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### Women in Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls

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#### **[–] Abstract and Keywords**

The question of women in Qumran is a recent one. The interest in, and awareness of, women on the site and in the scrolls was slow in coming, and associated with the emergence of intellectual feminism, which put as its chief goal the discovery of women where none had previously been noted. This external phenomenon was bolstered by two internal developments, strongly connected with Qumran research: 4QMMT, with its apparent similarity to Sadducee *halakhah*, created doubt with regard to the Essene hypothesis; the belated publication of all the documents from Qumran in the 1990s and 2000s made the cumulative presence of women in them ever more evident and difficult to ignore. This article presents an overview of women's appearance in the Qumran texts and discusses their history and state of research. It follows the conventional structure of dividing the Qumran library between biblical texts, apocryphal texts, and unique Qumran-sectarian texts.

Keywords: Qumran women, Qumran-sectarian texts, apocryphal texts, 4QMMT, Essene hypothesis, intellectual feminism, Sadducee halakhah

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#### **History of Research**

The question of women in Qumran is a recent one. When the scrolls were discovered sixty years ago, it was assumed that their authors were the celibate Essenes of Philo and Josephus. The first excavators of Qumran were influenced by early Christian monasticism, and identified Qumran as a site similar to a Christian monastery, and its inhabitants as celibate males. The interest in, and awareness of, women on the site and in the scrolls was slow in coming, and associated with the emergence of intellectual feminism, which put as its chief goal the discovery of women where none had previously been noted.

This external phenomenon was bolstered by two internal developments, strongly connected with Qumran research: (1) 4QMMT, first brought to the public attention in 1984, with its apparent similarity to Sadducee *halakhah* (Qimron and Strugnell 1985), created doubt and confusion with regard to the Essene hypothesis; (2) the belated publication of all the documents from Qumran in the 1990s and 2000s made the cumulative presence of women in them ever more evident and difficult to ignore. True, 1QS, which was almost the first sectarian document to be discovered, and which inspired E. L. Sukenik in his identification of its members as (p. 124) Essenes, is silent on the issue of women, but one cannot say the same for CD, which was known long beforehand from the Cairo Genizah, and never considered Essene until the discovery of the DSS. Indeed, Solomon Schechter designated it 'a Zadokite Fragment', associating it with the Sadducees (Schechter 1910). One of the reasons for this failure to identify Essene characteristics in CD was probably that the work does not reflect a celibate society. And indeed, additional fragments of this document, which were discovered in Qumran itself (J. Baumgarten 1996), but which have no parallel in the document discovered in the Cairo Genizah, only magnified the role women play in it (Wassen 2005: 45–89; 107–12; 171–97).

The presence or absence of women in the DSS remains one of the most important factors for determining the character of the Qumran community. If they are not the Essenes but some other sect (e.g. a Sadducean offshoot, so Schiffman 1994: 83–95), women pose no problem. If they are the Essenes, then women constitute a major obstacle. Philo, Josephus, and Pliny describe the Essenes as a celibate male congregation (Philo, *Apologia* 14–17; Jos. *BJ* 2: 120–1; Pliny, *NH* 5.17.4 [73]). If they are identical with the Dead Sea Sect, women need to be explained away. One way of doing this is by recourse to Philo's Therapeutai. This is a sect described by Philo, which was active in Egypt in the first century CE. It too was celibate, but unlike the Essenes, it counted celibate women among its members. The question whether the Essenes and the Therapeutai are two branches of the same movement or completely separate entities must have a bearing on the question of women in Qumran. If the two groups form one and the same movement, women present among the DSS could be considered as celibate members. However, scholars who thought the two groups belonged to the same movement did not bring the women question into their discussion (e.g. Vermes and Goodman 1989). On the other hand, Joan Taylor, who devoted an entire book to the women question among the Therapeutai, does not think the two belonged to the same movement (Taylor 2003). For her the Therapeutai are first and foremost representatives of Jewish-Hellenistic Alexandria, and not Greco-Roman Palestine, to which both the Essenes and/or the DSS belonged.

Not long after 4QMMT became a factor in the determination of the character of DSS, Eileen Schuller published her first influential article on women in Qumran (Schuller 1993), in which she claimed that the Dead Sea Sect tolerated marriage, and suggested tentatively that there were perhaps women members in it. Obviously such a suggestion could not have been possible while the hegemony of the Essene hypothesis was incontrovertible.

For a while the Sadducee hypothesis gained supporters, sometimes even replacing the Essene one. This allowed women to enter the Qumran consciousness, albeit mostly as good wives and mothers (Schiffman 1994: 127–43). It also allowed Schuller's theory of women's Qumran membership to gain supporters (Elder-Bennet 1994; Cansdale 1994), and opened the question of women's presence at the site and their burial in the cemetery. German physical anthropologists, who (p. 125) reexamined skeletons from the cemetery preserved in the German University of Göttingen, identified among them many female ones (Röhler-Ertl, Rohrhirsch, and Hahn 1999; and see also Taylor 1999).

However, the Essene hypothesis soon righted itself. Although the developments in the understanding of the Qumran texts as inclusive of wives and marriage could not be overturned, new suggestions were put forward about how to harmonize these women with the Essenes of Josephus. The new consensus that developed (influenced by the earlier work of Vermes 1974) runs as follows: at the end of his discussion, Josephus mentions a group of Essenes who do marry, although under strict conditions (*BJ* 2: 160–1); 1QS was interpreted as referring to the celibate Essenes, CD as describing the marrying ones. A pericope in CD was utilized to develop this theory: CD 7: 4–9 reads, 'All who walk in these [ways—TI] in the perfection of holiness according to all the instructions of the covenant of God in loyalty, they shall live for a thousand generations'. These words were interpreted to refer to the celibate Essenes. The text continues: 'And if they dwell in camps according to the rule of the land and took wives and bore sons, they shall walk according to the Torah and the rule of the law of the instruction and the rule of the Torah, as is written between a man and his wife and between a father and his son'. These refer to Josephus' marrying Essenes (see Qimron 1992; Bernstein 2004; Shemesh 2006). The celibate Essenes resided in Qumran. Members of the entire sect were male. Either they lived in Qumran and were celibate, or they lived elsewhere and took wives. Contrary to Schuller, the women of the Essenes were wives or daughters or mothers, but not members.

This hypothesis is supported, according to Jodi Magness, by archaeology, which failed to provide evidence of women at Qumran (Magness 2002: 182–5). On the assumption that jewellery and cosmetics are generic to the presence of women, the failure to find them convinced her that no women resided at the site. There are, however, problems with such an assumption, because if the sect was ideologically opposed to the use of jewellery and cosmetics, one may assume that women members of the sect would refrain from using them too. In a similar vein, physical anthropologists explained away the female skeletons found in Qumran. Joe Zias claimed that all female skeletons, save one, found at the site should be interpreted as late Bedouin burials (Zias 2000). Susan Sheridan claimed that in the French skeleton collection, aside from one doubtful case, there were no female specimens (Sheridan 2002). Yet the issue is not decided. Shortly after these publications, Eshel et al. published the results of further excavation at the Qumran cemetery, which yielded the burial of two women (Eshel et al. 2002). In light of these, Albert Baumgarten commented that absolute claims, like the one about the Essene identity of the Qumran sectarians, do not tolerate exceptions such as these, and explaining them away, while being the normal method

adopted by scholars, does not solve the problem (2004: 179–85).

(p. 126) The new consensus, of married male members and women who are mere wives, has also to contend with some texts that do not quite confirm it: 1QSa 1: 11 speaks of women testifying against their husbands; 4Q502 mentions women elders (4 ; תונמאQ159 and 4Q271 both mention trustworthy women (תונמא), appointed by the overseer, who perform gynaecological examinations on prospective brides; and 4Q270 mentions mothers (תומא) parallel to fathers of the community, who generate respect (on all these see below). These phenomena do not support the new consensus of male members and their non-member wives. Scholars who choose to privilege these texts, still support Schuller's theory that women may have been members in the *Yaḥad* sect.

In the following sections I present an overview of women's appearance in the Qumran texts, and discuss their history and state of research. I follow the conventional structure of dividing the Qumran library between biblical texts, extra-biblical (apocryphal) texts, and unique Qumran-sectarian texts.

### Biblical Texts

Usually one would leave biblical texts out of the discussion of women in Qumran, because the assumption is that these texts are constant, pre-Qumranic, and the women in them can be discussed elsewhere. However, next to LXX, the biblical texts from Qumran serve as vital witnesses for the textual history of the Hebrew Bible (Tov 2001: 117). Although for the LXX a full-blown feminist commentary has not been attempted, there is little doubt that such a study is possible and fruitful, as Schorch in his study of Genesis was able to show (2008). He maintained that there are many differences between the presentation of women in LXX and in the masoretic text, and that some of these were already found in the Hebrew *Vorlage* of LXX, while some are due to the latter's unique worldview. A similar Hebrew *Vorlage* may have been used in Qumran and similar differences may be expected there. Here are three such examples that have been noted by scholars and discussed in the literature:

**(1) Exodus 2: 3.** In 4QExod<sup>b</sup>, in the rendition of this verse we find not just Moses' mother placing the baby in the bulrushes, but also her female slave (שפחה—Ulrich and Cross 1994: 87). This woman is not present in the masoretic text and one may well wonder how she made her way into this text. In his study of this passage Alexander Rofé demonstrated that a similar phenomenon is evident in LXX, albeit for other texts. Eli's slave, unknown from the masoretic text, suddenly shows up in LXX to 1 Samuel 1: 14, and reprimands Hannah for being drunk in the sanctuary, instead of Eli doing so. A hitherto unattested slave also appears in LXX to 1 Kings 12: 24k, sent by the blind Ahiah of Shilo to (p. 127) speak to Jeroboam's wife, instead of doing so himself (Rofé 2002). The gender of the slaves in LXX is unknown. The word used to describe both of them is the gender-neutral Greek *paidarion*. Yet, if the additional slaves here, as Rofé claims, are of the same order as the slave in 4QExod<sup>b</sup>, we may assume that in an original Hebrew *Vorlage*, they were female. Why this is so is not a question that interests Rofé, but a collection of such examples in order to assess their meaning could be helpful for the study of biblical women.

**(2) Exodus 15.** The editors of DJD did not consider 4Q365 as a biblical text, but rather as a 'Reworked Pentateuch' (Tov and White [Crawford] 1994), described by the editors as a selection of pentateuchal verses, with short exegetical notes. However, it is now more generally recognized as a proto-masoretic biblical text, with exegetical additions (Segal 2000: 393–5). One addition in this text is much more significant than a short exegetical note. In Exodus 15: 21, after the mention of Miriam, Aaron's sister, leading the Israelite women in song and dance, Miriam's song was inserted, a seven-line poetic composition, supplementing the biblical text, which only presents the song of Moses. The editors unanimously view the song as an exegetical addition, but the view is not argued, except in general terms—it is harmonistic in character, intended to fill a gap that seems to be found in the masoretic version. However, since with issues pertaining to women the tendency is usually the opposite, namely to omit rather than expand (see Ilan 2006), this judgement may not be the final word. The significance of this text for the issue of women and their voice has been emphasized by Joan Taylor (2003: 329–30), who integrated it into her discussion of women in the Jewish-Egyptian sect of the Therapeutai (see above). However, a reading of this song in connection with the position and presence of women in Qumran is still lacking.

**(3) Malachi 2: 16.** This verse, in first person, voices God's disapproval of divorce with the words: חלשאנשיכ (for I hate divorce). In a Qumran scroll (4QXII<sup>a</sup>, col. 2) this verse reads חלשהנתנמאיכ, which could be translated as 'for if you hate her, divorce (her)' (Ulrich and Fuller 1997: 224). A similar textual variant is also found in LXX

and Targum Jonathan. The variation is slight, but the meaning it conveys could not be more different. The masoretic version denigrates divorce but the other condones and even recommends it in certain circumstances. Obviously, the two versions come from two competing schools. Which one did the Qumranites support? Brin (1997) uses this text to bolster his argument that the Dead Sea Sect tolerated divorce. Whether he is right or not is hard to decide, but this is an example where a Qumranite biblical text variant was used to reconstruct the sect's gender ideology. There is, however, no sectarian text from Qumran that cites this verse in this form or otherwise.

In this context it is important to note what was not found in Qumran. Despite early and late attempts to prove otherwise (Fink 1961; Talmon 1995), not a single scrap that could be identified with the Book of Esther has been discovered in (p. 128) Qumran (White Crawford 1996). This is significant for the study of women because, as is well known, the heroine of this text is a Jewish woman who married a foreign king. Is the absence of the scroll in Qumran intentional or accidental? And if it is intentional (as claimed for example by Talmon 1995: 264–7), has the feminine heroine anything to do with this? In a previous study, I had claimed that it is noteworthy that not only Esther but Judith and Susanna (i.e. books with feminine subjects) were also absent at the site (Ilan 1999: 140–1). Although this can be considered no more than an *argumentum ex silentio* (particularly in Qumran where the survival of a book may be purely accidental), it may still be significant for feminist research, which is often about the silencing of women in patriarchal texts.

### Apocryphal Texts

Aside from biblical texts, the Qumran library also yielded a large repository of non-biblical fragments; some of them (such as the Book of Jubilees) were known before the discovery of the Qumran corpus, and some of them (like the Genesis Apocryphon) were new. The question, what exactly a non-biblical (or apocryphal) text is, is in the context of Qumran not easy to answer. Some compositions, like 4Q365 (Song of Miriam, just cited), demonstrate that the boundaries between biblical and non-biblical texts are fluid. For the issue of women this could also be very pertinent. For example, Allegro (1968) designated 4Q179 as 'Lamentations', although it is clear to anyone who looks at this text that, despite verbal and topical similarities, it is not a fragment of the biblical Lamentations. The text has not been extensively discussed and no one has noted that most differences between it and the biblical text are based on gendered language. While in the masoretic Lamentations 1 Jerusalem is described as a mourning, widowed woman, and in Lamentations 4 as a heartless, whoring mother, the text takes pains to emphasize the metaphoric quality of these designations. In 4Q179 the difference between metaphors and real women is more blurred. Fragment 1 is verbally similar to Lamentation 4, but while in the masoretic text, 'the daughter of my people' is described with the masculine verb as ruthless (רָחֵם, Lam. 4: 3), and speaks of the 'dear sons of Zion' (4: 2), 4Q179 maintains the feminine (הַיְרֵחָם) and refers to 'the gentle daughters of Zion'. The same is true for Fragment 2, which is verbally similar to Lamentations 1. In the masoretic text Jerusalem is described as a widow (1: 1 הנמלא, and perhaps as a menstruant (1:8 הדין). In 4Q179 she is described as neither, but rather as a deserted woman (הבן[ו]זנהשאהממוש), barren (הרקע), and bitter (מִיִּרְמַת שֶׁא). In masoretic (p. 129) Lamentations 1: 16 her sons are deserted (מִיִּמּוּשׁ) and she weeps for them. But in 4Q179 she weeps for her daughters, who are repeatedly mentioned as deserted (תוֹבוּזַעַת) and mourning (תוֹלְבָא). It mentions no sons. In sum, gender is an excellent tool for the proper discussion of this text and its relationship to the canonical Lamentations (Ilan 2008).

The following is a summation of the various genres of apocryphal literature present at Qumran, and how they contribute to the study of women in Second Temple Judaism and in Qumran.

### Wisdom Literature

Wisdom literature is typically represented by the biblical Proverbs, and literature of the same genre is usually designated wisdom literature. Following Proverbs 1–9, two feminine stereotypes are familiar to the biblical scholar—the personification of wisdom (designated in short 'Lady Wisdom') and the strange, sexually alluring woman (often designated 'Dame Folly'—White Crawford 1998). Scholars have increasingly investigated the recurrence of this theme in apocryphal literature. Some Qumran fragments have contributed to the debate. For example, White Crawford inquired to what extent does one find independent Qumran fragments of these two types, and in what context can we situate them. She identified three relevant compositions (4Q184–folly; 4Q185–wisdom, and 4Q525–wisdom) and concluded that they do not represent 'a "Qumranian" phenomenon but occur broadly in Second

Temple literature. This would lead to the conclusion that these texts are not “sectarian”...’ (White Crawford 1998: 365).

Yet curiously, White Crawford refers only to wisdom texts mentioning these figures, which were found only in Qumran. In her discussion she all but ignores the only two Qumranic texts derived from Ben Sira, which also refer to ‘Lady Wisdom’ (2Q18 and 11QPs. col. 21). Ben Sira is famous for his negative attitude to women, and elsewhere he had claimed that this was its chief attraction for the rabbis of the Babylonian Talmud. While in the book of Ben Sira verses referring to real women constitute only 7 per cent of the book, in the Babylonian Talmud they constitute 40 per cent of all the verses cited from it (Ilan 1999: 155–74). Here I would like to demonstrate that the interest in this book in Qumran was evidently different.

It should be noted that five sections in Ben Sira describe a person's striving for wisdom, personified as ‘Lady Wisdom’ (1: 1–18; 4: 11–20; 6: 17–40; 14: 21–15: 10; 51: 36–54), constituting 87 out of c. 1,700 verses in the book, which is slightly more than 5 per cent. In Qumran, no more than nineteen verses of this book have been preserved, all of them from these eighty-seven verses. 2Q18 (Ben Sira 6: 20–31) is so badly preserved that it is hard to say anything about its context, but 11QPs col. 21 clearly preserves Ben Sira 51: 36–44. This acrostic poem on the merits of courting ‘Lady Wisdom’ is incorporated into a composition other than Ben Sira—an (p. 130) eclectic, perhaps unique Qumranic collection of apocryphal psalms, some of them known from the Syriac Psalter, others quite new to Psalms scholars. Thus, we find two fragments of Ben Sira in Qumran, both taken from Ben Sira's discourse on ‘Lady Wisdom’, and at least one of them within a context other than the Book of Ben Sira. All this would suggest that the Qumranites were not interested in Ben Sira and his approach to women (of which they preserved no fragment), but were interested in his feminine personified wisdom. These texts should certainly be added to White Crawford's discussion of ‘Lady Wisdom’ in Qumran. I would conclude with her that ‘these texts are not sectarian’ but would limit such comments to the authorship of the pieces, not to the collectors of the sectarian library.

With White Crawford I note that not only ‘Lady Wisdom’ of Proverbs, but also its counterpart ‘Dame Folly’ is preserved in Qumran. In the 1960s John Allegro (1964) published ‘The Wiles of the Wicked Woman’ (4Q184), and immediately opened a lively discussion of the meaning of this metaphoric figure, obviously based on the strange woman of Proverbs 7. Scholars suggested that the woman mentioned there is either a personification of the sect's ideology of the two ways—reflecting the way of evil (Licht 1971; Moore 1979–81) or an allegory (or *peshet*) for one of the sect's enemies (Rome–Gazov–Ginzberg 1967; the Hasmonians–Burgman 1974), or a demon (J. Baumgarten 1991), or the heterodoxy that threatens the Sect (Aubin 2001), but not a warning against real women. It seems, in light of the interest the DSS show in ‘Lady Wisdom’ of Ben Sira, but not in his real ‘wicked’ women, that this is quite likely.

More enlightening on the question of real women and advice on the way the Qumranite sectarians should treat them is the hitherto unknown wisdom text Musar le Mevin (4QInstruction), discovered in fragments of seven separate scrolls in Qumran (Strugnell, Harrington, and Elgvin 1999). This text personifies as female neither wisdom nor folly, and it has a completely different ethical approach to the question of women from Ben Sira. This is perhaps because unlike Ben Sira, which is aimed at the upper echelons of society, the Musar le Mevin is addressed to a poor scholar. It gives concrete advice (and warnings) about women (wives, daughters, mothers), in a patriarchal and patronizing but not misogynistic fashion.

According to the Musar le Mevin, the right order of the world is that a daughter is to leave her father's house and reside with her husband. A husband should rule over her, as her father had done beforehand, annulling her vows and protecting her as his property (4Q416 fr. 2). If she leaves him, he has charge of the children (4Q415 fr. 11). It is his duty to marry his daughters off fairly, avoiding any deceit (4Q415 fr. 11). Yet despite this clearly hierarchical social concept, the addressee of the Musar le Mevin is enjoined to honour his mother exactly as he honours his father (4Q416 fr. 2).

Many of these teachings are based on the Eden story (4Q416 fr. 2; 4Q432; see also Wold 2005). This biblical intertext, however, is not treated as evidence that women are intrinsically evil, as we find in Ben Sira (25: 24) and in early Christian renderings (p. 131) of this story. It even designates mankind as ‘Sons of Eve’ (4Q418 fr. 126 i–ii). At one point Musar le Mevin addresses women directly in second person, making them the recipients of wisdom's teachings. In this text the hierarchical rule of husband over wife is maintained, and the woman is enjoined

to honour her husband as a father. She is also warned against a female enemy, although the text is too fragmentary to decide who this enemy is (4Q415, fr. 2, col. 2). This text was characterized by Wright with the words: 'I know of no other Jewish wisdom text in which the addressee is a woman' (Wright 2004: 252). He thinks that this text is based not on 'Lady Wisdom' of Proverbs, nor on 'Dame Folly' of the same composition, but rather on the 'Woman of Valour' of Proverbs 31, who represents an ideal of a real woman, rather than a metaphor for something else.

### Rewritten Bible

With some of the compositions known as rewritten Bible, particularly the Book of Jubilees, scholars were acquainted long before the discovery of the DSS. Many of these contribute significantly to the study of Second Temple women. Unnamed biblical women receive names; others receive additional characteristics and additional stories. The Qumran library has enriched this literature with a variety of hitherto unknown compositions and has enriched our portraits of some biblical women. Perhaps the most significant contribution of the Qumran literature to this genre is the almost complete scroll of the Genesis Apocryphon. As noted by Nickelsburg, the scroll provides us with two lengthy episodes which feature women (Noah's mother, designated Bitenosh–1Q20 2–3; and the biblical Sarah, who is described as exceedingly beautiful and pious 1Q20 19–20). He assumed that both these extensions address male anxieties about control of wives and paternity (Nickelsburg 1998). The names the Genesis Apocryphon provides for Lamech and Noah's wives (Bitenosh and Emzara) place it squarely within the Jubilees tradition, which provides the same names for these women (see Ilan 1993: 6–7).

Aside from the Genesis Apocryphon, other compositions also add to our post-biblical history of biblical heroines. The Testament of Naphtali provides Bilhah and Zilpah with an elaborate genealogy and named female ancestors (4Q215; Halpern-Amaru 1999a). The Visions of Amram provides Miriam, the sister of Moses, with a husband—Amram's brother, Uziel (4Q543 fr. 1; 4Q545 fr. 1a; 4Q549 fr. 2). A careful study of all these texts can provide us with additional information of this nature.

### Other Apocryphal Texts

A number of texts identified as apocryphal are not directly associated with the Bible, and usually describe post-biblical times. Scholars in the past have noted that (p. 132) this sort of literature is particularly interested in female protagonists (Wills 1995). This sort of text is attested in Qumran mainly by the Book of Tobit, known from the Apocrypha in Greek and from Qumran both in Hebrew and Aramaic. The women of Tobit are well known from previous scholarship, and their appearance in Qumran contributes little to our knowledge of Second Temple women. Tobit, it should be noted, is a composition mild in its judgement of women and their roles in society, unlike two other apocryphal works named after women—Judith and Susanna—of which, as mentioned above, no traces were found in Qumran. Whether this is significant or accidental is an open question.

### Sectarian Texts

The Qumran community produced texts usually defined as sectarian. These texts are characterized by their use of unique terminology and display sectarian concerns. These include first and foremost 1QS, 1QSa, CD, 1QM, 4QMMT, and the *Pesharim*. Just as a clear distinction between biblical and apocryphal texts in Qumran is not possible, so it is difficult to answer the question of what constitutes a sectarian document. For example, the Book of Jubilees, mentioned above, known from elsewhere outside of Qumran, displays many features unique to the Qumran sectarian literature. One of them is especially pertinent to the question of women. Jubilees 3: 8 explains why Leviticus 12: 2–5 prescribes a different purification period for a mother who gave birth to a boy and one who gave birth to a girl. The explanation is based on the creation order—man was created first, and therefore requires a shorter purification period. The same tradition is found in 4Q265, which has been given the name Miscellaneous Rules, and described by Joseph Baumgarten as a cross between 1QS and the CD (1994: 3). García-Martínez (2007: 71–2) understood this fragment as sectarian, indicating that the Book of Jubilees served as a source for the sect's halakhic approach here. Himmelfarb (1999: 25), on the contrary, took 4Q265 as a source used by Jubilees. If her reconstruction is correct, we must conclude (with other scholars) that Jubilees is a sectarian document produced in Qumran.

A similar issue may arise from an observation of the wisdom text *Musar le Mevin*, mentioned above. Unlike Jubilees, this text was not known prior to the Qumran discovery. The seven separate manuscripts at the site indicate just how popular it was in the Dead Sea Sect. However, as mentioned above, its similarity to other wisdom texts has led scholars to define it as non-sectarian. At least one phrase in this text, which is associated with women ('All her [i.e. his daughter's] deformities he [i.e. the father] will tell him [i.e. the future husband]'- (p. 133) 4Q415 fr. 11), is repeated verbatim in a segment of CD (4Q271; see Wassen 2005: 72–3), a clearly sectarian composition. So, who borrowed from whom? And what is *Musar le Mevin*'s relation to CD? We simply do not know.

In this context, the character of the Temple Scroll is intriguing. It is a complete scroll, and many parallels between it and sectarian documents can be shown. This is particularly true for issues pertaining to women, as discussed by Schiffman (1992). He demonstrated that like CD, 11QT probably rules against polygyny; and that also like CD, 11QT prohibits marriage with a niece. 11QT also holds stringent rules about menstrual and seminal impurity following intercourse and the permitted entrance into the 'Temple City', which is variously interpreted as the entire City of Jerusalem or the Temple Mount alone (Schiffman 1992: 210–12; Japhet 1993). Yet all other pericopes which mention women (the beautiful captive woman; the accused virgin; adultery; the seduced virgin and other incest laws) are clearly non-sectarian, and so he concludes that 'for the most part he [the author of the scroll] echoes... the simple meaning of the biblical text. There is no hint here of any ascetic or celibate tendencies' (Schiffman 1992: 228). So, was the Temple Scroll composed in Qumran, or was it composed elsewhere and inspired the Qumranites? We cannot tell.

In the following lines I will summarize the portrayal of women in the undeniably sectarian documents and review the state of research. I shall begin with CD.

### Damascus Document (CD)

CD is probably the Qumranic text that best lends itself to a gender analysis (Grossman 2004). Cecilia Wassen (2005) analysed all passages associated with women which appear in CD and concluded that it is a product of a patriarchal, totalitarian society (which she identifies as the Essenes), which nevertheless counted women as members, albeit of a lesser order. The following issues are the most decisive and most divisive in CD.

### Polygyny/Divorce

CD 4: 20–1 is one of the most often discussed texts in the entire Qumran corpus. It describes one of the 'nets of Belial', into which the opponents of the sect have fallen, as 'taking two wives in their lifetime'. Even before it was apparent that the members of the Dead Sea Sect condoned marriage, this text became a bone of contention. What is condemned here? Is it polygyny? Is it divorce? Is it remarriage after divorce? In his article in 1974, Vermes summarized the scholarly debate at that time, showing that all the above options had been raised. He concluded that, in light of a pericope from the then newly published Temple Scroll concerning the king ('He may not take another wife in addition to her, for she alone shall be with him all the days of his life. But if she dies he may marry another' 11QT 57: 15–19, see Yadin (p. 134) 1972), the issue at hand was polygyny. He concluded that the Qumran sect forbade polygyny (Vermes 1974). This conclusion seems quite straightforward, in light of the arguments raised in its support in CD: 'The foundation of creation is "Male and female he created them" (Genesis 1: 27) and those who came into the ark, "two by two they came into the ark" (Genesis 7: 9) and of the king it is written: "he shall not multiply wives for himself" (Deuteronomy 17: 17)' (CD 4: 21–5: 2). Even King David's polygyny is explained away with the words: 'And David did not read the sealed Book of Torah which was in the ark, for it was not opened in Israel from the deaths of Eleazar and Joshua...and the revealed law was hidden until the days of Zadok'. Daniel Schwartz claimed that this sort of argumentation is based on 'nature' and 'reality'. Monogamy is the 'foundation of creation', i.e. justified by nature itself. He assumes that this is what makes the *halakhah* of the DSS priestly (Schwartz 1992: 230–1).

Nevertheless, this text from CD continued to be discussed, even after it became the consensus opinion that it condemned only polygyny. Several variations on the theme were put forward. Gruber suggested that the prohibition of polygyny declared by this text is not just supported by the biblical verses Genesis 1: 23; 7: 9 and Deuteronomy 17: 17, but is actually based on Leviticus 18: 18 ('do not take a woman along with her sister so as to create rivalry, to reveal her nakedness in her life time'). He thinks that 'sister' here means 'fellow woman' and that CD paraphrases this verse when it reads: 'taking two wives in their lifetime' (Gruber 2001, and see also Barzilai

2005).

Shemesh suggested reading this text together with another from CD (4Q271). This text states that a father should only give his daughter to one to whom she is intended, and that if she is a virgin or a widow, suspected of infidelity, she should be examined by experts before she can marry. From this text Shemesh concluded that in the view of the Qumran Sect a woman who had sexual intercourse with another is considered his legal wife, and the one to whom she is intended is the one with whom she has already cohabited. Sexual intercourse makes a man and a woman into one flesh, and this bond can only be broken by the death of one of the partners. Thus, Shemesh concluded that CD not only forbids polygyny, it also forbids remarriage as long as the other partner is alive, even if the two are no longer living as man and wife (Shemesh 1998).

As opposed to these, Fitzmyer (1978) believed that CD 4–5 proscribes both polygyny and divorce. In order to make this argument, Fitzmyer placed special emphasis on 11QT 57: 15–19: 'He may not take another wife in addition to her, for she alone shall be with him all the days of his life', which he interpreted as proscribing divorce. If, Fitzmyer claims, this is the law even for the king, surely it is also the law for the commoner.

However, Fitzmyer's view remained the minority opinion. Several scholars refuted it, bringing additional evidence that divorce was sanctioned in Qumran. Brin (1997) cited the Qumranic variant reading of Malachi 2: 16, mentioned above, which recommends rather than condemns divorce (as opposed to the masoretic text, which does condemn it). Holmén (1997–8) supported the same view with reference to another paragraph in CD–13: 17—which includes the word שרגמל and which Holmén read as speaking of a man divorcing his wife. This text was known to Fitzmyer, but he had read the word שרגמ as a noun describing a plot of land, and not to a verb describing divorce. Holmén used new manuscript evidence from Qumran to show that Fitzmyer's reading is not possible. Noam (2005) accepted the conclusions of these two scholars, but with reservations. She suggested reading the Qumran divorce texts together with early rabbinic law on divorce, as represented by Beit Shammai, and thus qualifying its universality. The school of Shammai viewed divorce as permissible only in cases where the wife was discovered to have committed adultery. Noam uses 4Q271, referred to above, in order to bolster her argument. In 4Q271 the word רבד is used as a euphemism for sexual relations, exactly as one finds in the mouth of Beth Shammai in the Mishnah (b. Gittin 1: 1). She thus agrees with Fitzmyer that the King was indeed forbidden to divorce his wife, because the wife of the king was expected to be a paragon of fidelity, and it is unlikely that she would commit adultery. She also agrees with Shemesh that a divorced woman was ineligible for second marriage, but not because she is still physically attached to her first husband, but rather because she is considered an adulteress.

Thus, this passage is repeatedly discussed in the scholarly literature, although its meaning does not seem to be contested any more (Wassen 2005: 114–18).

### Marriage with Niece

A second net of Belial into which the enemies of the Qumranites fall is marriage to a niece. Here CD states that, while it is true that this prohibition is absent from the list of incestuous relationships recorded in Leviticus 18, the mirror opposite, marriage to an aunt, is, and 'The rule of incest is written for males but refers equally to women' (CD 5: 9–11). From the point of view of reading for women and gender, this is a very interesting exegesis of biblical male language. CD asserts here that male language does not necessarily imply male referents. Schwartz, however, noted a different aspect of this implied exegesis, and maintained that it too, like the prohibition of polygyny, relies on 'natural' rather than legal reasoning, and makes this ruling priestly (Schwartz 1992: 231).

The prohibition on marrying one's niece is voiced by two further Qumran compositions, making it one of the most often stressed aspects of sectarian *halakhah*. One reference is found in 1QT 66: 15–17, where the prohibition on marrying one's niece is incorporated into the list of biblically forbidden unions (Leviticus 18), as though it was part of scripture. Thus, although CD assumes that (p. 136) one can deduce this prohibition from the other, prohibiting marriage to an aunt, the Temple Scroll finds it necessary to spell it out.

The same technique of explicitly incorporating the prohibition on marrying a niece into a list of forbidden unions is repeated in a small halakhic fragment–4Q251 (fr. 17). This text begins with the words תוירעהלע ('about incest'), which is followed with the prohibition formula 'A man shall not take'. Unfortunately this is where this fragment leaves off. It picks up again in the next line, which reads 'his brother's daughter and his s[ister]'s daughter', listing the prohibition we are interested in here. I suspect that the entire list is intended to repeat Leviticus 18, but also to fill in

gaps in it. Thus, in the last preserved line of the fragment, we read: 'A man shall not take his daughter'. This line has been completed with the words 'to a non-priest' by the editor, who explains this decision as follows: 'This appears to be a law against marrying off one's daughter to a non-Jew or against a priest marrying his daughter to a non-priest' (J. Baumgarten 1996: 45–6). Yet this explanation is forced. The verb 'take' (לָקַח) is used in this fragment with reference to a man taking a wife and not giving one away. And it should also be noted that in the list of forbidden unions in Leviticus 18 it is not just the niece who is absent. The daughter too is not mentioned, even though the mother is. This list may be intended to complement the missing pieces of Leviticus 18, and this line prohibits nothing less than marriage (or sexual relations) between father and daughter.

The contested union between uncle and niece, much more than the issue of bigamy, seems to have constituted grounds for one of the most prominent polemics between the Dead Sea Sect and their (Pharisee?) opponents, as Schremer in his discussion of the issue in rabbinic literature shows. He suggested reading CD 5: 9–11 in conjunction with the text in CD 4–5 which prohibits polygyny and argued that rabbinic literature too demonstrates that marriage to a niece, combined with polygynous practices, brings about the real danger of incest, particularly in cases of levirate marriage. Precautions were necessary in order to avoid it, and the rabbis formulated elaborate rulings for this purpose. The Qumran sect sought to avoid it by prohibiting polygyny and marriage to a niece, and designating them both 'fornication' (זָנָה) (Schremer 2000).

That the issue was polemical is obvious also from other contemporary literary compositions. As shown by Halpern-Amaru, the Book of Jubilees, which (as demonstrated above) was much revered in Qumran, although it recommends endogamous marriages and praises the forefathers of Israel for adhering to it, can contemplate a brother-sister union (such as that of Abraham and Sarah) but never envisions a niece-uncle marriage (Halpern-Amaru 1999b: 23). Similarly, Segal showed that rabbinic *midrash* made Sarah into Abraham's niece (and Esther into Mordechai's wife), for the purpose of showing those who rejected marriage with a niece that there are biblical precedents for such a practice (Segal 1991–2). Thus, the prohibition of uncle-niece marriage can serve as a good indicator for identifying a sectarian document in Qumran. If, as suggested by Halpern-Amaru, Jubilees could (p. 137) be considered sectarian because it adheres to this prohibition, the Visions of Amram, found in Qumran, which describes the marriage of Miriam, Moses' sister, to her uncle Uziel (4Q543 fr. 1), is probably not.

### Oaths

In Numbers 30: 4–16 a husband is instructed concerning the vows of his wife and given permission to annul them under certain circumstances. According to the usual reading of this text, CD 16: 10–11 restricts this right of the husband only to cases where the female vows constitute a transgression of the commandments. If the vows she utters concur with the commandments he may not annul them. In this CD does not agree with the Temple Scroll (11QT 53: 16–54: 5; see Schiffman 1991) or with the wisdom text *Musar le Mevin* (4Q416 fr. 2.4: 8–10), both of which adhere more closely to the biblical text. What this means about the sectarian/non-sectarian nature of the last two remains contested. I have used this text in the past to show how, when a biblical-patriarchal legal principle clashes with sectarian loyalty, CD prefers the latter (Ilan 1999: 42). Wassen uses this text to argue that the sect was patriarchal but tolerated female members (Wassen 2005: 90–3).

### Physical Examination of Prospective Bride

4Q271 was identified as an additional fragment of CD. In it we learn that, as part of a marriage arrangement, if a woman was slandered as having been unchaste, trustworthy women (תּוֹנָמָא) should physically examine her. The same women are also mentioned in 4Q159, although as Tigay showed, in that fragment they perform the examination after intercourse and not beforehand (Tigay 1993; cf. Shemesh 2001). These trustworthy women must have had a professional standing within the sect, enforcing its patriarchal norms concerning the value of virginity (Wassen 2005: 87–8).

### Mothers

Another CD fragment, 4Q270, is the most interesting statement concerning women in the sect in the entire composition. We read that '[whoever comp]lains about the fathers [will be expelled] from the congregation and never return [and if (he complained)] about the mothers, he shall be punished te[n] days for the mothers have no *rqmh* within [...]'. The importance of this text is that it positions men with honorary titles—fathers—in comparison with women who bear honorary titles—mothers. Both were apparently appointees of the community. This further

bolsters Wassen's thesis of female membership in CD.

Yet the fathers obviously have something called *המקר*, which the mothers lack. Most of the discussions of this text have concentrated on the meaning of *rqmh*. While noting that *המקר* in Hebrew means embroidery, Elwolde interpreted this term in light of *יתמקר* in Psalms 139: 15, *המקרה* of Ezekiel 17:3 and *מתמגר* of Psalms 68: 28, (p. 138) all translated in LXX as indicating some form of authority (*hypostasis; hegema; hegemones*), and suggested that the mothers in Qumran actually had no authority (Elwolde 2000). Hurowitz, on the other hand, derived the word from an Akkadian legal term *ruggumû*, which means, rather similarly, 'legal claim' (Hurowitz 2002).

Although they derive the source of this term differently, both agree as to its meaning—women with the title 'mothers' are insignificant in the sect's hierarchy. Brooke alluded to the mention of the root also in other texts from Qumran, especially the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (4Q402–3) and the War Scroll. In all of these he identifies the term as describing a piece of clothing embroidered with many colours. He concludes that this *rqmh*, which the mothers do not have, is some piece of clothing, which identifies its bearer as a figure of authority (Brooke 2003). However we decide to translate this word, obviously it refers to the fathers' higher status in the community, supporting Wassen's assertion that the community reflected in this document, while recognizing female membership, and even leadership, was primarily patriarchal (Wassen 2005: 196–7; and also Grossman 2004: 227–8).

In association with the 'mothers', one may mention another long but very fragmentary Qumran document which mentions women, as figures of authority or at least of honour. The document is 4Q502, and its fragmentary character precludes the possibility of identifying it definitively as sectarian or otherwise. When it was published in 1982, Baillet designated it 'Rituel de Mariage' (Baillet 1982: 81). This was probably because the text speaks of 'the man (or Adam) and his wife' (fr. 1). Very soon after, Joseph Baumgarten suggested that one should rename the text 'Golden Age Ritual' (Baumgarten 1983). This he concluded because the text mentions twice *תונקזוסינקז* (frs. 19, 24), which could be translated as 'old men and women'. Against this translation, Schuller suggested that *מינקז* could likewise be translated as 'elders', a title of authority and leadership in antiquity, and that *תונקז* should consequently be translated as 'women elders' (Schuller 1994: 122). Taken together, the women elders of 4Q502, the trustworthy women of CD and 4Q159, and the mothers of CD suggest that some hierarchy and a social and professional division among the women of Qumran, parallel to the hierarchy among its male members, must have existed.

### Serekh ha-Edah

1QS<sub>a</sub>, the rule of the congregation, describes an assembly of the entire congregation as well as some of its institutions (like the council), perhaps but not indisputably, in the end of days. When described, this assembly is explicitly said to include women and children (1QS<sub>a</sub> 1: 4). For the council (*הצנע*), also described in this (p. 139) document, the question of gender inclusion remains open, since the manuscript in 1: 27 reads that 'women' (*מישינ*) were enjoined to gather to the council, but editors have consistently emended the text to read 'men' (*מישינג*, see Ilan, forthcoming). 1QS<sub>a</sub> also describes an education system, and the question whether it includes daughters as well as sons has been answered in the affirmative by Wassen, because its description of what one learns between the ages of ten and twenty follows closely (1: 8–9) on the inclusion of children (of both sexes) in the assembly (1: 4) (Wassen 2005: 141–2).

There is some justification in considering the entire document as speaking of members of both sexes. This is especially justified in light of the recent insight gained by most scholars in relation to 1QS<sub>a</sub> 1: 9–11. The text reads as follows: 'he (i.e. the member of the sect) shall not go near a women to know her in the manner of male intercourse before he is twenty years old and knows the difference between good and evil. And she shall receive (*לבקת*) upon herself to give evidence against him and to stand up in court hearings'. The first scholar to approach this text in 1957 was Richardson, who commented on how surprising it is to find a document from antiquity that sanctions the evidence of women (Richardson 1957). Very soon, however, scholars suggested emending the text so as to remove the women. Baumgarten suggested reading *לבקי* (he shall receive) (Baumgarten 1957) and Licht suggested *לבקתי* (Licht 1965: 257). For thirty years these emendations were accepted by all. Yet recently, this view has come under criticism. Scholars who read these texts with new concepts of gender can no longer accept the unjustified emendation. Davies and Taylor suggested that the text should not be emended but limited. They think that, because a member of the sect was supposed to be punished for committing sexual transgression, such as cohabiting with a menstruating woman, the wife was allowed to testify against her husband in case he acted in this

manner, because she was the only one who had access to such information (Davies and Taylor 1996). Yet this limited interpretation has now also been challenged. Rothstein suggested that the wife, a member's constant companion, could also testify against him if he slandered the community or committed other transgressions within the confines of his home (Rothstein 2004). Does this mean that the Qumran community was more egalitarian than other Jews of the days? A new consensus is developing, which suggests that the wife's evidence against her husband should not be viewed as an indication of the gender equality, but rather as an indication of the sect's totalitarian character. In this community the wife's loyalty to the sect was supposed to override her loyalty to her husband (Ilan 1999: 38–41; Wassen 2005: 205). (p. 140)

### The War Scroll

The War Scroll (1QM) describes the apocalyptic war between the sons of light (the sect) and the sons of darkness (everyone else). Only one paragraph in it is relevant to women, namely 1QM 11: 3–6, where they are expressly excluded from participating in this apocalyptic war. In the patriarchal understanding that war is men's business, the sect concurs with other opinions current in its day. The reason why this paragraph is of particular interest to the scholar of women is because it reflects similar lists of exclusions found in CD (15: 15–17, cf. 4Q266) and in 1QSa (2: 3–9), in which women are not mentioned. Shemesh paid particular attention to these lists, discussing and explaining the reasons for the minute differences between them (Shemesh 1997). However, interestingly, with regard to women, he concluded (without bringing any conclusive proof) that their absence in two of the lists indicates neglect on the authors' part, since the prohibition against their presence was so self-evident, that it required no mention (Shemesh 2006: 541). However, this conclusion is flawed in light of women's explicit inclusion in the 1QM list. If the absence of women should be self-evident anywhere, it is in the camp of war. Furthermore, at least one additional Qumran fragment, 4Q265, explicitly excludes women and children from partaking in the Passover sacrifice. Thus, one may conclude, with Wassen, that in contexts other than the war camp, where women are not explicitly mentioned, they were included in the community and its institutions (2005: 144–54 and also Ilan, forthcoming).

### 4QMMT

4QMMT is a halakhic letter in which the members of the sect express their views on various halakhic issues, and explain why they disagree on them with their opponents. The importance of this halakhic letter is in the glimpse it affords us of issues that were doubtless disputed between the sect members and other Jews of their day. One text in MMT is relevant to the issue of women—B 75–82. These lines forbid certain sorts of marriages, comparing them to forbidden mixtures between seeds, textiles, and beasts:

And on fornication that is committed among the people, and they are of the holy seed of whom 'holy Israel' is written, and of his pure beasts it is written, that it should not be bred in mixture, and of his clothes it is written, that it should not be a mixture of wool and flax, and his field should not be sown mixed within his vineyard, because they are holy and the sons of Aaron are holy of holies. And you know that some of the priests and the people are mixing and rendering the holy seed impure.

Because the text is extremely fragmentary, scholars disagree about the subject of the forbidden unions implied here (see already Qimron and Strugnell 1994: 171, n. 178a). Hayes (1999: 25–35), following J. Baumgarten (1999), thinks these are the (p. 141) unions between Israelites and gentiles. However, there is a problem with this interpretation, because there is nothing polemical about such a prohibition. Other Israelites would readily agree that intermarriage with gentiles is forbidden. It is true that marriage with converts is allowed in Jewish circles outside of Qumran, and if the members of the Dead Sea Sect rejected converts, this could have been disputed territory. Hayes claims that the language of this pericope is reminiscent of Ezra 9, which indeed excludes the option of conversion, but the Dead Sea Sect was not averse to accepting converts as CD 6: 21 and 14: 4–6 imply. Therefore Shemesh (2001) developed the original editors' idea that the forbidden unions are between priests and regular Israelites. As the text is formulated polemically, this seems a more plausible explanation. The rest of Jewish society would have found the idea that priests should only marry other priests bizarre. Yet the idea of such strict endogamous marriage of priests may already be voiced in the Aramaic Levi Document, as preserved in Qumran, where Isaac, having learnt that Levi is a priest, instructs him: 'marry a woman from my family and do not mix your seed with harlots, since yours is a holy seed' (6: 4—see Greenfield, Stone, and Eshel 2004). The terminology in this

document is strikingly close to that of MMT.

### Pesharim

The *Pesharim* are interpretations of biblical books as prophecies referring to the days of the Qumranites themselves. They quote verses from prophetic biblical books and the Psalms and apply them to events of their own day and age, thus making their relevance as prophecies timeless. Our ability to comprehend these texts is often hindered by our lack of understanding of code-words and names that the sect used when applying the prophecies to their times. Although there is but little in these texts that is relevant to women issues, at least one—*Peshar Nahum*—seems of some relevance.

The Sect's main enemies were the reigning Hasmonean dynasty. Most of the code names used by the sect refer to the heads of this dynasty. In the 70s and 60s of the first century BCE the Kingdom of Judaea was ruled by a Hasmonean queen—Shelamzion Alexandra—who was just as bitter an enemy to the sect as all her predecessors. Her name—שֵׁלַמְצִיּוֹן—actually shows up in two calendrical Qumranic texts (4Q331; 4Q332), but they are so fragmentary that very little can be made of them. The most extensive reference to this queen is probably to be found in 4QpNahum. In col. 2 of this text 'The Lion of Wrath', who is definitely identified with the Hasmonean king Alexander Jannaeus, is mentioned as hanging members of a group designated 'seekers of smooth things' alive. This action is universally identified as the crucifixion of the Pharisees described in Josephus (*BJ* 1.97; *AJ* 13.380). In col. 3, which describes chronologically the events that follow those of the rule of Jannaeus, we are informed of 'the government of those who seek smooth (p. 142) things'. If 'those who seek smooth things' whom Jannaeus crucified are to be identified with the Pharisees, their government in the next column obviously refers to their incorporation into the administration of Jannaeus' successor—his wife, Queen Shelamzion Alexandra. The rule of the seekers of smooth things is described with the help of a verse from Nahum where the city of Nineveh is personified as a whore. Although the queen herself is mentioned neither by name, nor by code-name, one may infer that the use of this negative biblical feminine image alludes to her and demonstrates how unsympathetically her regime was judged by the Dead Sea Sect (Ilan 2001).

### Conclusion

A careful consideration of the above will have by now shown that reading for gender can be performed much more fruitfully than has been previously done, or even considered possible, and that its late blossoming results from previously preconceived notions about the nature of women and gender. While we are now in a position to read all the documents from Qumran, and I have drawn attention in the above to many aspects which have hitherto been ignored, I have no doubt that I myself have fallen prey to similar preconceived notions. Much more about women and gender in Qumran will certainly come to light in the future, as scholars, more conscious of their own prejudices, will study these texts with open eyes.

### Suggested Reading

The formative piece on women in Qumran remains Eileen Schuller's article from 1993. In this article Schuller discusses the main texts of CD and 1QSa that I have elaborated upon in this article, and it demonstrates how tentatively and carefully the issue of women's membership in the sect was first broached. Following this study, the issue of women in Qumran is best treated in those essays that are devoted to one document, or genre. This approach was initiated by Lawrence Schiffman (1992) for the Temple Scroll, and has now been taken up by Grossman (2004) in a programmatic article on CD and by Wassen (2005), who has devoted an entire well-ordered and clearly written book to the topic. Ilan (forthcoming) has applied (p. 143) similar techniques to 1QSa. The most comprehensive and thoughtful essay on women in the wisdom literature of Qumran was produced by Wright (2004). In this study, Wright enumerates all the Qumran wisdom texts that describe women, categorizes and analyses them.

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