"A Voice Cries Out":
Reassessing John the Baptist's Wilderness Relationship to Qumran* **

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Introduction

In 1952, G. Lankester Harding noted, when responding to a telegram from benefactors who questioned the importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls' discovery, "And it must be borne in mind that these fragments are the remains of a library of the settlement of the Essenes described by the historian Josephus and by Pliny the Elder, a sect or school that John the Baptist was a member."[1] Yet, even before their discovery, scholars associated John the Baptist with the Essenes of the desert.[2] With the growing conversation of identifying the Qumran *yaḥad* with the Essenes,[3] this conversation naturally evolved into the Baptist's relationship to the Qumran community.[4]

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[1]* For R. Steven Notley who has shown me first-hand the importance of historical geography to reading the Gospels and for being the guide on my first trip to Israel nearly 20 years ago.
Weston W. Fields, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Full History — Volume 1* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 163-4. Harding's response was to Mr. and Mrs. Bechtel who showed interest in contributing to a fund for the purchase of some of the first scrolls. Fields states that the Bechtels were "the first private contributors to the purchase, restoration, and publication of the scrolls."

[2] In the late 18th century, Heinrich Graetz stated that the cry regarding the coming messiah and the kingdom of heaven in early Judaism came from the Essenes, namely, out of the mouth of the Baptist, "John dwelt with other Essenes in the desert, in the vicinity of the Dead Sea..." in *History of the Jewish People*, 6 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1893), 2:145-7; rev. and trans. of *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart: aus den Quellen neu bearbeitet*, 11 vols (Leipzig: Leiner, 1853–75). Graetz did not believe that John's Essenism to be in contradistinction to Pharisaism. John's call would have been socially and religiously acceptable to both. Shortly thereafter, in the early 19th century, Israel Abrahams describes John as having "Essenic leanings," noting that Josephus' attempt to identify John with the Essenes is clear, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917), 31-34. For Brownlee, identifying the scrolls with the Essenes was a settled matter; he naturally presumed that the contents of the scrolls were one and the same with them. He was, however, more cautious in an article describing the affinities between the Essenes, the Therapeutae of Egypt, Covenanters of Damascus, and John the Baptist, "A Comparison of the Covenanters of the Dead Sea Scrolls with Pre-Christian Jewish Sects," *BA* 13/3 (1950): 50-72; idem, ""John the Baptist in the New Light of the Ancient Scrolls," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* (1955): 73. See also A. T. Robertson, "The Baptism of John and the Qumran Community: Testing a Hypothesis," *HTR* 50/3 (1957): 175; Joseph Schmitt, "Le milieu baptiste de Jean le Précurseur," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 47/2-4 (1973): 391-407.

[3] For a sample of the bibliography on this issue see Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ I* (175 B.C. – A.D. 135), rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Matthew Black, Fergus Millar, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 2:583, n. 31; more recently Todd S. Beal, "Essenes" and Devorah Dimant, "Qumran: Written Material," *EDSS* 1:262-9; 2:739-46.

[4] See the survey by Paul Anderson, "John and Qumran: Discovery and Interpretation over Sixty Years" in *John, Qumran, and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Sixty Years of Discovery and Debate*, ed. Mary L. Coloe and Tom Thatcher

Continual research into the scrolls—in particular, after their release to the public in 1991—has proven to keep questions regarding the identity of John's socio-religious circle(s) alive. In fact, all studies that deal with the historical John must cross the Qumran/Essene bridge.[5] In 2006, James Charlesworth stating, "There seems no reason to doubt that the Baptizer adopted at least some of the teachings of the Qumranites,"[6] ventured the bold conjecture, "John would…have progressed through the early stages of initiation, which took at least two years…He would thus, almost surely, have taken the vows of celibacy and absolute separation from others."[7] For over 70 years, two matters have stayed the course in this conversation. First, while there remains no consensus on whether the Baptist or his movement were affiliated with the Qumran/Essenes, geographical proximity, namely, Qumran's location at Khirbet Qumran[8] in the so-called Judean wilderness,[9] and John baptizing on the southern end of the Jordan river near Jericho—a distance

(Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 15-52.

[5] See for example, Hermann Lichtenberger, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and John the Baptist: Reflection on Josephus' Account of John the Baptist," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research*, ed. Devorh Dimant and Uriel Rappaport, STDJ 10 (Leiden: Brill; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1992), 340-46; Hartmut Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran: On the Essenes, Qumran, John the Baptist, and Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 221-5, trans. from *Die Essener, Qumran, Johannes der Taüfer und Jesus* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Heder, 1993); Joan E. Taylor, "John the Baptist and the Essenes," *JJS* 47/2 (1996): 256-84; eadem, *The Immerser, John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 15-48; James VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 206-8; Josef Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer: Interpretation, Geschichte, Wirkungsgeschichte*, BZNW 53 (2013), 268-84.

[6] James Charlesworth, "John the Baptizer and the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls: The Princeton Symposium on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed., James Charlesworth, 3 vols. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 3:19.

[7] Charlesworth, "John the Baptizer," 7-9. There is no evidence whatsoever that the Baptist went through any of the stages required of the *yaḥad's* novitiates. Charlesworth's conjecture closely parallels the video that is used to introduce tourists to the site of Khirbet Qumran. While viewing a dramatization of life at the site and in the community, the narrator tells a brief story about hearing of the tragic end of a person named John the Baptist. This is followed by his recollection that the *yaḥad* once had a member named John, who volunteered to join and after two years broke his vow. While this portion of the video is exceedingly brief, the implications are obvious and fictional.

[8] See Daniel R. Schwartz, "Introduction: On the Jewish Background of Christianity," in *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*, WUNT 60 (Tübnigen: Mohr Seibeck, 1992), 3.

[9] Taylor, one of the few dissenters, argues that John's movements around the Jordan Valley occurred primarily in Perea (as well as Samaria, and within Perea proper), *The Immerser*, 47. Her dissent of course gives John a wider berth along the Jordan Valley, but it does not necessarily remove him from the region of Qumran, as the traditional Jordanian baptismal site (al-Maghtas), which dates to the Byzantine period, is on the eastern bank that is near an ancient ford, not far from Qumran.

of no more than 16k (10m)—remains a part of the debate.[10] Second, the use of Isaiah by the Gospel writers and by the *Community Rule* continues to draw John into conversation with the *yaḥad*. While there is little agreement among scholars regarding this parallel, most have not fully appreciated Luke's unique portrayal of the Baptist and the manner it informs this subject. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to reassess these two matters as part of a larger, and continual, examination of John's relationship, or lack thereof, to the Qumran community.

Historical Geography and the Baptist's Wilderness

Accounts of John the Baptist appear in the Gospels and Josephus, but John's presence in the wilderness is only referenced in the former (Matt 3:1, Mark 1:4, Luke 3:2, John 1:23). As mentioned, there has been little variance among scholars in identifying the wilderness of John as the modern Judean desert that now defines the stretch of the Jordan Valley that begins near the area of Jericho and occupies the western shore of the Dead Sea; the same desert where Khirbet Qumran is located.[11] The depiction in the Gospels of John's location, however, is not so clear. Both the Gospels of Mark and Luke describe that the Baptist was simply in the "wilderness," whereas Matthew appears to attest a more secure[12]—perhaps unnecessary[13]—toponym, "wilderness of Judah"[14] (τῇ ἐρήμῳ τῆς Ἰουδαίας) or as it is commonly understood, the Judean desert. Before dealing with this toponym, it is worth noting that the semantic range of "wilderness," ἔρημος, and its Hebrew equivalent, מִדְבָּר, offer more nuance than an arid, dry

[10] Charlesworth, "The Baptizer," 18-19; idem, "John the Baptizer and Qumran," https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/passages/related-articles/john-the-baptizer-and-qumran. See also Joel Marcus, *John the Baptist in History and Theology* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2018), 30.
[11] Joan E. Taylor, "John the Baptist in the Jordan River," *ARAM* 1 & 2 (2017): 1-19. She does not specify a particular site where John would have immersed followers, but names both Makhadat Hajla and al-Maghtas as possibilities. The traditional site on the western bank, Qasr al-Yahud, is located in what is now called the Judaean Wilderness.
[12] *Johannes der Täufer*, 280.
[13] Taylor, "John the Baptist," 4; also, eadem, *The Immerser*, 42-48.
[14] Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the authors.

desert. מִדְבָּר can refer to a desert but also an uncultivated pasture (e.g. Joel 1:19) or a "pastureland between two villages."[15] Similarly, ἔρημος can be used to describe a desert, pastureland, or, more importantly, a grassland.[16] This wider semantic range in Greek is on display in 1 Macc. Specifically, it is used to refer to the hill country of Samaria—not far from the Gophna hills[17]—where Mattathias, his sons, and their followers retreat (1 Macc 2:29-31; 2 Macc 5:27).[18] Outside of the Baptist narratives—when geographical clues can be ascertained—the Synoptic Gospels use "wilderness" (ἔρημος) primarily to refer to desolate areas that are in the Galilee and Gaulanitis, which was surely not arid and dry.[19] For example, after the Baptist is killed, Jesus is described as going into "the wildernesses" (ταῖς ἐρήμοις) to pray (Luke 5:16). Within the larger context of the chapter, the passage likely refers to uninhabited pasturelands that were around the northern stretches of the Sea of Galilee. Furthermore, some manuscripts of Luke refer to the area surrounding Bethsaida—located technically in Gaulanitis—as "the wilderness (or uncultivated pastureland area) of a city called Bethsaida" (εἰς τόπον ἔρημον πόλεως καλουμένης Βηθσαϊδά). Therefore, the appearance of "wilderness" alone does not require a desert location.

Other geographical markers preserved in the accounts of Matthew and Mark are worth considering. Mark states that John "was baptizing in the wilderness" (ἐγένετο Ἰωάννης βαπτίζων ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ) with the only possible geographic reference in 1:5, "And there went out to him *all*

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[15] *HALOT* 2:548.
[16] *BDAG* 392.
[17] Joshua Schwartz and Joseph Spanier, "On Mattathias and the Desert of Samaria," *RB* 98/2 (1991): 252–71.
[18] Notley, "The Hasmonean Struggle for Independence," in *The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006), 308. Jonathan Goldstein has noted parallels to this account in Maccabees and the Davidic story in 1 Sam, *1 Macabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1976), 235.
[19] Matt 11:17, 14:13,15; Mark 1:45, 6:30-35; Luke 4:42, 5:16 (in light of parallels), 8:29, 15:4. See Joshua Schwartz,"Sinai- Mountain and Desert: The Desert Geography and Theology of the Rabbis and Desert Fathers," in *"Follow the Wise:" Studies in Jewish History and Culture in Honor of Lee I. Levine,"* ed. Zeev Weiss, Oded Irshai, Jodi Magness, and Seth Schwartz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 354.

the district of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem" (πᾶσα ἡ Ἰουδαία χώρα καὶ οἱ Ἱεροσολυμῖται πάντες). Matthew who may be following Mark, omits "all" before Jerusalem and Judea but adds "all the region near (or around) the Jordan" (πᾶσα ἡ περίχωρος τοῦ Ἰορδάνου). Neither are indicators of the Baptist's location, however. Vincent Taylor notes that Mark's statement of "all" reads somewhat hyperbolically.[20] Matthew is also not concerned with providing the geography of John's movement, but rather, both gospel writers are heavily invested with the John's role as Elijah. First, Mark and Matthew portray John with a similar sense of style to that of Elijah, wearing a garment of hair and leather girdle (Matt 3:4; Mark 1:6; cf.2 Kings 1:8).[21] Second, Mark associates Mal 3:1's messenger, perhaps Elijah, with John the Baptist (1:2). Third, Matthew (and Luke) preserve testimony of John's warning of coming judgment (Matt 3:10; also, Luke 3:7-9), a role envisioned for Elijah in Mal 3 and 4 and other postbiblical texts (more on this later). There are two alternate reasons that Matthew and Mark reference Jerusalem and Judah that are not intended to locate John's baptism events. Mention of both regions may function as an additional allusion to Malachi where the messenger who portends judgement will return Jerusalem and Judah to its former years (3:4 ,כְּיָמִים קַדְמֹנִיּוֹת). Therefore, neither should be used to bolster the identification of the desert area around Jericho with John's location. Technically, there is no region along the Jordan river that would have prevented Jews from Jerusalem and Judea from reaching wherever his events were held. Moreover, in the same manner that being dressed in camel hair and a leather waistband is not a

[20] Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel of According to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indexes*, 2nd ed., Thornapple Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 155; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Grand Rapids: Fortress Press, 2007), 142.
[21] See Collins, *Mark*, 141; William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 51; Herbert W. Basser with Marsha Cohen, *The Gospel of Matthew and Judaic Traditions: A Relevance-Based Commentary*, BRLJ 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 84-85.

statement of the Baptist's fashion sense, the reference to Jerusalem and Judah are not an argument towards a specific location.[22]

Luke also refers to the "wilderness" without any reference to Judah or Jerusalem, simply stating that "the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness and he went into all the region about the Jordan" (Luke 3:3). Unfortunately, the "region about the Jordan" (πᾶσα ἡ περίχωρος τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, also Matt 3:5) is equally unspecific, designating a number of places along it. For example, similar language is used one time in the Hebrew Bible, "And when they came to the regions about the Jordan…" (וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־גְּלִילוֹת הַיַּרְדֵּן אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן, Josh 10:22). The account records the building of an altar on the eastern bank of the Jordan by Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. However, the tribal territories that are mentioned span most of the length of the Jordan river from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea.

The only seemingly secure geographical marker is Matthew's "the wilderness of Judah" (τῇ ἐρήμῳ τῆς Ἰουδαίας). The Hebrew equivalent מִדְבַּר יְהוּדָה is found only twice in the Hebrew Bible. In Judges 1:16, the "wilderness of Judah" is geographically defined for the reader, "and the descendants of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up with the people of Judah from the city of palms *into the wilderness of Judah, which lies in the negev of Arad*" (מִדְבַּר יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר בַּנֶּגֶב עֲרָד). Thus, the wilderness of Judah lies in the Negev, near the city of Arad, which is not far from the western shore of the Dead Sea but is approximately 107k (66.5 m) south of Khirbet Qumran and even further from the Jericho region. Interestingly, manuscripts of the Septuagint [LXX] do not preserve this phraseology; rather, they refer to the "wilderness" (τὴν ἔρημον) or the "wilderness that is south of Judah." Trent Butler notes that "south of Judah" (νότω Ιουδα) is a standard geographic term, which is not unlike what is found in 1 Sam 27:10 (νότον τῆς

[22] Notley, "The Geographical Setting for the Ministry of John and the Baptism of Jesus," in *The Sacred Bridge*, 350-51.

Ιουδαίας) and 2 Sam 24:7 (νότον Ιουδα).[23] Perhaps, the LXX, around the period of its translation, did not know or understand the toponym, "wilderness of Judah," and the translator amended the terminology to simplify the geography, correctly describing the Negev as "south of Judah." The second occurrence of "wilderness of Judah" is in the superscription of Psalm 63:0 [MT: v. 1], "A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah" (מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד בִּהְיוֹתוֹ בְּמִדְבַּר יְהוּדָה). It is difficult to ascertain which part of David's life the psalm is referring, but it is suggested to be an allusion to David's flight from Absalom (2 Sam 15-17). If David's route into the wilderness in 2 Sam 15:23 is alluded to in the psalm, David is said to cross the Kidron (נַחַל קִדְרוֹן) and travel into the wilderness (הַמִּדְבָּר).[24] The Kidron valley winds its way south and east from Jerusalem; the valley's exit is approximately 8k (5m) south of Qumran. David, however, is also depicted as fleeing into the wilderness from Saul, specifically to "the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the Wilderness of Ziph" (1 Sam 23:14, וַיֵּשֶׁב דָּוִד בַּמִּדְבָּר בַּמְּצָדוֹת וַיֵּשֶׁב בָּהָר בְּמִדְבַּר־זִיף). Whether the toponym "wilderness of Judah" is intended to direct the reader back to either account is unclear. Even so, whether David is in the wilderness as it makes its way out of the Kidron or in Ziph, he appears to be in a location south of Khirbet Qumran. In biblical literature, it seems that the "wilderness of Judah" was a territory that encompassed part the Negev, which is significantly south of Qumran, somewhere near the cities of Arad and Beersheva.

In postexilic and Second Temple sources, the "wilderness of Judah" (מִדְבַּר יְהוּדָה or ἔρημος τῆς Ἰουδαίας) is altogether unattested.[25] In particular, it does not appear that people in the Second Temple period referred to the area of Qumran with the specific toponym, "wilderness of Judah." A "wilderness," yes (cf. 1QS 8:13), but not the "wilderness of Judah." Indeed, in the

[23] Trent C. Butler, *Judges, Volume 8*, WBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 1-33.
[24] Roff Rendorf, "The Psalms of David: David in the Psalms," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller, VTSup 99, FIOTL 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 59.
[25] I was first notified to this in a private conversation with Marc Turnage.

early Roman period (1st CE), the toponym may have been obvious— the "wilderness of Judah" is the wilderness which belongs to the Roman province of Judaea.[26] This might be compared to standing in Jerusalem and referring to the Mount of Olives, as the "Mount of Olives of Jerusalem;" it is wholly unnecessary. Still, for such an active region in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, it is a striking lacuna. "Wilderness of Judah" also does not appear in the earliest strands of Rabbinic (apart from quotations of Judges 8; e.g., *Mek. R. Ish.* 14:26) or Christian literature and is missing in Latin and Greek sources between the 4th century BCE – 7th century CE.[27] Furthermore, pilgrims from the 3rd to the 18th centuries CE, who traveled to the traditional site of John's baptism on the southern end of the Jordan river, never refer to it as being located in the "wilderness of Judah."[28]

Why then is Matthew utilizing "wilderness of Judah"? Taylor suggests that it creates unnecessary repetition but "is perhaps meant to clarify where we are at the start."[29] Joshua Schwartz is not convinced that John ever baptized in an area known as the wilderness of Judah. He argues that a setting in the wilderness of Samaria, or the "Desert of Samaria"—somewhat bolstered by an identification for Aenon near Salim (John 3:23) in Samaria[30]—works as much for John's baptisms as does the Judaean wilderness. He suggests that perhaps Matthew has chosen

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[26] See Michael Avi-Yonah, *Gazeteer of Roman Palestine*, Qedem 5 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1976). Avi-Yonah refers to the toponyms of other wildernesses, specifically, the Wilderness of Ruba (91) and Wilderness of Suca (98).

[27] See Leah De Segni and Yoram Tsafrir, *The Onomasticon of Iudaea, Palaestina and Arabia in the Greek and Latin Sources — Volume I: Introduction, Sources, Major Texts* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2015).

[28] See, Fr. Donatus Baldi, *Enchiridion Locorum Sanctorum*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1955), 177-201.

[29] Taylor, "John the Baptist," 4.

[30] Joshua Schwartz, "John the Baptist, the Wilderness and the Samaritan Mission," in *Studies in Historical Geography and Biblical Historiography: Presented to Zecharia Kallai*, ed. Gershon Galil and Moshe Weinfeld, VTSup 81 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 106-17. See Avi-Yonah, *Roman Gazeteer*, 26-27; Yoram Tsafrir, Leah Di Segni, and Judith Green, *Tabula Imperii Romani*: *Iudaea and Palaestina – Eretz Israel in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Periods, Maps and Gazeteer* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Science and Humanities, 1994), 58; also "*M[adaba] M[ap]*," in Di Segni and Tsafrir, *The Onomasticon*, 315.

the "wilderness of Judah" because he was unfamiliar with other desert regions.[31] This argumentation only works if the area now designated as the Judaean wilderness was known as such when Matthew's Gospel was written. As we have argued, regardless of the gospel's dating, this is unlikely. There is, in fact, a more germane reason for Matthew's specification. Notley has already shown that the term "Sea of Galilee" is the creation of previously unknown toponym for the Galilean lake due to early Christianity's understanding that Jesus' ministry was a fulfillment of the prophecy mentioned in Is 9:1.[32] The phrase "wilderness of Judah" may be another example of this Matthean creativity. First, if the gospel writer intended a geographical location, it would have been lost on his audience. Second, Matthew makes no equivocation of John's identity as Elijah. It is the only gospel to preserve the unique statement by Jesus concerning John's role, "and if you are willing to accept it, he [i.e. the Baptist] is Elijah" (αὐτός ἐστιν Ἠλίας, Matt 11:14). It is this prophetic motif that is driving the appearance of the "wilderness of Judah." In the Elijah narrative, one gets very close to the Matthean toponym, "[Elijah] came to *Beer-sheva, which is in Judah* (בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע אֲשֶׁר לִיהוּדָה) and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey *into the wilderness*." (1,בַּמִּדְבָּר Kings 19:3-4).[33] The prophet takes flight to Beersheva due to the Jezebel's threat against his life. It is possible to read that the prophet begins his day's journey in the "wilderness" that belongs to "Judah", i.e., the "wilderness of Judah." Indeed, Elijah's role in early Judaism is partly seen as bringing about the repentance of the nation prior to judgment (Mal 4:6 [MT: 3:24]). Aspects of this are associated with the revelations of judgment that he receives at Mount Horeb (Mal 4:5 [MT 3:23]; Sir 48:7-10) where Elijah concludes his journey (1 Kgs 19:8). Space does not allow us to unpack the Baptist's role as

[31] Schwartz, "John the Baptist," n. 3.
[32] R. Steven Notley, "The Sea of Galilee: Development of an Early Christian Toponym," *JBL* 128/1 (Spring, 2009): 183-5; idem, *The Sacred Bridge*, 352-4.
[33] 1 Kings follows Judges' general geography by indicating that the "wilderness" area that belongs to Judah is near Arad and Beersheva, that is in the biblical Negev.

Elijah here and the parallel themes of repentance and judgement. Suffice to say, that Matthew's creativity has little to do with geography. The Evangelist is creating a theological toponym à la "Sea of Galilee," that views John's ministry in a fulfillment of the expected coming of the prophet whose wilderness (of Judah) journey is interpreted later in the light of the aforementioned themes.

Both Notley and Schwartz have each argued for alternate locations that have only gained a modicum of scholarly attention. It is worth examining their suggestions here. As mentioned earlier, Schwartz suggests that the desert area of Samaria is as good a choice as anywhere else (see above).[34] According to him, John's experience in Samaria resolves why the Gospel of John depicts the Baptist at "Aenon near Salim" (3:23). Scholars have by and large identified Salim just 13-17k (8-11m) south of Scythopolis/Beth Shean[35]—although identifying the springs (i.e. Aenon) has proven difficult.[36] While Schwartz's tendency is correct, namely, "that the John the Baptist wilderness traditions discussed up to this point need not be identified with the Judean Desert…," there is no evidence for John's presence in Samaria outside of a possible Samaritan identification for "Aenon near Salim." This identification, however, appears for the first time on the 6th century CE Madaba Map.[37] Moreover, the earliest Roman archaeological remains found at a site identified with Salim, namely, Tell Shalem, is a Roman fort—once occupied by the VI Ferrata Legion—dated to the 2nd century CE.[38] Of all the sites that are thought to be either Salim or Aenon, none are very far from the Galilee. Unfortunately, determining a first century CE

[34] Schwartz, "John the Baptist," 117.
[35] Tsafrir, Di Segni, and Green identify "Tel er Radgha," Salem III, Salumias; *Tabula*, 219, which is located 13km (8m) south of Scythopolis/Beth Shean. Avi Yonah identified Tel Abu Sus , *Roman Gazeteer*, 92, which is approximately 17km (11m) south of Scythopolis/Beth Shean.
[36] Avi-Yonah identifies two sites for "Aenon," sources near 'Umm el-Umdan and Bassett el Kharrar, *Roman Gazeteer*, 26-27, which are located on the western Jordan valley near Scythopolis and the eastern Jordan valley near the river's entry into the Dead Sea, respectively.
[37] Di Segni and Tsafrir, *The Onomasticon*, 315.
[38] See Mark A. Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus*, SNTMS 134 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 67.

"Aenon" or "Salim" based solely on archaeology cannot be done up to this point and textual evidence is scant. Schwartz's work, however, does highlight the apparent itinerancy of the Baptist depicted in the fourth Gospel. Still, there is very little in the Baptist's apparent movements that argues for locating him at the southern end of the Jordan.

Before reviewing Notley's argument, it is necessary to examine the Gospel of John's "Bethany beyond the Jordan" (ἐν Βηθανίᾳ…πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, 1:28).[39] This Bethany is not the village of Martha and Mary referenced in 11:18 as being 3km (1.8m) from Jerusalem (11:18). Furthermore, "beyond the Jordan"—without mention of Bethany—refers to a place on the *eastern* bank of the river, without specification.[40] In fact, a Byzantine period site just off the eastern bank of Jordan and just north of the Dead Sea—essentially across from the traditional baptism site on the western bank, Qasr al-Yahud—has been identified as "Bethany Beyond the Jordan." As a result of excavations of Tell al-Kharrar—situated in Wadi al-Kharrar—between 1996 and1997, archaeologist Mohammed Waheeb states "the recent discovery of Roman and Byzantine architectural remains….without exaggeration represent the discovery of Bethany Beyond the Jordan River…"[41] While the excavations are important to understanding the

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[39] Origen and John Chrysostom supported reading "Bethabara" (Βηθαβαρά), rather than "Bethany," which is attested in several manuscripts of John. Likely a Greek form of the "Beth-avar" (בית עבר), "place of crossing"—i.e. a ford in the Jordan river—the church father championed it due to his inability to locate Bethany, Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 171. Eusebius, following Origen, also follows the Bethabara reading. It is, however, the Bordeaux pilgrim in 333 CE who provides a general geographical location for Origen's and Eusebius' geographical understanding by referencing that John's baptisms occurred near Jericho, a ford (*monticulus*) in the river, and at the place from where Elijah was taken into heaven (…*ubi raptus est Helias in caelo*), Paul Geyer, *Itinera Hierosolymitana Saeculi III-VII*, CSEL 39 (Vindobone; Pragae: F. Tempsky; Lipsiae: G. Freytag, 1898), 24. As a result of the lengthy tradition at that point of the Jordan, "Bethabara" is identified on the Madaba Map on the western bank of the Jordan. "Bethany beyond the Jordan" (al-Maghtas) is not identified on the map, but there is a site identified on the western bank of the river adjacent to "Bethabara" called *Saphsaphas*. See comments by Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Madaba Mosaic Map with Introduction and Commentary* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1954), 37.

[40] This is the consistent use of the "beyond the Jordan" in both the Hebrew Bible (מֵעֵבֶר לְיַרְדֵּן; LXX: πέραν τοῦ Ιορδάνου; e.g. Num 32:32) and Josephus (πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου; e.g. *Ant*. 12:222).

[41] Waheeb, "The Discovery of Bethany," 123; also idem, Abdelaziz Mahmod, and Eyad Al-Masri, "A Unique Byzantine Complex Near the Jordan River in the Southern Levant and a Tentative Interpretation," *Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry* 13/2 (2013): 128-134; Rami G. Khouri, "Where John Baptized," *BAR* 31:1 (Jan.-Feb. 2005): 39.

development of Christian traditions in the holy land, the majority of the remains date well into the Byzantine period (5th-6th century CE). The only early Roman remains come from a well that was dug into the "water table of a nearby spring."[42] But it is unclear which remains are early Roman as Waheeb lists fallen ashlars, sand, pottery sherds, and coins but does not provide a dating for the material. He notes further that the excavated material indicates a Byzantine date for the digging of the well. Waheeb is perhaps suggesting, without explicitly stating, that the digging of the Byzantine well inadvertently disturbed earlier remains. Yet, even early Roman remains do not establish the Baptist's presence. The ford in the Jordan river that is near the outlet of Wadi al-Kharrar would have been used by Jewish pilgrims travelling through the Transjordan.[43] Therefore, the presence of early Roman remains is evidence that this area of Wadi al-Kharrar could have been a way-stop of sorts for Jewish pilgrims making their way to Jerusalem through the Transjordan due to the presence of a ford and the existence of several nearby springs. Unfortunately, detailed accounts of travel to Jerusalem through the Transjordan are scant. Although, Luke's description of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem as "between Samaria and Galilee" (Luke 17:11) and in Jericho (19:1) indicates that on occasion he travelled this route. Consequently, that the Evangelist's "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" has been properly identified at Tell al-Kharrar is uncertain.

Indeed, the Byzantine remains are a significant attestation to a Christian tradition that should not be easily dismissed. Yet, the earliest account of anyone identifying this area of the river with the Baptist's activity is the 4th century Bordeaux pilgrim.[44] The tradition likely predates the pilgrim, but there is little evidence that it goes back to the 1st century CE. Richard Freund

[42] Waheeb, "The Discovery of Bethany," 122.
[43] Later Christian pilgrims, e.g., Theodosius, traveled along a similar route, see Yoram Tsafrir, "The Maps Used by Theodosius: On the Pilgrim Maps of the Holy Land and Jerusalem an in the Sixth Century C.E.," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 40 (1986): 129-45
[44] Paul Geyer, *Itinera Hierosolymitana Saeculi*, 24.

notes regarding the ancient identification of Byzantine relic sites, "They relied upon oral traditions that were circulating in their own period and in some cases manufactured not a few places from their own inspiration."[45] Even more to the point, Taylor's examination of Christian holy sites sums up, "Up until Constantine won the East, evidence of Christian veneration of sites cannot be found in surviving literature or archaeology."[46] This does not mean that the locations of Byzantine holy sites are wholly historically inaccurate, but rather, that their veneration did not require it.

Notley's assessment is germane to the identifying "Bethany." Moreover, he has offered the most sustained and convincing argument for locating John's baptism of Jesus, and his ministry, north of the Sea of Galilee.[47] The Jordan river first enters the lake through the Bethsaida (modern day Buteiḥa) valley—an area which is referred to in some Lukan manuscripts as a "wilderness" (9:10, see above). The eastern bank of this stretch of the Jordan can be appropriately described as "beyond the Jordan." Yet, there remains the matter of identifying Bethany north of the lake. Notley suggests that "Bethany" (Βηθανία, 1:23) should probably be identified with the Bashan/Batanea region on the eastern side of the river in the modern-day Golan, stating,

> Designation of the region of biblical Bashan—extending from Mount Hermon in the north to the southern boundaries of the Lower Golan—with the term Batanea is also heard by Greek writers from Josephus (Life 54; Ant. 9:159) to Eusebius (Onom. 44:9-

[45] *Digging Through the Bible: Understanding Biblical People, Places, and Controversies Through Archaeology* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), 90. Several sites in Israel are based on Byantine period remains, e.g., the Mount of Beatitudes (Matt 5-7) in the Galilee and the site of the Church of All Nations where Jesus said to have prayed on the Mount of Olives (Matt 26:36-40; Mark 14:32-38; Luke 22:39-46).
[46] Joan Taylor, *Christian and Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish-Christian* Origins (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1993), 317.
[47] Notley, "The Geographical Setting," 350-51. See also Rainer Riesner, "Bethany Beyond the Jordan (John 1:28): Topography, Theology and History in the Fourth Gospel," *TynBul* 38 (1987): 29-64; Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 1:450. This is likely how John 10:40 should be understood.

11). Additionally, according to the Septuagint the region of Bashan is demarked like Bethany, "beyond the Jordan" (πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου: Deut 4:47; Josh 9:10). If "Bethany beyond the Jordan" does signal the region of ancient Bashan (Batanea), then it indicates that John's ministry reached regions northeast of the Sea of Galilee.[48]

Moreover, Notley's analysis fits best with Jesus' movements in John's Gospel. The Evangelist reports that two of John's disciples begin to follow Jesus the day after his baptism. One disciple, Andrew, also brings his brother Peter to Jesus (1:29-42). While the narratives are distinctly different in the Synoptic Gospels, the meeting and calling of the disciples is always set by the Sea of Galilee (Matt 4:18, Mark 1:16). If, as in the other gospels, John the Evangelist is describing the meeting of Andrew and Simon somewhere around the Galilee the day after Jesus is baptized, it is unlikely that Jesus would have taken the 60-plus mile journey between the southern stretches of the Jordan and the Galilee in a single day. On the day following this encounter, Jesus finds Philip who is described as being from the city of Bethsaida, the city of Peter and Andrew (Βηθσαϊδά, ἐκ τῆς πόλεως Ἀνδρέου καὶ Πέτρου, 1:44b). John couples this with Jesus' decision to return to the Galilee (43). If Jesus and John are on the eastern bank of the river—near and around Bethsaida—than heading to the region of the Galilee would have been a matter of crossing the Jordan. The river was a political boundary between Batanea, part of the tetrarchy of Philip and the Galilee which was administered by Antipas (*Ant*. 17:189). Therefore, a setting north of the lake makes the most sense of the gospel's evidence.[49]

[48] Notley, "The Geographical Setting," 351. See also Reisner, "Bethany Beyond the Jordan," 53-56.

[49] Notley argues additionally that the Mishnaic statement, "water of the Jordan and water of the Yarmuk are unfit, because they are mixed waters" (מֵי הַיַּרְדֵּן וּמֵי יַרְמוּךְ, פְּסוּלִים, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהֵם מֵי תַעֲרוֹבוֹת, Par. 8:10), prohibits any form of ritual immersion south of the lake where these waters meet, "Geographical Setting," 351; also Marc Turnage, *Windows into the Bible* (Springfield: Logion Press, 2016), 61-62. The context of the mishnah indicates that the conversation is regarding waters for "males with seminal discharge" (זָבִין), "lepers" (מְצוֹרָעִין), and waters for mixing with the ashes of red heifer (מֵי חַטָּאת, 8:8-9. see the ruling by Akiva and Hanina in the Tosefta). Lawrence Schiffman has suggested to me in a private conversation that this mishnah is not intended to disqualify these waters from all forms of ritual immersion, rather, it is designating that the waters where the Yarmuk and the Jordan meet as being unfit for mixing with the ashes of the red heifer. Thus, John's immersions would have been allowable in these waters.

One matter must still be considered regarding the Baptist's place near the Dead Sea. Josephus' reports that Herod Antipas has John killed in his desert stronghold Machaerus, which lies 25 km (16 mi) southeast of the mouth of the Jordan River.

> But to some of the Jews the destruction of Herod's army seemed to be divine vengeance, for his treatment of John, surnamed the Baptist. For Herod had put him to death, though he was good man…Though John, because of Herod's suspicions, was brought in chains to Machaerus, the stronghold that we have previously mentioned, and was there put to death… (*Ant.* 18:116-117, 119)[50]

The account begins with the historian remarking that upon sending his Nabatean wife away to her father, and planning to marry his brother's wife, Herod Antipas unwittingly embroils himself in a conflict with the king of Nabatea, Aretas. According to Josephus, Antipas' wife gets wind of his desires and requests departure to Machaerus. The historian adds an important detail, stating that the stronghold was subject to Aretas. The hilltop fortification was situated on the border of Antipas' tetrarchy and the Nabatean kingdom. The ensuing battle between Antipas and Aretas does little to change the former's fortunes, as his army is destroyed (*Ant*. 18:112-116). There is no indication that control of Machaerus returns to Antipas. Thus, there is an inconsistency in the Josephan text, which scholars have already pointed out.[51] Simply, could John have been murdered at a site that was no longer under the authority of the Galilean tetrarch? As with Josephus, in Matthew and Mark, the Baptist, who amasses a significant popularity among Herod's subjects (*Ant.* 18:118), stokes fear in the tetrarch. John openly rebukes his relationship with Philip's former wife, Herodias (Mark 6:14-29, also Matt 14:1-12). Flusser points out details in the gospels' accounts that effectively argue for moving the Baptist's death from Machaerus to

[50] Louis H. Feldman, trans., *Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, Books XVIII-XX* (London: Harvard University Press, 1969), 81-85.
[51] David Flusser, in collaboration with R. Steven Notley, *Jesus* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2001), 278.

Galilee, namely, Antipas holds a birthday banquet (Mark 6:21, Matt 14:6) that was given "for his courtiers and officers and the leading men of Galilee" (Mark 6:21). It makes little sense that a celebration of Antipas' birthday with Galilean leading mean[52] in attendance would be held at the fortress that bordered with the, potentially contentious, Nabatean kingdom. Reasonably, this indicates that John's murder likely took place somewhere in the Galilee, the central region of John's ministry and the locale of Antipas's capital city, Tiberias. Josephus' inconsistency alongside Matthew's and Mark's account are a compelling challenge to Machaerus being the location of John's death.

In conclusion, Taylor may be correct that "physical proximity means nothing in terms of tracing influence or connection."[53] However, it has endured as a factor in the Baptist's potential relationship to the *yaḥad*[54] and its persistence of somewhat merited. While reasons vary, the political, social, and cultural realities of a particular location can prove to be the catalyst for the emergence of new religious ideas. For example, Shmuel Safrai suggests that the Galilee—for whatever reason—was the geographical setting for the appearance of a group of early Jewish pietists known as the Hasidim.[55] Thus, examinations of John's and Jesus's possible relationship to this group, which flourished in the same region and historical period, mutually trading in similar or unique ideas, are warranted. In our particular case, the evidence that is often understood as connecting John the Baptist with the southern stretches of the Jordan river does not hold together under closer scrutiny. Notwithstanding the Gospel of John's portrayal of the Baptist's apparent itinerancy (i.e., baptizing at Aenon near Salim), or the later Byzantine Christian traditions on both east and west banks of the Jordan river, demonstrating that John's

[52] I am reading the three categories, courtiers, officers, and Galilean leading men, as a hendiatris, that is they are intended to express a single idea—the chief nobles of Antipas' Galilean court.
[53] Joan Taylor, *The Immerser*, 48.
[54] Most prominently in Charlesworth's article (see above).
[55] Shmuel Safrai, "The Pious ("Hassidim") and the Men of Deeds/*Hasidim ve-anshei maaseh,*" *Zion 50* (1985): 134-8 (Heb.).

ministry was located in the modern-day Judean wilderness is quite difficult. From here, if geographical region is employed to study the content of the Baptist's ministry, sufficient weight should be given to the Jewish Galilean ethos of the first century CE.

The Wilderness of Isaiah 40:3 and Luke's Baptist

The use of Isaiah 40:3 by both the *Community Rule* (1QS) and the four Gospels is significant. From Brownlee to Charlesworth, however, there endures an opinion that this parallel equals some form of a relationship.[56] In the scrolls, Is 40:3 appears in 1QS 8:14[57] and, partly in 9:19-20,[58] while Is 40:1-5 is attested in 4Q176 1 2 i 4-9. In the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and John all utilize Is 40:3, while Luke quotes Is 40:3-4, 5b in relation to the Baptist. Regarding the *serekh* quotation, it is, in part, a biblical justification for the community's separation into a wilderness—whether literal, metaphorical, or both[59]—from the dwelling of "perverse people" (הנ 9:17 ,אנשי העול ;8:13 ,שי העול). Column 8 of 1QS clarifies how Is 40:3 should be understood, "*This is (the) interpreting of the torah* (היאה מדרש התורה), which he commanded through Moses…" (8:15). Column 9 elaborates further, stating that "preparing the way" involves each member of the *yaḥad* walking blamelessly in what is revealed of God's truly wonderous mysteries (18-20). In 4Q176[60] a larger quotation of Isaiah, 40:1-5, is interconnected with other portions of prophet (more on this later). Regarding the *serekh* text and the gospels, both Joseph Baumgarten and Devorah Dimant argue that the interpretations of Is 40 in either corpus differ significantly and "therefore should remain distinct."[61] However, the gospels do share some

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[56] Brownlee, "John the Baptist," 72-74; Charlesworth, "John the Baptizer," 14; but also Taylor, *The Immerser*, 24.
[57] Par. 4Q259 (*Serekh*^{e}) 3:5.
[58] Par. 4Q259 (*Serekh*^{e}) 3:19.
[59] George J. Brooke, "Isaiah 40:3 and the Wilderness of the Community," in *New Qumran Texts and Studies:* Proceedings of the First Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Paris 1992, ed. George Brooke and Florentino García Martínez, STJD 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 117-32.
[60] Variously known as 4QTanḥumim, 4QJubilees(?), or 4QMutiple Compositions.
[61] Devorah Dimant, "Not Exile in the Desert but Exile in Spirit: The Pesher of Isa 40:3 in the *Rule of the Community* and the History of the Scrolls Community – Collected Studies," in *History, Ideology, and Bible Interpretation in the*

similarity to the interpretive style reflected in 1QS. The author of the *Community Rule* associates the prophetic passage with its own group. In good *pesher* style, the single Isaianic passage is fulfilled in the *yaḥad's* circumstance. While the gospels are reflecting on a past event, rather than a current predicament, Matthew and Mark appear to view the Baptist's place in the wilderness as a fulfillment of Is 40:3 (as well as, Mal 3:1 in Mark). John's Gospel differs, in that the prophetic passage is placed on the Baptist's lips (1:23). It is self-reflective, not unlike 1QS, but likely not the *ipsissima verba* of John.[62] Still, the interpretive style is the same, John sees his person as the fulfillment of the prophetic passage. In that sense, the gospel writers have something in common with the author of 1QS even if the applications diverge. Where Matthew, Mark, and John employ Isaiah in this fashion, however, Luke does not.[63]

Luke's departure from the gospels is exhibited in attributing a longer quotation of Is 40 to the content of the Baptist's teaching, rather than his person. The nuance is subtle, but critical. Unfortunately, the Lukan Baptist is mired in the synoptic problem.[64] The generally accepted solution, Markan Priority—with or without a theoretical sayings source, Q(uelle)—calls into question the historical reliability of texts that deviate from the Markan source. Yet, as Sanders and Davies correctly conclude, "no one solution to the synoptic problem is without objection."[65] Indeed, Luke's deviation is so significant that François Bovon, who ascribes to the two-source hypothesis (Markan Priority + Q), states that the Lukan Baptist is "organizing still older materials," has "roots in the most ancient Christian kerygma," and that individual sayings "could

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Dead Sea Scrolls FAT 90 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 460; Joseph M. Baumgarten, "The Unwritten Law in the Pre-Rabbinic Period," in *Studies in Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 32.

[62] Keener states, "extant evidence is insufficient to prove or disprove that John uttered the words attributed to him in 1:23," *The Gospel of John*, 1:473.

[63] *Pace* Marshall, *Luke*, 137.

[64] See E. P. Sanders and Margaret Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (London: SCM Press; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1989), 51-122.

[65] *Studying the Synoptic Gospels*, 112.

be attributed to the historical John."[66] Thus, the focus here will be on Luke's utilization of Is 40:3-5b as a mostly independent tradition that perhaps reflects the historical John, his disciples, or memories of his movement, thereby providing a more secure footing regarding any relationship with the Qumran community.

Before examining Luke's use of Isaiah, there are contextual matters that betray the partially independent nature of the Baptist (3:1-20). First, Luke does not, in this account,[67] utilize the moniker "Baptist" (βαπτιστὴς) or "Baptizer" (βαπτίζων), which is a later development of those who remember John's mission, including to some extent Josephus (βαπτιστοῦ**,** *Ant*. 18:116). Rather, Luke, on this occasion, speaks of John as one might expect in an ancient Jewish environment, "John son of Zechariah" (Ιωάννην τὸν Ζαχαρίου υἱὸν, 3:2; יוֹחָנָן בֶּן־זְכַרְיָה).[68] Second, John is not as present in Jesus' baptism as he is in Matthew, Mark, and John. Literarily, Matthew and Mark present a single, continuous narrative that locates the Baptist somehow participating in Jesus' immersion (Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11). Luke uniquely reports Jesus' baptism after John is imprisoned. In the third Gospel, John is not explicitly present at Jesus' baptism (Luke 3:21-22). Third, the Baptist's role in Luke as the messianic forerunner is muted. There is a single statement in Luke regarding who will come after him, but it is prefaced with, "all men questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he was the Christ" (3:15). The Baptist's acknowledgement that the "one" coming "is mightier" than him is disconnected (3:16-17) from the appearance of the apparent "one" (21-22). In both Matthew and Mark, mention of the one who is coming is directly followed by Jesus' entrance into the narrative (Matt

[66] *Luke 1: A Commentary of Luke 1:1-9:50*, trans. Christian M. Thomas, ed. Helmut Koester, *Hermeneia* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 119.
[67] Luke does employ "Baptist" later (7:20, 33, 9:19).
[68] Marshall notes that the use of "son" (υἱὸς) is unnecessary in Greek idiom and may reflect a Semitic source, I. Howard Marshall, *Commentary on Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster Press; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 135. The intent may be to draw readers back to his earlier narrative, thereby recalling John's father Zechariah (Luke 1:18-23), but the Gospel writer is still using a common form of expressing parentage in ancient Judaism.

14:3-4; Mark 6:17-18). Additionally, the Baptist's account concludes with his imprisonment (20). Jesus enters only after John's arrest and when "all the people had been baptized" (21). The other three gospels present Jesus' baptism in grand fashion: John comes from the Galilee "to be baptized" (βαπτισθῆναι) by John (Matt 3:13; Mark 1:9; John 1:31 = the Baptist's own retelling), John's role primarily is to introduce Jesus, and upon Jesus' immersion the heavens open and a divine voice speaks (Matt 3:16-17; Mark 1:10-11; John 1:33-34). Comparatively, baptism of Jesus in Luke is far less monumental. Fitzmyer suggests that Luke is "inspired" here by Mark.[69] This is a difficult proposition as Luke's obscure portrayal ignores the primary thrust of its Markan source, namely, Jesus' baptism as part of the commencement of Jesus' public ministry. Frankly, the Lukan Baptist is barely a forerunner, if he is one at all. If so, the Evangelist parallels the lack of evidence in early Jewish sources for an eschatological prophet—Elijah or otherwise—functioning as a forerunner to the messiah.[70]

The Lukan Baptist is not wholly unique from the others. He too understands the Baptist as a type of Elijah, the eschatological prophet[71] (3:7-9; Mark 1:2,[72] Matt 3:7-10)—a tradition that becomes associated with the prophet only in the post-exilic period[73]. Unlike the other gospels, he studiously avoids overlapping it with the baptism of Jesus. Lying behind this Elijah-type is the

[69] Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, AB 28, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 479.
[70] Barrera states, "the concept of Elijah as forerunner of the Messiah is not widely attested in the Pseudepigrapha," Julio Trebolle Barrera, "Elijah," *EDSS* 1:146. Regarding the scrolls, Alex Jassen states, "In none of these texts, however, does Elijah (or the eschatological prophet) appear as the harbinger of the messiah, whereby Elijah emerges prior to the arrival of the messiah in order to announce his arrival. Such a tradition will not appear unequivocally until the New Testament," *Mediating the Divine: Prophecy and Revelation in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Second Temple Judaism*, STDJ 68 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 155. See Morris M. Faierstein, "Why do the Scribes say that Elijah Must Come First?" *JBL* 100/1 (1981): 75–86; Rivka Nir, "The Appearance of Elijah and Enoch 'Before the Judgment was Held' 1 Enoch 90:31: A Christian Tradition," *Hen* 33/1 (2011): 108-12. But see, more recently, Anthony Ferguson, "The Elijah Forerunner Concept as an Authentic Jewish Expectation," *JBL* 137/1 (2018): 127-45; Bovon, *Luke 1*, 128.
[71] Ernst, *Johannes*, 81-84.
[72] John's presence as the Elijah-type eschatological prophet is embedded in Mark's fusion of Mal 3:1 and Is 40:3. See Notley and García, "Hebrew-Only Exegesis," 357-62.
[73] This association with John is already seen earlier in Luke (1:16-17), a statement that is missing any messianic reference. See Bovon, *Luke 1*, 37; Fitzmyer, *Luke I-XI*, 327; Marshall, *Commentary on Luke*, 58-59; Taylor. *The Immerser*, 93.

portrayal of the prophet in the book of Malachi. There, Elijah is envisioned as the catalyst for the repentance of Israel, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. *And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers* (וְהֵשִׁיב לֵב־אָבוֹת עַל־בָּנִים וְלֵב בָּנִים עַל־אֲבוֹתָם), lest I come and smite the land with a curse" (Malachi 4:5-6 [MT: 3:23-24]). Judgement is assuaged by adherence to the law—especially matters of the Temple—and acts of interpersonal justice. A similar idea is echoed in a exceedingly fragmentary portion of the so-called *Messianic Apocalypse*, 4Q521, regarding what will happen on that great day and what will occur with the coming of the messiah, "it is certain, fathers are coming to their sons" (4 ,נכוֹן בֹאים אבות על בנים Q521 2 iii 2).[74] So also, in Ben Sira, Elijah the one who will "at the appointed time…*calm the wrath* [i.e. of God] *before it intensifies, to turn the heart of the father to the son*… (κοπάσαι ὀργὴν πρὸ θυμοῦ, ἐπιστρέψαι καρδίαν πατρὸς πρὸς υἱὸν, 48:10). He is described as being taken up because of his great zeal for the law (ζηλῶσαι ζῆλον νόμου, 1 Macc 2:58). In mishnah Eduyot, the prophet will settle halakhic disputes, specifically, he will declare clean and unclean (לְטַמֵּא וּלְטַהֵר), put far off or bring near (לְרַחֵק וּלְקָרֵב), settles disputes (לְהַשְׁווֹת אֶת הַמַּחְלֹקוֹת), and make peace in the world (8:7 ,לַעֲשׂוֹת שָׁלוֹם בָּעוֹלָם). The Baptist in Matthew and Luke is not unlike this Elijah, especially his calls for repentance, the announcement of God's coming judgment (Luke 3:7-9; 15-17; ascribed to Jesus in Matt 3:11-12) and, uniquely in Luke, demands of interpersonal justice and charity among the people who have repented (Luke 3:10-11; see below).

Returning to Luke's use of Is 40, the longer reference (3-5b) stands in opposition to the interpretation and employment of a single passage in the other gospels. Elsewhere in Luke's Gospel, his use of the Hebrew Bible preserves varied styles of Jewish interpretation. Remarkably, when Hebrew Bible passages are employed in Luke's Gospel, they are often

[74] Émile Puech, "Une apocalypse messianique (4Q521)," *RevQ* 15 (1992): 492.

intended to signal its context and, not simply, the portion which is quoted. Sometimes these texts are also intended to lead to the reader to other key texts.[75] In particular, the context of Is 40 speaks of the *mevasser* (מְבַשֵּׂר), "the herald"[76]— albeit in the feminine form, *mevasseret* (מְבַשֶּׂרֶת, 9)—announcing redemption. In chapter 52, the figure of the *mevasser* appears again heralding the redemption of Zion. Luke's intention to recall both portions of Isaiah is conspicuously evident in that the LXX form of Is 40:5b and 52:10b are decidedly similar.

40:5b and all flesh shall see it together, the salvation of God…	καὶ ὄψεται πᾶσα σὰρξ τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ·
52:10 and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.[77]	καὶ ὄψονται πάντα τὰ ἄκρα τῆς γῆς τὴν σωτηρίαν τὴν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ.

This may be why Luke's text omits 40:5a, "And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed," and 40:5c, "for the mouth of the LORD has spoken," thereby highlighting 5b.

Both chapters are also part of Israel's redemption in early Judaism (e.g., Ps. Sol. 11; 1 Bar 5:1-9). In 4Q176, redemption and the redeemer (10 11 8 ,יי גואלֹ) are vividly represented with numerous Isaianic passages including Is 40:1-5 (1 2 i 4-8) and 52:1-3 (8 11 1-4). Moreover, early Jewish authors also viewed Is 61 in similar light. While the *mevasser* is explicitly missing, it attests the infinitive לְבַשֵּׂר and shares in ideas of redemption. Both chapters 52 and 61 form part of the portrayal of the eschatological redeemer in 11QMelchizedek (11Q13 2:9-10, 16-20, 23). Thus, part of the Lukan Baptists's role is as a *mevasser* who heralds redemption. In fact, the Baptist as a *mevasser* permeates the Lukan portrayal. It is Luke who states, "Therefore, with many exhortations *he* [i.e., John] *brought good news* (εὐηγγελίζετο) to the people" (3:18). The

[75] See R. Steven Notley and Jeffrey P. Garcia, "The Hebrew Scriptures in the Third Gospel," in *Searching the Scriptures: Studies in Context and Intertextuality*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Jeremiah Johnston, LNTS 543 (London and New York: Bloomsbury, T & T Clark, 2015), 128-47; also, Fitzmyer, *Luke I-XI*, 533.
[76] *HALOT* 1:164-5.
[77] Luke may have intended the closing citation of Is 40:5b as also an allusion 52:10. Further the Masoretic text of both verses read differently. However, it is not beyond the pale to suggest that perhaps the difference between the LXX and the MT are due alternate Hebrew mss.

verb εὐαγγελίζω,[78] which is the equivalent of בשׂר (the root of מבשר). The Greek verb occurs 52 times in the Gospels, but Luke is the only one who applies it to the Baptist.

Commenting here on the additional teachings attributed to the Baptist in Luke (3:11-14) and the role they play in the *mevasser's* message is warranted. Having repented, the people, tax collectors, and soldiers ask John what they should do. John's instructions to be charitable and just in their dealings with others harkens back to the function of the *mevasser* in Is 61. There the figure brings news to the "afflicted"/"poor" (עֲנָוִים/πτωχοῖς), proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor and day of his vengeance (1-3). The redemptive portrait entails bringing justice to those in need (e.g., binding the broken-hearted, liberating the captives, and rebuilding ancient remains, 1-4; cf. Is 58). God is described specifically as a lover of "righteousness" (מִשְׁפָּט/δικαιοσύνην, 8) and that "righteousness" will spring forth from Israel (יַצְמִיחַ צְדָקָה וּתְהִלָּה; ἀνατελεῖ… δικαιοσύνην καὶ ἀγαλλίαμα) before the nations (11). Isaiah's vision is paralleled in Psalm 146 where the fulfillment of the *mevasser's* message of justice to the afflicted is accomplished by God (6-8; see 4Q521 below). The psalm incorporates teachings from elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible that are germane to this study, especially, that God, feeds the hungry (cf. Is 58:7) and God, who treasures righteousness, also loves the righteous ones, or the ones who practice righteousness (יְהוָה אֹהֵב צַדִּיקִים, 8). Schiffman specifies that "righteousness" in the Bible reflects the fulfillment of relational requirements "describing how humans relate to God and humanity."[79] Accordingly, righteousness in Isaiah between God and his people, and between Israel and the nations, plays a role in the prophet's redemptive portrait. By the Hellenistic period, "righteousness" (δῖκαιοσύνη) took on an additional semantic nuance, specifically the act of giving alms to the poor/needy (Sir 44:10; Matt 6:1). These concepts that are associated with

[78] εὐαγγελίζω is also verb that is utilized to translate מְבַשֵּׂר in 2 Sam 4:10, 18:26; Is 40:9 (מְבַשֶּׂרֶת), **52:7**; Nah 2:1.
[79] Lawrence H. Schiffman, "Foundations of *Tzedek* and *Tzedakah*: Righteousness and Charity in the Jewish Tradition," (unpublished article).

righteousness are on display in the Lukan Baptist's additional teachings, namely, the people should give garments and food to those who lack, the publicans should be just in their collecting, and soldiers should avoid violence and false accusation (3:10-14). Moreover, this aligns with Josephus' testimony of John,

"He was a good man and had exhorted the Jews to lead righteous lives, to practice righteousness (δικαιοσύνῃ[80]) towards their fellows and piety towards God" (*Ant*. 18:117). These various interconnections with biblical and early Jewish ideas, as well as how John's movement was remembered by Josephus, demonstrates that the Lukan Baptist is not an invention of the author. Even more to the point, it strengthens our assertion that John is being characterized, in part, as the *mevasser* of redemption.

Up to this point, the two traditions embedded in Luke's depiction—both shared with, and independent of, the other gospels—are that of the Elijah and the figure of the *mevasser*. While the intersection of these idea eludes us in the sectarian scrolls, evidence of it is preserved in 4Q521, which is referenced above. The *mevasser*, as someone anointed by God, is missing in the fragmentary texts. The anointed one is referenced in 2 ii 4 1, "[…For the hea]vens and the earth shall listen to his anointed." The rest of the column, however, speaks of God's redeeming actions. Perhaps this column is intended as a fulfillment of things referenced in an earlier column. But that remains unclear. In any event, God's active redemption is associated with several biblical texts.[81] In particular for this study is Is 40 in line 5, "For the Lord will attend to the pious and the righteous he will call by name" (בשם יקרא=Is 40:26), and Is 61 in line 12, "he will bring good news to the afflicted" (ענוים יבשר, cf. Is 61:1). The very beginning of the next

[80] Josephus' text is from Benedictus Niese, ed, *Flavii Iosephi Opera*, vol. IV (Berolini: Apud Weidmannos 1955), 161. J. P. Meier supports the authenticity of the Josephan account but takes a different approach suggesting that the historian's Baptist is portrayed as someone who fits neatly within a Greco-Roman milieu, "John the Baptist and Josephus: Philology and Exegesis" *JBL* 11/2 (1992): 225-37.

[81] See comments by Émile Puech, "521. 4QApocalypse Messianique," in *Qumrân Grotte 4 XVII: Textes Hébreux (4Q521-4Q528, 4Q576-4Q579)*, DJD XXV (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 12-17.

column, 2 iii 2, references the work of Elijah in Malachi, "it is certain: fathers are coming to their sons (אבֹות על בנים=Mal 4:6 [MT 3:24])." While much of the scroll is fragmentary, it is clear that repentance, redemption, and judgement are themes that are present in the portions that have survived.

Issues regarding the announcement of judgment and redemption in John's ministry are largely missing in Mark and John. As we have noted, Mark alludes to the Elijah tradition in Malachi (Mark 1:1, 6) but drops it in favor of shifting attention to Jesus' baptism. The Matthean Baptist attests additional attributions to the Baptist, including judgment (3:7-10). Allusions to Elijah are present there and the call to repentance is associated with the kingdom of God (1). Bearing fruits of repentance (ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν, 8) are an admonishment to stave off judgment. Luke trades in similar ideas of repentance and judgement as witnessed in biblical, Second Temple, and mishnaic Elijianic traditions. However, the longer quotation of Is 40, and preservation of additional teachings, make contact with *mevasser* texts from Isaiah that speak to a hoped-for redemption, one that may be national, and the manner which it will be wrought, namely, repentance, charity and justice. The coalescing of Elijah with the *mevasser*[82] and this triad of repentance > redemption > judgement, although perhaps not in this exact progression, is attested together in early Jewish texts and complemented by similar biblical passages. That Luke makes contact with them argues that his departure from the other gospels is a reworking of a more ancient tradition that retains some witness of the historic John and his ministry.

Garnering any relationship between Qumran and John the Baptist by use of Is 40:3 is difficult. Dimant has already warned that they should remain separate (see above). The author of 1QS utilizes the prophetic passage as a self-reflective justification for the *yaḥad's* wilderness

[82] In a rather late midrash, the prophet Elijah is associated with the *mevasser* who will proclaim the coming of the messiah and also "the redemption of Israel from exile," *Otzar Midrashim, Sefer Eliyahu, Introduction 5*.

existence. John the Baptist—apart from John's Gospel—is never portrayed applying the Isaianic passage to himself or his movement. This is the work of the Evangelists. Matthew, Mark, and John see the Baptist as the fulfillment of the prophetic verse. The *pesher*-like utilization of Is 40 in these three gospels bears some similarities to its use in the *Community Rule*. In this respect, the Evangelists' ascription of Isaiah to John's ministry is similar to 1QS, even if the ensuing interpretations differ significantly. As we have shown, Luke charts a different course. If the Elijah-*mevasser* of Luke is indeed a portrait of the historic movement—or even a memory of it—then more may be possible in ascertaining any relationship to Qumran vis-à-vis the use of Is 40. Issues of repentance, redemption, and judgment permeate most corners of early Judaism albeit separately. And so, they are present in texts thought to be authored by the Qumran community (e.g., 1QS, 1QH, CD), as well as texts thought to be regarded by the *yahad* as important. This is not surprising given the aforementioned popularity of these ideas. Therefore, we must depend how these ideas are communicated and to whom. While it has been argued that there exists some evidence of inclusivism among the *yahad*—even in regard to messianic or eschatological redemption—[83] all of these hopes seem to work via the community. In some sense, it is belonging to the elect community of Qumran that functions as their arbiter. The concept that John as a mediator of redemption or judgment is unknown in Luke; the Baptist is the herald. John did not expect that affiliation with his movement specifically to be catalyst for either point. Rather, the Baptist of Luke, this *mevasser*-Elijah, if you will, viewed them as consequences of Israel's actions. Repentance, charity and interpersonal justice (i.e., the fruits of repentance) was the manner that either (national?) redemption[84] and/or judgment were wrought. Additionally, that acts of justice and charity are the catalysts for either are missing in Qumran communal texts.

[83] Gudrun Holtz, "Inclusivism at Qumran," DSD 16/1 (2009): 52.

[84] Repentance and redemption in regard to the appearance of Elijah also appear together a later midrashim, Pirqe R. El. 43:11. In the Talmud, repentance and good works bring redemption (b. Shab. 118b; b. Yoma 86b; b. Sanh. 97b).

Therefore, there is a distinguishable contrast between the Lukan Baptist and Qumran.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to reassess two matters that have stayed the course in aligning John the Baptist with the Qumran *yaḥad*. These are geographical proximity and the association of Is 40:3 with either. On the one hand, proximity, it has been argued, is not a good enough reason for association; yet, it endures. Additionally, we have suggested here that geography should not be so easily dismissed, as it, along with societal developments in a particular region, could provide some insight of the movements that developed there. Still, under close scrutiny, there is insufficient evidence to place John the Baptist anywhere near Khirbet Qumran.[85] Of course, this does not eschew a relationship. But it negates a relationship based on proximity. Moving forward, studies of John's relationship to any particular early Jewish group should give full weight to the 1st century CE Galilean (Gaulanitis) ethos in as much as—perhaps more than—is given to the desert around Jericho. On the other hand, the utilization of Isaiah proves somewhat problematic, especially, but not solely, because of the style of attribution utilized by the gospels. Our examination of the Lukan Baptist indicates that it is trading in ideas that may go back to the historical John or a memory of him. It is clear that Luke's longer quotation of Isaiah 40, namely, vv. 3-4, and 5b is intended to connect the Baptist's preaching with that of the *mevasser*, the herald of redemption. Interweaved with ancient Jewish ideas of the Elijah's eschatological role, John's ministry is seen through the lens of a *mevasser*-Elijah whose call to repentance and resulting righteous acts of interpersonal justice and charity are the

[85] The earliest reference that I discovered to the Judaean Wilderness was a German map from the mid 19th century, *Map of Palestine or the Holy Land* (Philadelphia: E.H. Butler & Co, 1859), Amir Cahanovitc Collection. Public domain work, Israel, ACC 1102-2). See also *PEFQS* 1-2 (1869-1870): 31.

incitation for redemption and judgement. While these concerns permeate all forms of ancient Judaism, including Qumran, the concept that repentance and the intervening charitable acts that lead to redemption and judgment effectively separate John the Baptist from the *yaḥad*. However, relationships are nuanced. The two aspects reexamined here are only part of a more complex story.