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

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to challenge the nearly 70 years of attempts to identify some degree of relationship/influence between John the Baptist and the Qumran community vis-à-vis geographical proximity and the use of Isaiah 40:3. First, the confluence of traditions that the Baptist's immersion event(s) occurred on the southern stretches of the Jordan river—near Jericho—his presumed association with the Essenes, and Khirbet Qumran's location in the Judean wilderness, have resulted in geographical proximity's continual enumeration among arguments for a relationship/influence between the two. Second, the use of Isaiah 40:3 in the Dead Sea Community Rule (1QS) naturally draws attention to its occurrence in the gospels to describe the Baptist's role. Most examinations, however, of 1QS and the gospels are matter-of-factly comparisons with the Gospel of Mark. Consequently, this has hindered fruitful analysis of Luke's employment of a longer Isaianic passage and its place in the third gospel's mostly independent Baptist narrative. As such, this study will show: 1) there is little to no evidence from the early Roman period that warrants locating John's event(s) near Qumran or in the Judean wilderness, and 2) the Lukan portrait of John diverges from its counterparts depicting an eschatological "herald" whose calls for interpersonal justice appear to be a catalyst for God's—not a messiah's—direct redemptive engagement. It distances John somewhat from the *yaḥad* and, importantly, relocates at least one portrayal of the Baptist in the wider landscape of early Jewish thought.

Keywords

John the Baptist, Qumran, Wilderness, Isaiah 40, Herald

1. 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] Continual research into the scrolls—in particular,

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* For R. Steven Notley, who continues to show me first-hand the importance of physical setting to reading and understanding the Gospels.

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[1] Weston W. Fields, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Full History—Volume 1* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 163–164. Harding's response was to Mr. and Mrs. Bechtel, who showed interest in contributing to a fund to 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 19th 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), 2:145–147; rev. and trans. of *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart: aus den Quellen neu bearbeitet*, 11 vols. (Leipzig: Leiner, 1853–1875). Graetz did not believe 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 described 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. 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* 1:262–269; 2:739–746, respectively.

[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 (Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 15–52.

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 John the Baptist must cross the Qumran/Essene bridge.[5] In 2006, 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. First, while there remains no consensus on whether the Baptist or his movement were affiliated with the Qumran/Essenes, geographical proximity, namely, the *yaḥad's* location at Khirbet Qumran[8] in the so-called Judean wilderness,[9] and John baptizing on

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[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. Devorah Dimant and Uriel Rappaport, STDJ 10 (Leiden: Brill; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1992), 340–346; Hartmut Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran: On the Essenes, Qumran, John the Baptist, and Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 221–255, 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): 256–284; 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), 206–208; Josef Ernst, "Johannes der Täufer: Interpretation," *Geschichte, Wirkungsgeschichte*, BZNW 53 (2013), 268–284.

[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 that the Baptist went through any stages required of the *yaḥad's* novitiates. Charlesworth's conjecture closely parallels the video 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 broke his vow after two years. While this portion of the video is exceedingly brief, the implications are as obvious as they are fictional. Charlesworth is not the only one to offer specifics as to why John would have left the desert community. Marcus offers three reasons for the Baptist's departure, *John the Baptist*, 35–36.

[8] See Daniel R. Schwartz, "Introduction: On the Jewish Background of Christianity," in *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*, WUNT 60 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 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 near Qumran. The traditional Jordanian baptismal site where John was located, al-Maghtas, dates to the Byzantine period and is on the eastern bank of the Jordan river, would have been in first-century

the southern end of the Jordan river near Jericho—a distance of no more than 16 km (10 mi)—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 regarding this parallel, most have not fully appreciated Luke's unique portrayal of the Baptist and how it informs this issue. Therefore, the aim is to reassess these two matters as part of a larger and continual examination of John's relationship, or lack thereof, with the Qumran community.

2. 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 deviation 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. Mark and Luke's Gospels describe that the Baptist is simply in the "wilderness." In contrast, Matthew appears to attest a more secure[12]—perhaps unnecessary[13]—toponym, "the wilderness of Judah"[14] (τῇ ἐρήμῳ τῆς Ἰουδαίας) or as it is commonly understood, the Judean desert.

2.1 *The Wilderness*

Before dealing with this toponym, it is worth noting that the semantic range of "wilderness," ἔρημος, and its Hebrew equivalent, מִדְבַּר, offer more nuance than an arid, dry region. 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] Outside of the Baptist narratives—when geographical clues can be ascertained—

Perea. The site facing al-Maghtas on the western bank of the river, Qasr al-Yahud, is situated in the Judean Wilderness—a relatively modern name for this area (see below).

[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; Joel Marcus, *John the Baptist in History and Theology* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2018), 30–33.

[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—a site near the ancient road that led from the Transjordan to Jerusalem—and al-Maghtas (see, n. 9) as possibilities, 13–15.

[12] Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 280.

[13] Taylor, "John the Baptist," 4; also, eadem, *The Immerser*, 42–48.

[14] Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author's.

[15] *HALOT* 2:548.

[16] BDAG 392.

the Synoptic Gospels use "wilderness" (ἔρημος) primarily to refer to desolate areas that are in the Galilee and Gaulanitis, which were surely not arid and dry.[17] 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" (τόπον ἔρημον πόλεως καλουμένης Βηθσαϊδά, Luke 9:10[18]). Therefore, the occurrence of "wilderness" alone does not require a desert location.

2.2 *Jerusalem and Judea*

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 only two possible geographic identifiers, "And there went out to him *all 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, 3:5). Neither are intended to pinpoint the Baptist's location, however. Vincent Taylor notes that Mark's statement of "all" reads somewhat hyperbolically and indicates that level of interest that John aroused.[19] Matthew is also not concerned with providing the geography of John's movement, but rather, both gospel writers are heavily invested in John's role as Elijah.[20] 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 the

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[17] 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.

[18] Mss. A, C, K, N, W, Γ, Δ, Ξ^{mg}, $f^{1.13}$, 565, 700, 892, 1424, 𝔐 $sy^{(p).h}$.

[19] Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indexes*, 2nd ed., Thornapple Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 155; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Grand Rapids: Fortress Press, 2007), 142.

[20] Craig Evans argues that Matthew should not be read hyperbolically here, reasoning "for Josephus says much the same," *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 68. Yet, when referencing the crowds (τῶν ἄλλων συστρεφομένων, *Ant.* 18.118) that came to John, the first-century historian makes no mention from where they came. The bulk of the story—*sans* mention of the Herodian fortress Machaerus (more on this below)—is primarily an account that takes place in the Galilee (*Ant.* 18.116–119), esp. when compared to the Gospel accounts.

[21] See, for example, Collins, *Mark*, 141; William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark:*

messenger of Mal 3:1, perhaps Elijah, with John the Baptist (1:2). Third, Matthew preserves testimony of John's warning of coming judgment (Matt 3:10; also, Luke 3:7–9), a role envisioned for Elijah and Moses in Mal 3–4 and Elijah in other postbiblical texts (more on this later). It is conceivable, then, that both Jerusalem and Judah are part of Matthew's and Mark's allusion to Malachi 3. There the messenger who portends judgment will purify the sons of Levi, allowing Jerusalem and Judah to offer pleasing offerings "as the days of old and former years" (כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וּכְשָׁנִים קַדְמֹנִיּוֹת, 3:4). Therefore, in the same manner that being dressed in camel hair and a leather waistband is not a statement of the Baptist's fashion sense, the reference to Jerusalem and Judah is not by itself a compelling argument for a specific location.[22]

Luke also refers to the "wilderness" without 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 several places along the river. 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, 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 mentioned span most of the length of the Jordan river from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea.

2.3 *The Wilderness of Judea*

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 בְּנֶגֶב עֲרָד). Thus, the wilderness of Judah here lies in the Negev, near the city of Arad, which is not far from the western shore of the Dead Sea but is approximately 107 km (66.5 mi) 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

The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 51; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Commentary*, Hermeneia, trans. James E. Crouch, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 135–136; Herbert W. Basser with Marsha Cohen, *The Gospel of Matthew and Judaic Traditions: A Relevance-Based Commentary*, BRLJ 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 84–85.

[22] R. Steven Notley, "The Geographical Setting for the Ministry of John and the Baptism of Jesus" in *The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World*, ed. Anson F. Rainey and R. Steven Notley (Jerusalem: Carta, 2005), 350-351.

that is south of Judah." 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 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 is referred to in the psalm, but it has been suggested to be an allusion to David's flight from Absalom (2 Sam 15–17). If indeed 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 8 km (5 mi) 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" (וַיֵּשֶׁב דָּוִד בַּמְּצָדוֹת וַיֵּשֶׁב בָּהָר בְּמִדְבַּר־זִיף, 1 Sam 23:14). Whether the toponym "wilderness of Judah" is intended to direct the reader back to either account is unclear. When geographical coordinates can be ascertained, it appears that biblical literature locates the "wilderness of Judah" as an area that encompassed part of 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 early Roman period (1st century CE), the toponym may have been obvious—the "wilderness of Judah" is the wilderness that 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 a region that is so active in the Hellenistic and Roman period, 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

[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] This was brought to my attention in a private conversation with Marc Turnage.

[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).

century BCE and 7th century CE.[27] Furthermore, Christian 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 the "wilderness of Judah"? Taylor suggests that it creates unnecessary repetition but "is perhaps meant to clarify where we are at the start."[29] 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 the "wilderness of Judah" because he was unfamiliar with other desert regions.[31] This argumentation only holds, however, if the area now designated as the Judaean wilderness was known as such when Matthew's Gospel was written. As we contend, 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 Matthean creation of a previously unknown toponym for the Galilean lake due to early Christianity's understanding that Jesus' ministry was a fulfillment of the prophecy mentioned in Isa 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 with "wilderness of Judah," it would have been lost on the 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). This prophetic motif drives the appearance of the

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[27] See Leah Di 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), 106–117. 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.

[31] Schwartz, "John the Baptist," n. 3.

[32] R. Steven Notley, "The Sea of Galilee: Development of an Early Christian Toponym," *JBL* 128.1 (2009): 183–185; idem, *The Sacred Bridge*, 352–354.

"wilderness of Judah." In the 1 King's 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*." (בַּמִּדְבָּר,1 Kgs 19:3–4).[33] The prophet flees to Beersheva due to 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." Moreover, Elijah's role in early Judaism is partly seen as bringing about the nation's repentance prior to judgment (Mal 4:6 [MT: 3:24]). Aspects of this are associated with the revelations of judgment that Elijah receives at Mount Horeb (Mal 4:5 [MT 3:23]; Sir 48:7–10), where the Prophet concludes his aforementioned journey (1 Kgs 19:8). 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 as a fulfillment of the expected coming of the prophet whose wilderness (of Judah) journey is interpreted later in the light of the aforementioned Elijianic themes.

2.4 *Locating the Baptist's Ministry*

Notley's and Schwartz's argument for alternate locations of John's immersion events has received only a modicum of scholarly attention, and 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 13–17 km (8–11 mi) south of Scythopolis/Beth Shean[35]—although identifying the spring (i.e., Aenon) has proven difficult.[36] While Schwartz's tendency is correct, namely, "that some John the Baptist wilderness traditions 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

[33] 1 Kings follows Judges' general geography by indicating that the "wilderness" area that belongs to Judah is near Arad and Beersheva, which is in the biblical Negev.
[34] Schwartz, "John the Baptist," 117.
[35] Tsafrir, Di Segni, and Green identify "Tel er Radgha," Salem III, Salumias; *Tabula*, 219, which is located 13 km (8 mi) south of Scythopolis/Beth Shean. Avi Yonah identified Tel Abu Sus, *Roman Gazeteer,* 92, which is approximately 17 km (11 mi) south of Scythopolis/Beth Shean.
[36] Avi-Yonah identifies two sites for "Aenon," springs 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.

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

Before reviewing Notley's argument, it is necessary to examine the Gospel of John's reference to "Bethany beyond the Jordan" (Βηθανίᾳ...πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, 1:28).[39] This Bethany is not the village of Martha and Mary referenced in 11:18 as being 3 km (1.8 mi) from Jerusalem (11:18). "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." Excavations of Tell al-Kharrar—situated in Wadi al-Kharrar—between 1996 and 1997, led archaeologist Mohammed Waheeb to state that, "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 essential to understanding the development of Christian traditions in the holy land, most of the remains date

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[38] See Mark A. Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus*, SNTMS 134 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 67.

[39] Origen and Chrysostom support reading "Bethabara" (Βηθαβαρά) rather than "Bethany," which is attested in several manuscripts of John. Likely a Greek form of "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, see 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 (*monticulous*) 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 this identification at that point of the Jordan, "Bethabara" is identified on the Madaba Map on the western bank of the Jordan. 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 לַיַּרְדֵּן; 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.

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] It is unclear which remains are early Roman as Waheeb lists fallen ashlars, sand, pottery sherds, and coins but does not provide 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, perhaps Roman, 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 traveling through the Transjordan.[43] Therefore, the presence of early Roman remains may be evidence that this area of Wadi al-Kharrar functioned as a way-stop for pilgrims going to and from Jerusalem. The river's nearby springs and ford allowed access from the region of Perea (in the Transjordan) to Judea/Jerusalem. Unfortunately, detailed accounts of travel to Jerusalem in the first century CE through the Transjordan are meager (cf. *J.W.* 2.43). However, Luke's description of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem as going through Jericho (19:1) indicates that he traveled through that area on occasion.[44] Consequently, that the Evangelist's "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" has been properly identified at Tell al-Kharrar is uncertain.

Particularly germane to this discussion is Notley's assessment that it is possible for "Bethany beyond the Jordan" to be identified north of the Sea of Galilee. As noted, "beyond the Jordan" can refer to any place along the eastern bank of the river including the portion located north of the lake. This section of the river 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).[45] Moreover, following the proposals of Brownlee and Reisner, Notley contends that "Bethany" (Βηθανία, 1:23) might be identified with the Bashan/Batanea region on the eastern side of the river in the modern-day Golan. As he notes, "John's ministry in the north seems a more fitting setting for his critique of actions involving the Herodian families, who resided in the Galilee and the north. John's popularity and outspoken critique resulted in his imprisonment by Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee."[46] As such, he adds that a

[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): 129–145.

[44] Notley, "The Last Days of Jesus," in *The Sacred Bridge*, 363; see also Jeffrey P. García, "Epistle: Jesus and His Pilgrimage Practices," *BAR* 47.2 (2021): 60–62.

[45] Notley, "The Geographical Setting," 350–351. See also Rainer Reisner, "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.

[46] Notley, "The Geographical Setting," 351. See also Reisner, "Bethany Beyond the

northern setting, specifically northwestern, seemingly makes sense of John's narrative after Jesus' baptism. Some additional details in John help to fill out this aforementioned location.

The evangelist reports that two of the Baptist'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 are always set by the northern shores of 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 unfeasible 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 "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—then heading to the region of the Galilee would have been a matter of crossing the Jordan. The river formed 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 comports with the Gospel of John's evidence.[47]

2.5 *Machaerus and the Baptist's Death*

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 [i.e., Antipas] army seemed to be divine vengeance, for his treatment of John, surnamed the Baptist. For Herod had put

Jordan," 53–56.

[47] Notley suggests 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, m. Par. 8:10), may prohibit any form of ritual immersion south of the lake where these waters meet, "Geographical Setting," 351. The context of the mishnah deals with the waters of immersion for "males with seminal discharge" (זָבִין), "sufferers of a skin disease" (מְצוֹרָעִין), and waters for mixing with the ashes of red heifer (מֵי חַטָּאת, 8:8–9; see the ruling of Akiva and Hanina in the toseftan par.). 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 designates that the waters where the Yarmuk and the Jordan meet as being unfit for the three aforementioned categories. Thus, other forms of ritual immersion—likely, including the Baptist's immersion events—would have been permitted in these waters.

> 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).[48]

Josephus begins by remarking that Herod Antipas unwittingly embroils himself in a conflict with king Aretas of Nabatea after Antipas sends his wife—Aretas' daughter—back to her father in order for him to marry his brother Philip's wife. According to Josephus, Antipas' wife gets wind of his desires and requests departure to Machaerus. The reason being, as the historian adds, the stronghold was subject to her father.[49] 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, his army is destroyed (*Ant.* 18.112–116). 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 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).[50] It makes little sense that a celebration of Antipas' birthday with Galilean leading mean[51] in attendance would be held at the fortress that bordered with the, potentially contentious, Nabatean kingdom. Reasonably, this indicates that John's murder is portrayed in Matthew, Mark, and Luke as transpiring somewhere in the Galilee, the central region of John's ministry and the locale of Antipas's capital city, Tiberias. Thus, the consistency of the Synoptic Gospel's depiction of John's death in the Galilee, the location of Herod Antipas' seat of power in Tiberias, and the general location of the Baptist's Galilean ministry comprise a compelling challenge to Josephus' identification of the desert fortress as the place of John's death.

In conclusion, Taylor may be correct that "physical proximity means

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[48] Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities, Books 18–20*, trans. and ed. Louis H. Feldman (London: Harvard University Press, 1969), 81–85.

[49] There is an alternate manuscript reading to 18:112 that is noted by Feldman which suggests that the messengers, and not the fortress, are under subject to Aretas. Feldman, ed., *Jewish Antiquities*, 79.

[50] See David Flusser's discussion on this issue, especially Josephus' double reference to the fortress of Machaerus in *Ant.* 18, in *Jesus*, with the collaboration of R. Steven Notley, 3rd ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2001), 278–279; and Notley, "Geographical Setting," 351.

[51] I am reading the three categories, courtiers, officers, and Galilean leading men as a hendiadys, that is they are intended to express a single idea—the chief nobles of Antipas' Galilean court.

nothing in terms of tracing influence or connection."[52] However, it has endured as a factor in the Baptist's potential relationship to the *yaḥad*.[53] Surely, geographical proximity should not be wholly abandoned. While reasons vary, the political, social, and cultural realities of a particular region at any point in history can prove the catalyst for the emergence of new religious ideas. For example, Shmuel Safrai suggests that the particularities of Galilean culture in the first century were an important component to the development of a group of early Jewish pietists known as the Hasidim.[54] 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 under closer scrutiny. Even more to the point, demonstrating that John's ministry was located in the modern-day Judean wilderness seems an insurmountable task and should not be enumerated among the reasons for a relationship between John and Qumran.

3. 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, there endures an opinion that this parallel equals some form of relationship.[55] In the scrolls, Isa 40:3 appears in 1QS 8:14[56] and, partly in 9:19–20,[57] while Isa 40:1–5 is attested in 4Q176 1 2 i 4–9. In the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and John utilize Isa 40:3, while Luke quotes Isa 40:3–4, 5b in relation to the Baptist.

3.1 *Isaiah 40:3*

Regarding the 1QS quotation, it is, in part, a biblical justification for the community's separation into a wilderness—whether literal, metaphorical, or both[58]—from the dwelling of "perverse people" (אנשי העול, 9:17; הנשי העול, 8:13). Column 8 of 1QS clarifies how Isa 40:3 should be understood, "*This is (the)*

[52] Taylor, *The Immerser,* 48.
[53] Charlesworth, "John the Baptizer."
[54] Shmuel Safrai, "The Pious ('Hassidim') and the Men of Deeds/*Hasidim ve-anshei maaseh,*" *Zion* 50 (1985): 134–138 [Heb.]. See also idem, "Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature" *JJS* 16.1–2 (1965): 15–33; "Jesus as a Hasid," *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies*: *Jerusalem, August 16–24, 1989, Div. B*, ed. David Asaf (Jerusalem: World Congress of Jewish Studies, 1990), 1–7 [Heb.]; Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 58–82.
[55] Brownlee, "John the Baptist," 72–74; Charlesworth, "John the Baptizer," 14; but also, Taylor, *The Immerser*, 24.
[56] Par. 4Q259 (Serekh^{e}) 3:5.
[57] Par. 4Q259 (Serekh^{e}) 3:19.
[58] 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), 117–132.

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). While both Baumgarten and Dimant argue that the interpretations of Isa 40 in the Gospels and 1QS differ significantly and "therefore should remain distinct."[59] The gospels do share some similarity to the interpretive style reflected in the scroll. 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* present 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 Isa 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. That is, the interpretive style is not dissimilar, John sees himself 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.

Luke charts a different course both methodologically and interpretatively.[60] The evangelist's departure from his counterparts is exhibited in attributing a longer quotation of Isa 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.[61] The generally accepted solution, Markan Priority—with or without the theoretical sayings source, Q(*uelle*)—calls into question the reliability of texts that deviate from the presumed Markan source. Yet, as Sanders and Davies correctly conclude, "no one solution to the synoptic problem is without objection."[62] Indeed, Luke's deviation is so significant that 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 be attributed to the historical John."[63] Joseph Fitzmyer asserts that apart from John's presence in the wilderness and the occurrence of Isa 40:3, the Lukan composition is "independent" [64] even though he does not

[59] 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 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.

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

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

[62] Sanders and Davies, *Studying*, 112.

[63] F. Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary of Luke 1:1–9:50*, trans. Christian M. Thomas, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 119.

[64] Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, AB 28 (New York: Doubleday,

assess the value of it with regard to the Baptist. The focus of this second part of the study, then, will treat, in contrast to Fitzmyer et al., the employment of Isa 40:3–4, 5b as a mostly independent tradition that perhaps reflects the historical John, his disciples, or memories of his movement, and provides additional information about the Baptist that allows a fresh assessment of his relationship, if any, to the Qumran community.

3.2 *Luke's Baptism*

Before examining Luke's use of Isaiah, there are contextual matters that betray the partly independent nature of the Baptist narrative (3:1–20). First, Luke does not, in this account,[65] 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 בַּר־זְכַרְיָה).[66] 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 only after John is imprisoned and all the people have been baptized. 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 (see Acts 18:24–26), 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 14:3–4; Mark 6:17–18). Additionally, the other three gospels present Jesus' baptism in grand fashion: Jesus 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, Jesus' immersion in Luke is far less monumental. Fitzmyer suggests that Luke is

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1981), 479. *Luke I–IX*, 452. Fitzmyer points out that there are five Lukan stand outs, among them being the longer Isaianic passage.

[65] Luke does employ "Baptist" later (cf. 7:20, 33, 9:19).

[66] 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. But the Gospel writer is still utilizing a common way of expressing parentage in ancient Judaism, see, e.g., 4Q477 2 ii 3, 9; m. Šeqal. 8:5.

"inspired" here by Mark.[67] 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 presentation of the Lukan Baptist in 3:1–20 is barely that of a forerunner.[68] If as Bovon suggests, that Luke is reordering older material, perhaps the elements that do not deal specifically with the forerunner's role (c.f. vv. 13–15) represent the pieces of that more ancient tradition. Not functioning as the forerunner fits well within early Judaism; both Trebolle Barrera and Jassen have noted the scarcity of an eschatological prophet—Elijah or otherwise—functioning as a forerunner to the messiah in Second Temple sources.[69]

It is also not certain that the Luke, specifically 3:1–20, understands John's role as a type of Elijah—an eschatological prophet,[70] yes, an Elijah type, however, is uncertain. Indeed, an eschatological prophet does not necessitate an identification with Elijah (e.g., 1QS 9:11), although it is easy to see how Elijah's work, as envisioned in the Second Temple period (Mal 4:5–6 [MT: 3:23–24], Sir 48:10, m. 'Ed. 8:7; perhaps, 4Q521 2 iii 2), can be thought to lie behind the Lukan account. Of course, in Matthew and Mark, the attribution with Elijah is unmistakable (Matt 3:4; Mark 1:6[71]). In John, the Baptist denies any association with Elijah or any other prophet but acknowledges that he is the voice in the wilderness of Isa 40 (1:19–23). Notably outside of Luke's Baptist narrative, the third gospel does trade in Elijianic tradition (Luke 1:17, 9:7).[72] Yet, read as an independent narrative, Luke 3 is not necessarily Elijianic. As argued here, John's role in Luke is that of the "herald" (מבשר) of redemption and judgment as found in Isaiah and the reinterpretation of the prophet in Second Temple texts.

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[67] Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 479.

[68] See Fitzmyer's notes on Luke, *Luke I–IX*, 3:7–10, 464–465.

[69] 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; John J. Collins, "The Works of the Messiah," *DSD* 1.1 (1994): 103; Rivka Nir, "The Appearance of Elijah and Enoch 'Before the Judgment was Held' 1 Enoch 90:31: A Christian Tradition," *Hen* 33.1 (2011): 108–112. But see, more recently, Anthony Ferguson, "The Elijah Forerunner Concept as an Authentic Jewish Expectation," *JBL* 137.1 (2018): 127–145; Bovon, *Luke 1*, 128.

[70] Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 81–84.

[71] John's presence as the Elijah-type eschatological prophet is embedded in Mark's fusion of Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3. See Notley and García, "Hebrew-Only Exegesis," in *The Language Environment of First Century Judaea: Jerusalem Studies in the Synoptic Gospels—Volume 2,* ed. R. Steven Notley and Randall Buth, JCP 26 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 357–362.

[72] See Marcus' discussion on John/Jesus as Elijah/Elisha in *John the Baptist*, 87–91.

3.3 *Luke's Longer Isaiah Text*

Returning now to Luke's use of Isa 40:3–4, 5b, the quotation diverges from the interpretation and employment of Isa 40:3 in the other gospels. The longer passage, as in other places in Luke, is likely intended to point the reader/hearer to the larger context of Isa 40.[73] One of the markers that the Gospel is pointing to the context of the prophetic passage—as well as, perhaps, other interconnected texts—is the association of the verb εὐαγγελίζω[74] with John's teaching, "Therefore, with many exhortations *he* [i.e., John] *brought good news* (εὐηγγελίζετο) to the people" (3:18). The most common Hebrew equivalent for εὐαγγελίζω is בשׂר, "bring news."[75] The form מְבַשֶּׂרֶת ("news bringer/herald," fem.) appears in Isa 40:9, "Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings…" (עַל הַר־גָּבֹהַ עֲלִי־לָךְ מְבַשֶּׂרֶת צִיּוֹן).[76] John's portrayal as bringing good news and the occurrence of one of Isaiah's "herald" passages—feminine form not withstanding[77]—is not coincidental. For all intents and purposes, the Baptist in Luke is the herald of good news.

It is worth considering here whether Luke's Gospel is intending to allude to other passages that naturally connect with Isa 40's "herald." To that end, the Gospel's incomplete quotation of Isa 40:5 is strange in light of nearly preserving a complete quotation of vv. 3–4. The omission of 40:5a, "And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed," and 5c, "for the Lord has spoken," appears to intentionally stress 40:5b, "and all flesh shall see it together, the salvation of God…" It is possible that the emphasis is an allusion to Isa 52:10. In their Septuagintal form, 40:5b and 52:10 are linguistically similar:

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[73] See R. Steven Notley, "Jesus' Jewish Hermeneutical Technique in the Nazareth Synagogue," in *Early Christian Literature and Intertextuality*. Vol. 2: *Exegetical Studies*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Daniel H. Zacharias (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2009) 46–59; R. Steven Notley and Jeffrey P. García, "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), 128–147; also, Fitzmyer, *Luke I–XI,* 533. See also Charles David Isbell, *How Jews and Christians Interpret Their Sacred Texts: A Study in Transvaluation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 104–112.

[74] Occurring 11 times in the Gospels, εὐαγγελίζω is predominantly a Lukan word (10 of the 11 occasions). This is not due to Mark since the word is altogether missing there. It is also equally unlikely related to Matthew, in that Matthew is Luke's source, since it employs the word once (cf. Matt 11:5).

[75] E.g., 1 Sam 31:9; 2 Sam 1:20, 4:10, 18:19–20, 26, 31; 1 Kgs 1:42; Isa 60:6; Jer 20:15; Nah 2:1; Ps 39:10.

[76] RSV translation. But see also the commentary in John Goldingay and David Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40–55, Volume I*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 86.

[77] The LXX translates as a masculine participle, ὁ εὐαγγελιζόμενος.

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.[78]	καὶ ὄψονται πάντα τὰ ἄκρα τῆς γῆς τὴν σωτηρίαν τὴν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ.

Goldingay and Payne note that 40:9–11 and 52:7–10 are "twin" texts (cf. also Nah 1:15 [MT 2:1]).[79] Both refer to the "herald" (מְבַשֶּׂרֶת, 40:9; מְבַשֵּׂר, 52:7) and its good news.[80] For Blenkinsopp, the good news is "tripartite: the end of indentured service; the liquidation of debts incurred, understood metaphorically; and the bestowing of benefits that will outweigh the punishment inflicted for sins committed."[81] The picture painted here, namely, the removal of debt and indentured servitude is of God's redemption[82] (esp. 52:3).

The "herald" in Isaiah chapters 40 and 52 continued to inspire later/contemporary Second Temple authors in the portrayals of national[83]/communal redemption. One example is the rewrite of Isa 40 in Psalms of Solomon 11 where the elements of redemption are spoken of as already having occurred, "Blow in Zion on the trumpet to summon (the) holy ones. Proclaim in Jerusalem the voice of him who brings good news, for God *has had pity* (ἠλέησεν) on Israel in visiting them." (cf. also 1 Bar. 5:1–9). In 4Q176, redemption and the redeemer (יהוה גואלך, 8 11 10) are vividly represented with numerous Isaianic passages including Isa 40:1–5 (1 2 i 4–8) and 52:1–3 (8 11 1–4).[84] Sometimes known as 4QTanḥumim, Høgenhaven states, "The overall concern of the composition seems to consist in the construction of a salvation history with the steadfastness of God, that brings about the change in his

[78] 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.

[79] Joseph Blenkinsopp notes the interconnectedness of Isa 40:9–11 and 52:7 with chaps. 40–55's salvific narrative, *Isaiah 4–55*, ABR 19 (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 185–186.

[80] See Goldingay and Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 1:86.

[81] Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah*, 179.

[82] For this study, the term "salvation" seems to be interconnected with redemptive imagery. Both are intended to describe God's active engagement on behalf of his people, returning them to land of Israel and its former glory, and dealing with their debts/sins. While these matters are not always eschatological in nature, in the Second Temple period there is considerable evidence of their eschatologicalization.

[83] "National" refers to however early Jewish authors uniquely define God's people, i.e., God's nation. According to Blenkinsopp, in Isaiah, the "reprobate" has no share in it, which he attributes to "sectarian thinking," *Isaiah*, 84–87; 296.

[84] John M. Allegro, with collaboration of Arnold A. Anderson, *Qumran Cave 4: I (4Q158–4Q186)*, DJD V (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 60–66.

people's fate, a change from affliction to reward and blessing, as the focal point."[85]

In other texts, the conceiving of redemption with Isa 52 also appears to be paired with Isa 61 where similar themes of bringing news (לְבַשֵּׂר, 1), redemption (to Zion) and judgment occur. Chapters 52 and 61 form part of the depiction of the eschatological redeemer in 11QMelchizedek (11Q13 2:9–10, 16–20, 23). As the original editors of 11Q13 state regarding the thematic *pesher*, the most legible "column focuses on the acts of redemption which will free the sons of the light from Belial and the spirits of his lot."[86] Melchizedek is also envisioned as administering "the vengeance of Go[d]'s judgements" (נקם משפטי א]ל).[87] As in 4Q176 and Psalms of Solomon, 11Q13 portrays redemption using two Isaianic "herald" texts. Unique, however, to 11QMelchizedek is the appearance of judgment against Belial. Judgment is not attested in the Pss. of Sol. 11 or, it seems, in 4QTanḥumim. What is clear is that the prophet Isaiah, especially chapters 40, 52, and 61—among others—had a wide influence on the ancient Jewish literary imagination regarding redemption and judgment (cf. 11Q13 2:8–10).

The pairing of Luke's Baptist as the preacher of "good news" (Luke 3:18) with the gospel's tendency to utilize biblical texts in a decidedly Jewish interpretive fashion—where the quotation is intended to echo the context and language of that text, as well as other complementary passages—is likely intentional. Luke exclusively identifies John's ministry with the "herald" (מְבַשֵּׂר) of redemption. In fact, the other unique details of the Lukan Baptist, namely, the additional teachings attributed to the Baptist in 3:11–14, may forward this argument, especially with regard to Isa 61 (and its use in the Second Temple period). In vv. 11–14, John outlines *the fruits that befit repentance* (καρποὺς ἀξίους τῆς μετανοίας, v. 8) to those who have repented and immersed, that is, the crowds, tax collectors, and soldiers. The three teachings are for the crowds to be charitable, the publicans to be fair when acquiring taxes, and the soldiers to be nonviolent and avoid slander. These instructions specify a sort of social justice—charitable and merciful actions—which calls forth redemption and protects from divine wrath. Similar themes to the Baptist' instructions are unsurprisingly attested in the good (social) news of Isa 61. There the prophet brings news (לְבַשֵּׂר /εὐαγγελίσασθαι) to the "afflicted"/ "poor" (עֲנָוִים/πτωχοῖς), proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor (1–2). The redemptive portrait entails bringing justice to those in need—binding the broken-hearted, liberating the captives, setting prisoners

[85] Jesper Høgenhaven, "The Literary Character of 4QTanhumim," *DSS* 14.1 (2007): 122.
[86] Florentino García Martínez, Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, and Adams Van Der Woude, eds. "11QMelchizedek," in *Qumran Cave 11, II, 11Q2–18, 11Q20–31*, DJD XXIII (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 222. See also R. Steven Notley, "11QMelchizedek," in *Early Jewish Literature: An Anthology*, ed. Archie. T. Wright, Brad Embry, Ronald Herms, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 490–498.
[87] Text from García Martínez, Tigchelaar, and Van Der Woude, "11QMelchizedek," 225.

free and rebuilding ancient remains (1–4). Later in 61, the Lord is described by the prophet as a lover of justice who hates robbery and iniquitous (interpersonal) action. Of course, the call for social justice is not unique to Isa 61 (cf. also e.g., 44:21–23; 58:5–7). Lying behind John's instructions may also be the judgment portion of Ezekiel, specifically 18:5–9. There the "righteous person" (אִישׁ...צַדִּיק), in part, "does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, does not lend at interest or take any increase, withholds his hand from iniquity, executes true justice between people…" (7–8). This "righteous person shall surely live" (צַדִּיק הוּא חָיֹה יִחְיֶה, 9), whereas the wicked "shall surely die" (מוֹת יוּמָת, 13). Block states that life here is not eternal life but escape from divine judgment. The wicked person has no escape; both life and death are a result of the person's own action.[88]

The expectation to be charitable and interpersonally just—what Flusser collectively refers to as "social love"[89]—is very much present and heightened in texts dated to the Hellenistic-Roman period.[90] In particular, the complex of passages utilized in 4Q521, the so-called *Messianic Apocalypse*, whose relationship to the Qumran community is unclear, are critical at this juncture. Most of the columns are exceptionally fragmentary. However, 2 ii + 4 preserve a good deal of legible content. The description of God's "anointed," perhaps describing an eschatological prophet (not necessarily a messiah),[91] appears to be announcing the unfolding of redemption/salvation, "[…For the hea]vens and the earth *shall give heed* (ישמעו) to his anointed" (1).[92] Particular to this study is

[88] Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, NICOT (Grand Rapids; Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2012), 574–579. See the longer discussion on this issue by Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press; Jerusalem: Magness Press, 1997), 140–141.

[89] David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 1988), 474.

[90] For biblical evidence regarding the individual's responsibility, see Weinfeld, *Social Justice*, 222–225. These ideals are well attested in both Ben Sira (e.g., 7:32–35, 12:3, 16:14, 17:22, 40:17, 24) and Tobit (e.g., 4:5–11). In particular, both authors depict these social practices as analogous to observing the commandments (Tob 1:3), atoning for sins (Sir 3:30; "purging away," Tob 12:9), protecting from times of affliction and death (Sir 11:27; Tob 4:10)—perhaps even the day of judgment (ἡμέραν ἀνάγκης, Tob 4:9; cf. esp. ἡμέρᾳ ἀνάγκης, 1 En. 100:7)—occurring in relation to repentance (specifically, God's mercy to those who repent, Sir 17:29), and redeeming (Tob 14:2–7). They are also enumerated among the covenant-defining laws of the Qumran community, "[the] ne[w (covenant) in the lan[d of Damascus…] to lo[ve each man his brother as himself] [and] to [sup]port [the poor destitute and the proselyte, and to seek] each [m]an the pea[ce of his brother…" (4Q269 4 ii 1–4 = CD 6:19–7:1; cf. also 1QS 1:5, 5:4, 8:2). The impact of these moral actions is witnessed as well on the language of the day.

[91] Jassen, *Mediating*, 86.

[92] See comments by Émile Puech in, *Qumrân Grotte 4 XVII: Textes Hébreux (4Q521–4Q528, 4Q576–4Q579)*, DJD XXV (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 12–17; also "The

Isa 40 in line 5, "For the Lord will attend to the pious and the righteous *he will call by name*" (בשם יקרא = Isa 40:26[93]), and Isa 61 in line 12, "he will bring good news to the afflicted" (ענוים יבשר, cf. Isa 61:1). Again, it appears that in the mind of Second Temple authors, the "herald" passages of Isaiah fit together with others in describing eschatological redemption. God (or his agent[94]) redeem/save his servants from places of need (12–15). Moreover, redemption in 4Q521 hinges, it seems, on interpersonal justice.[95] In other words, God's eschatological engagement is partly found on socially just action. For example, the original editors construct line 4Q521 ii 4 10 to read, "and the frui[t, (i.e., benefit) of] good[dee]ds shall not be delayed for anyone" (ופר[י מעש]ה טוב לאיש לוא יתאחר). Later fragments of 4Q521 refer to "…those who do good before the Lor[d]" (העושים את הטוב לפני אדנ[י]..., 7 + 5 ii 4). Puech notes that there are parallels regarding the salvation of the righteous and the judgment of the cursed (c.f. 5–6) that are found in other Second Temple Jewish texts (e.g., 1 En. 98:1–3; 27:1–4).[96]

What does this all mean about Luke's portrayal of the Baptist? First, the portrayal of the Lukan Baptist is not limited to the Isa 40:3–4, 5b. In fact, there is evidence that other "herald" passages are being hinted at in the Gospel. Second, the image of redemption (and judgment) in these passages, especially Isa 40, 52, 61 (and perhaps 41 and 60) are creatively reworked by early Jewish authors in their own portraits of redemption. Third, with respect to the Lukan Baptist, the growing emphasis on interpersonal justice and its dual role as a way of both escaping divine judgment and redeeming Israel make sense of John's role as the "herald" and the additional teachings as they appear in Luke. As suggested here, the aforementioned elements are also integrated into the eschatology of 4Q521. Regrettably, its fragmentary state does not allow more to be said about the content of the scroll.

It is then the argument of this study that Luke's longer quotation is intended to affirm the Baptist as the "herald," who preaches "good news," primarily, redemption of God's people, that is, those who repent, immerse, and are socially just. Social engagement, functions as catalyst for God's eschatological engagement with his people. Those who do not heed John's call will not escape the "wrath to come." As such, Luke's longer quotation, Isa 40:3–5, 5b, is intended to draw the reader/hearer back to a number of "herald" texts and their contexts, especially Isa 52 and 61. The effect of this approach resolves

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Wonder of the End-Time Metaphoric Language in 4Q521 and the Interpretation of Matt 11.5 par," *JSP* 18 (1998): 87–110.

[93] This phraseology only appears here and in Isa 40.

[94] Benjamin Wold has brought important attention to this issue in, Agency and Raising the Dead in *4QPseudo-Ezekiel* and 4Q521 2 ii," *ZNW* 103.1 (2012): 1–19.

[95] Although Florentino García-Martínez and Eibert Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 1044.

[96] Notes on lines 5–6, Puech, *Qumrân Grotte 4 XVII*, 25–26.

two pertinent issues with the Lukan Baptist's account: 1) Luke's omission of Isa 40:5a and 5c and the emphasis placed on 5b—the salvation of the Lord; 2) the occurrence John additional teachings on social justice. It also provides a picture of John with greater resolution.

3.4 *11Q13 and 4Q521*

A couple of points are key here. The two Dead Sea texts that bear similarities to John in their use of "herald" texts are 11Q13 and 4Q521. Regarding 11QMelchizedek, the appearance of Belial—along with other Qumranic language—may be sufficient to tie it closely to the *yaḥad*.[97] In terms of scriptural interpretation, as with other *pesharim*, the Melchizedek scroll is not necessarily concerned with the context of the passages as much as the quoted texts support the overall theme. Assuming that Luke's longer Isaiah passage is intended to lead back to the context of those passages, then the interpretative style is unlike the *yaḥad's* approach in 11Q13. Moreover, in 11Q13 Melchizedek is the eschatological redeemer, one who will atone for the sons of light and execute God's judgment. In contrast, John is not a direct agent of redemption in the gospel and the lines between those judged and the groups of those redeemed are not so clearly specified as they are in the scroll. In Luke, the indefinite "crowds" are warned of judgment and instructed to be socially just after repenting and immersing. As scholars have long noted, this pattern betrays some form of relationship—at least indirectly—between John and Qumran via the repentance, immersion, and requisite action expected of community members in the Community Rule (1QS 3:8–11). Unlike 11Q13, unfortunately, it is not certain that the attribution of the Isaiah passage originates with John's community or memories of his movement. The scriptural texts associated with Melchizedek seem to originate with the Qumran community, as much as the scroll can be identified as a product of the *yaḥad*. Yet, for a moment, let us entertain that the Lukan Baptist—specifically the attribution of Isaiah 40, the interconnected texts surveyed here, and the Luke's additional teachings—remembers how John was remembered, namely, as the "herald" of God's redemption. John seems to be waiting for God's direct engagement, and not necessarily a human (messianic) agent (apart from 3:16–17, see above). This significantly pulls for him redemption and judgment are imminent. [98] In that sense, the Baptist seems to fit the role of some early Jewish eschatological prophets.

With regard to the use of Isaiah passages, 4Q521 seems to have the most in common with Luke. Unfortunately, its fragmentary nature prohibits a more

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[97] Devorah Dimant, "Sectarian and Non-Sectarian Texts from Qumran: The Pertinence and Usage of Taxonomy," *RevQ* 93 (2009): 7–18 (17).

[98] See the important discussion, David Flusser, "The Stages of Redemption History According to John the Baptist and Jesus," in his, *Jesus*, (with R. Steven Notley; Jerusalem: Magnes, 2001), 258–275.

fruitful examination of 4Q521 and the Lukan Baptist. Yet, what is suggested here is that 4Q521 portrays an eschatological redemption and judgment. Additionally, there is evidence that socially just actions play a role in the coming eschatological event. If indeed John was viewed as the "herald," believing that redemption and judgment were imminent, and that repentance, immersion, and social justice would trigger redemption, then the Baptist appears in a manner that is not unlike 4Q521.[99] Any direct relationship then with the Qumran community vis-à-vis the use of Isaiah 40 is wanting and further examination of the relationship between John and Qumran should take full advantage of Luke's semi-independent, unique portrayal. There are some commonalities of course that cannot be ignored (e.g., immersions, repentance, etc.).

4. Conclusion

The aim of this study is to reassess two matters that have stayed the course in associating John the Baptist with the Qumran *yaḥad*. These are geographical proximity and the mutual use of Isa 40. On the one hand, proximity, it has been argued, is not a good enough reason for association; yet, it endures. Indeed, geography should not be so easily dismissed, as it—along with societal developments in a particular region—could provide some insight into the movements that developed there. Still, under close scrutiny, there is insufficient evidence to place John the Baptist's ministry anywhere near Khirbet Qumran.[100] Of course, this does not forgo a relationship, even if it negates one 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 Qumran.

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 are independent from the other Gospels. In other words, they may represent a different, if not earlier source(s) of the Baptist's movement. While historical certitude is elusive, because Luke's depiction has its own peculiar traditions, it is worth being read independently as representing a historical movement or memory thereof. What has been brought to bear here is that Luke's longer quotation of Isa 40 connects the Baptist's preaching with that of the Isaianic "herald" texts, not with the prophet that functions as a messianic forerunner. As the portent of goods news, Luke's John comfortably can be

[99] Repentance and good works are envisioned bringing redemption in b. Šabb. 118b; b. Yoma 86b; b. Sanh. 97b.

[100] 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.

situated among early Jewish eschatological prophets. While there are a limited number of texts that employ similar Isaiah passages, 11Q13 and 4Q521 are the most pertinent. It appears that the Lukan Baptist and the Melchizedek scroll part ways in terms of scriptural interpretation, opinions regarding the agent of the expected eschatological event, and with defining specific groups of those who escape or receive divine judgment. 4Q521 offers surer footing. The colocation of Isaiah texts and the potential for interpersonal justice to be a catalyst for divine intervention appear to shed light on John's role in Luke.

Additionally, it has been noted that 4Q521 is likely not a text composed by the *yaḥad*. Being among the scrolls may indicate that it held some importance to the community, but to what extent is unclear. Even more to the point, the ideas in the so-called Messianic Apocalypse, which some argue may have originally depicted an eschatological prophet(s) rather than a messiah, may represent traditions that intersected with numerous communities. As such, while the scroll text provides a better context for the Lukan Baptist, and evidence that this unique portrayal fits comfortably in the religious landscape of early Judaism, ascertaining a relationship to the Qumran community is challenging. Speaking specifically of the use of Isa 40, there seems to be minimal connection between 4Q521 and the *yaḥad*. Where the scrolls provide comparable material defining definitive relationship can only be done imprecisely. Finally, this is not an argument of relational absence, as much as it is noting that geographical proximity and the use of Isaiah 40 are not suitable for supporting one. Relationships, however, are indeed nuanced and the two aspects reexamined here are only part of a more complex story.