à l’abri, mais qu’un parti d’hommes résolu avait tenté de défendre le bâtiment” (“It can be assumed that the whole [community] had indeed left the place, sheltering their treasures, but that a party of resolute men had tried to defend the site”) (R.

de Vaux, “Fouilles au Khirbet Qumran: Rapport préliminaire sur la deuxième campagne,” *Revue biblique* 61 [1954]: 206-36 at 234).

¹⁸ Frederick F. Bruce and Stephen J. Pfann, “Qumran,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 16 (ed. M. Berenbaum and F. Skolnik; 2d ed.; Detroit: MacMillan, 2007), 768-75 at 771. Bruce and Pfann state that Period IIB was only 2-3 years in duration, but it is not clear what archaeological grounds prevent Bruce and Pfann’s IIB from having begun much earlier than 66 CE.

¹⁹ Stacey, “Reassessment” (above n. 2), 63, 70.

²⁰ Jolanta Mlynarczyk, “Terracotta Oil Lamps from Qumran: The Typology,” *Revue biblique* 120 (2013): 99-133.

²¹ Bar-Nathan, *Hasmonean and Herodian Palaces at Jericho III* (above n. 3), 110-12.

everywhere, because no longer were these lamps being made at Qumran. The two “Qumran lamps” in Cave 1Q have no other apparent reason for being there than association with the deposits of scroll jars and scrolls. scroll jar activity. Certainly the early archaeologists assumed such an association.

Two knife-pared, bow-spouted “Herodian” lamps as well as domestic pottery from the first century CE also were found in Cave 1Q. The trapezoid shape of and line markings on the “Herodian” lamp’s nozzle (of the one de Vaux published: de Vaux said the other, unpublished, one “appartenu au même type” as the published one [DJD 1, Fig. 3.1]) indicate those two lamps from Cave 1Q belong to Smith’s Type 2 class of “Herodian” lamps, believed to have started in Judea about 35 CE and the most common type of lamp in Judea at the time of the First Revolt.²²

These two pairs of lamps in Cave 1Q—the pair of “Qumran” (“hellenistic”) lamps and the pair of “Herodian” lamps—are therefore decades apart in their datings and cannot be interpreted in terms of contemporaneous uses by the same people. Since the Smith Type 2 “Herodian” lamps are contemporary with the first-century CE domestic pottery in Cave 1Q, those Smith Type 2 Herodian lamps are well understood as associated with the domestic pottery of Cave 1Q.

There is no good reason to suppose any additional scroll deposits in Cave 1Q three-quarters of a century later. The lamps in Cave 1Q reveal that the two classes of phenomena—scroll jars and scroll deposits on the one hand, and first-century CE refugees or fugitives’ fleeting uses of caves on the other—were significantly separated in time and not contemporary.

5 The scroll jars do not prove the First Revolt dating

The “scroll jars” in the buildings of Qumran were in use in the time of Herod (some continued in use later) according to a study I published in 2006 of datings of scroll jars found at the site based on de Vaux’s field notes and other available information.²³ That study concluded that of 15 identified

scroll jars from the buildings of Qumran, 7 appeared to be from late first BCE, an additional 3 (including the famous one of Locus 2) probably were from late first BCE but with a question mark, and the remaining 5 were uncertain or there was no information.²⁴

At the Lugano conference Jean-Baptiste Humbert kindly provided me with a draft discussion of the southeastern annex in which he argued that both ovoid and scroll jars in those loci date to first-century CE contexts. David Stacey has commented to me that Humbert’s interpretation of the southeastern annex jar datings seems convincing, based on an association in the same context with first-century CE Nabatean ware. However Stacey suggests the uses could be secondary: “Were [these large jars] being made at Qumran then? Perhaps. Or were they, perhaps, scavenged from nearby caves? If the population is now largely ‘refugee’ it would make sense for them to utilize perfectly good—and heavy—jars if they stumbled across them in one or other of the caves. It makes so much sense to me that people living in Qumran in mid 1st century CE—quite possibly newly arrived—would utilise perfectly good jars standing idly around in nearby caves.”

At Jericho, Bar-Nathan reported that the only example of a Qumran type of scroll jar (Jericho Type J-SJ2B) was found in a context dated to the time of Herod (none from first century CE).

At Ein Feshkha, de Vaux noted that Ein Feshkha’s Period II of the first century CE corresponded exactly to Qumran’s Period II chronologically and in all of its kinds of small pottery, but that there were no scroll jars in Ein Feshkha’s Period II.²⁵ At Masada, Bar-Nathan did report scroll jars found in First Revolt “Zealot Occupation” contexts which Bar-Nathan interpreted as having been brought to Masada at the time of the First Revolt.²⁶ But in the opinion of David Stacey, who was a field supervisor in the Netzer excavations at Jericho and also worked on the Masada Yadin excavations, all of the scroll jars found at Masada are likely residual or reuses from the stores of Herod at Masada.²⁷

²² Mlynarczyk, “Terracotta Oil Lamps from Qumran” (above n. 20), 108-17.

²³ Doudna, “Legacy of an Error in Archaeological Interpretation” (above n. 1), 150-52, 155-57.

²⁴ One of the items in that inventory may not be a scroll jar, changing the total to 14 and “uncertain” to 4. A Gunneweg and Balla reference in 2003 to a scroll jar in “the makeup of the tower glaciis” likely refers to No. 939 of L17 which de Vaux published rather than to de Vaux’s “jar embedded in the reinforcement” of L17 identified as No. 794 in a footnote in the Pfann 2003 edition of de Vaux’s field notes. In this correction No. 939 changes from “Uncertain” to “Ib” for reasons given in the “Notes and

Comments” for No. 794 applied now to No. 939 (at Doudna, “Legacy of an Error in Archaeological Interpretation” [above n. 1], 156).

²⁵ De Vaux, *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (above n. 14), 64.

²⁶ Rachel Bar-Nathan, *Masada VII: The Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963-1965, Final Reports: The Pottery* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2006), 67-72.

²⁷ Doudna, “Sect of the Qumran Texts” (above n. 1), 113. I asked Stacey to elaborate on this point. Stacey returned the following response and I thank Stacey for permission to quote it here: “I was in the library a couple of days ago and took a look

Based on the finds from these sites (Qumran, Jericho, Ein Feshkha, Masada), the scroll jars do not prove First Revolt scroll deposits. Instead it is very plausible that the time of Herod was the era of manufacture of these jars associated with the huge numbers of identical jars found in the caves around Qumran (over 150 by de Vaux's count), and the scrolls deposited with those jars.

6 *Today, the most common claim of evidence for the First Revolt dating is palaeographic dates. However first-century CE palaeographic dates assigned to Qumran cave texts provide no basis for confidence that those texts were first century CE*

The issue in the palaeographic datings of the Qumran texts is the validity of the absolute dates in the palaeographic script charts. A first observation is that the small number of decades separating mid-first century CE from the time of Herod is barely greater than acknowledged margin of error, but that is not the important point. The important point is the circularity in which scribal hands of texts from Qumran's caves were defined after 1951 as dated as late as

the first century CE because those defining the palaeographic sequences believed Qumran scroll deposits at the time of the First Revolt had been firmly established archaeologically. No information in the years since has materially altered this epistemological circularity. Radiocarbon dates on Qumran texts that have been done until now have not altered this picture.²⁸

7 *The biblical texts of the caves of Qumran predate stabilization of the Hebrew biblical text which occurred before the First Revolt*

About 25 biblical texts have been found at Judean Desert sites other than Qumran. As brought out many times by Emanuel Tov, the biblical texts found at the sites other than Qumran are all exact-Masoretic (MT) in their text type, in contrast to a well-known pluriformity of the Qumran biblical texts.²⁹ Tov further emphasizes that even in the case of the "MT-aligned" biblical texts of Qumran, none were "carefully copied" in exact agreement with M in the way that is the case for all of the biblical texts from all other Judean Desert sites.

[again] at the Masada final reports regarding the scroll jars. There were sherds from 7 jars, claimed to be 'complete' on the basis that a rim and base fragment seemed to be from the same jar. No single jar was anywhere near actually complete. They were found in four locations in the Western Palace, and in various places in the casement wall: 8 rims and 3 handles were found variously in Buildings 7 and 9, from a 'dump' in the storerooms, and from a 'dump' in the Northern Palace. It is impossible from what is published to identify the exact locations because each room was given only one locus number. Although each sherd should theoretically be assigned to a particular pottery basket which would give an indication of more precise location within each locus, these numbers are, not surprisingly as there must have been tens of thousands of individual baskets, not published. Four of the 'complete' vessels came from the Western Palace where, 'if one judges from the building remains the Zealot presence ... was minimal' (Netzer, Masada Vol III p. 633). One supposedly 'complete' jar came from Room 502 in the Western Palace, which was the largest storeroom found at Masada, and which continued as a storeroom in the Zealot period (Netzer p. 634). Also found in 502 was one complete sj [storage jar] type M-SJ5 (see table at Bar-Nathan, Masada VII p. 400). A number of sherds from this type of sj, inscribed with the names 'Zenon', 'Shabyo' or 'Bar Yasson' were found in both Herodian [Herod the Great, 37-4 BCE] and Zealot contexts. Bar-Nathan, from the evidence at Masada, 'suggests that it was produced in the Herodian period' and specifically states that 'it seems that during the Zealot Occupation, some of the jars were moved to other localities, such as Storerooms 140 and 502 [emphasis Stacey's], Room 526 in the Western Palace, Casemates 1103, 1141, 1197 and 1201 in the eastern and southeastern sections of the wall, and Tower Rooms 1110 and 1156' (Bar-Nathan, Masada VII pp. 49-50). If this is

extremely likely for SJ5 then the same is equally true for SJ 17 (scroll jar)" (David Stacey, email, 24 March 2014).

²⁸ Space limitation prevents discussion here of radiocarbon datings (see Doudna, "Sect of the Qumran Texts" [above n. 1], 108-112). Suffice it to say that the existence of first-century CE texts Qumran texts can be established through radiocarbon dating in really only one of two ways. First, by obtaining individual Qumran text radiocarbon dates whose calendar date possibilities after calibration entirely postdate first century BCE at 95% confidence and exclude (by rechecking) that those results are from statistical variation or a contaminated sample. Or second (requiring a greater number of datings and a higher order of statistical analysis), by obtaining enough repeated radiocarbon dates of Qumran texts whose calendar date ranges of possibility after calibration entirely postdate first century BCE at the weaker but narrower 68% confidence interval, even if first century BCE is not excluded at 95% confidence in any of the individual datings. Neither of these criteria have been met in the existing radiocarbon data. A reasonable assessment of the existing radiocarbon data is that of J. van der Plicht and K. Rasmussen: "The dates suggest a possible range from the third century BC to the first century AD for texts from caves near Qumran, with a strong concentration of probable dates in the second or first century BC" (J. van der Plicht and K. L. Rasmussen, "Radiocarbon Dating and Qumran," in *Holistic Qumran: Trans-Disciplinary Research of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* [ed. J. Gunneweg et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2010], 99-121 at 111).

²⁹ Emanuel Tov, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Textual History of the Masoretic Bible," in *The Hebrew Bible in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. N. David et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 41-53 at 42-43, 46.

This description was confirmed by studies of Ian Young of 2002, 2015, and 2013.³⁰ Young compiled statistics of “words per variant” of biblical texts from Qumran and the other Judean Desert sites compared to the medieval Leningrad Codex. Young found, in agreement with Tov, that the Qumran biblical texts differ systematically from the biblical texts from the other Judean Desert sites.

At least most, and it is possible all, of the 25 biblical texts from the non-Qumran Judean Desert sites are pre-First Revolt in their dates of scribal production. But whether it is all, or only most, *every* non-Qumran biblical text from *before* the First Revolt is *carefully-copied exact-MT*.

This is the true reality of first-century CE Judea *before* the First Revolt, reflected in later rabbinic traditions of careful copying of biblical texts in the pre-destruction standing Second Temple.

What implications does this have for the Qumran biblical texts? Some think of Qumran as *sui generis*, a sect operating in isolation from the rest of contemporary Judaism, cut off from the temple and operating independently in a world of its own. Within this interpretive matrix it is then imagined that the Qumran caves’ range and variety of biblical texts, and the substantial subset of non-carefully-copied MT-type biblical texts among that mix in the Qumran caves, were contemporary in the first century CE with the 100% carefully-copied exact-MT biblical texts of all of the other Judean Desert sites.

Then at the First Revolt, so the theory goes, both Qumran’s and Masada’s biblical texts came to an end at the same time, even though they are systematically different in kind. It is supposed that the people of the scrolls of Qumran’s caves intentionally and systematically boycotted the carefully-copied exact-MT biblical texts of the temple or synagogues associated with the temple through the entirety of the first century CE prior to the First Revolt.

The *ad hoc* and intrinsically unlikely nature of the preceding reconstruction seems not to be sufficiently appreciated. There is neither evidence nor reason to suppose that the collectors of the Qumran texts boycotted the carefully-copied biblical texts identical to MT because the MT tradition had become associated with a rival sect, or because the collectors of the Qumran texts objected to biblical texts being copied too accurately, or because such texts were being copied in the temple. These notions, for which there is no support in the Qumran texts themselves nor in any known ancient external testimony, appear to have been invented for the sole purpose of explaining anomalies created by the assumption of the First Revolt endpoint for the Qumran texts.

These *ad hoc* explanations are even more questionable in light of a sea change in scholarly perception in recent years. No longer do many Qumran text scholars regard it as sensible that the people of the Qumran texts were wholly separated from the temple in Jerusalem. And once that idea goes—the notion of long-term, continuous, generational separation from the Jerusalem temple by the people of the Qumran texts—the issue *necessarily* emerges of how to understand the biblical texts of the caves of Qumran all of which differ *so systematically* from the non-Qumran exact-MT biblical texts of pre-First Revolt first-century CE Judea. What is the solution?

Ian Young gave the only explanation that makes sense: quite simply, the Qumran biblical texts all predate the biblical texts of the other Judean Desert sites. All of the texts of the caves of Qumran are from *before* the stabilization of the biblical text which took place *before* the First Revolt.

In this light the stabilized biblical text of the rabbis after the First Revolt was simply a continuation of a stabilized biblical text already in place in Judea before the temple was destroyed. The watershed for the stabilization of the Hebrew biblical text becomes not the disaster of the destruction of the temple and then accidental survival and fixing of the MT type of the late first century CE as the rabbis reorganized, as commonly supposed, but rather an earlier intentional text stabilization accompanied by programmatic scribal practice reforms implemented in the new temple of Herod in the closing years of the first century BCE or early first CE, affecting all Hebrew biblical texts emanating from the temple from that point forward, copies used by all Jews of first-century CE Judea irrespective of party, all of whom participated in the temple in Jerusalem.

In such a perspective the scrolls of Qumran become representative of a textual spectrum of Judea of the second half of the first century BCE before the biblical text was stabilized. The era of interest for the date and circumstances of the scroll deposits of the Qumran caves, the stabilization of the biblical text, and the conceivable relationship between these two phenomena, becomes the reign of Herod toward the end of the first century BCE, rather than the First Revolt and destruction of the temple which was still decades in the future.

³⁰ References above n. 2.

8 Conclusion: Albright's original interpretation of Cave 1Q of 1949 ironically appears to have been correct after all, and the date correction following 1951 was the mistake, not vice versa. The scrolls of the caves of Qumran in their entirety take their rightful place as the remains of a lost textual world before the first century CE

I started this paper with attention to the striking drop in historical allusions in the Qumran texts, from flourishing numbers in the first two-thirds of the first century BCE to flat-line zero thereafter. I closed with the systematic differences between the biblical texts of Qumran, none exact-MT, and the biblical texts of the other Judean Desert sites, all exact-MT. Both of these descriptions, each independently established on the basis of aggregate, large-scale data analyses, are simply stunning in impact if one takes a step back and looks at them with fresh eyes.

Like flashing beacons these are signals in the data that the First Revolt endpoint for the Qumran cave texts is *not correct*. When all is said and done, these two signals are the argument and the evidence for the earlier dating.

The principal reason these signals have not registered in common scholarly consciousness seems to be the palaeographic dates which are *assumed* to establish the existence of first-century CE dates of text copies found in the caves.

But the absolute dates of the “late Herodian formal” and “post-Herodian formal” scribal hands defined by Cross 1961 are derivative from the flawed 1951 archaeological redating of the scroll deposits discussed earlier. The flawed archaeological redating of 1951 provided the framework or template within which Cross labored to accurately reconstruct the development of the scribal hands. The absolute datings of the “Herodian formal” hands reconstructed by Cross no doubt are close to correct but for this question which devolves to issues of small numbers of decades that is not good enough. It is no disrespect to Cross’s formidable study of 1961 if today there is some critical engagement or nuancing or departure from what sometimes seems to have become a scholarly doctrine of inerrancy concerning the absolute datings of Cross 1961.

The scribal hands must be reassessed free of presupposition that the Qumran cave texts continued to the time of the First Revolt.

A shift in understanding in which the dates of the latest formal hands in the Qumran caves are situated perhaps in the time of Herod will not create a gap in typological development in the first century CE. The gap is filled by “late Herodian formal” developing in the time of Herod and “post-Herodian formal” developing in the first half of the first century CE.

Once this is realized, no longer will the saying of Matt. 5:18 alluding to *iotas* and *kereias* in the writing of scribes scrupulously copying the books of Moses with letter-perfect accuracy, and alluding to the decorative *kereias* of the most developed scribal formal hands, be regarded as anachronistic. Matt. 5:18 may become recognized as a realistic allusion to scribal practice and ideology before the destruction of the temple, yet postdating the latest texts of Qumran.

In this picture the various waves of people who were at Qumran in the first century CE disturbed, opened, looted, and possibly read the scrolls they encountered by accident, thus accounting for the anciently disturbed conditions in the caves closest to the site, with remains of anciently-opened scrolls such as the torn-off leather tabs and strings left on the floors of Caves 4Q and 8Q. There has as yet been no positive evidence set forth that first-century CE people at Qumran added any new literary texts to the ones they encountered in the caves—texts which may have seemed to them, as to us, as if they were from another world and time.