

# The Book Of Daniel And The Dead Sea Scrolls

By Walter E. Wegner

[This article was originally presented as a paper in a University of Wisconsin seminar series on the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is submitted to the *Quartalschrift* upon request of the Editor. The writer wishes to express his gratitude to Professor Menahem Mansoor, head of the Department of Hebrew Studies at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, for the use of the department's Hebrew typewriter in the preparation of the typed transcription of the Hebrew-Aramaic text of the Daniel fragments from which the plates which accompany this article were prepared. For the source of these transcriptions, see note 1.]

## I. The Dead Sea Scroll Manuscripts of the Book of Daniel

Approximately two dozen fragments of the text of Daniel, representing several different manuscripts, have appeared among the discoveries of the past decade in the Dead Sea Caves. The only Dead Sea Daniel texts actually published to date are the fragments from the First Qumran Cave (1Q) which appear in transcription in Volume I of *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* by Barthélemy and Milik<sup>1</sup> Barthélemy, who edited the Biblical manuscripts in this volume, has appended descriptive notes in French which give, among others, the following items of information about these Daniel fragments.

The first copy of Daniel consists of a single fragment of leather containing two half-columns of text. On the basis of the extant fragments Barthélemy calculates that the original scroll was written with lines of approximately ten centimeters in length and that each "page" of text consisted of fifteen lines in columns approximately ten to twelve centimeters high. Barthélemy calls attention to the fact that the transition from Hebrew to Aramaic in this Daniel fragment takes place at the very same point as in the Masoretic text. He goes on to state that certain indications permit the conclusion that Daniel may not have been considered by the Qumran sect as a canonical book. In support of that conclusion, Barthélemy adduces two items of evidence. The first is his observation that all *Biblical* manuscripts from 1Q whose format it is possible to calculate have columns of text whose height is double their width, whereas in the case of this Daniel fragment the column height and width are approximately equal.

Plates I and II accompanying this article are transcriptions of the Hebrew-Aramaic fragments of Daniel (1QDan<sup>a</sup>) under discussion here. A comparison of these transcribed lines of 1QDan<sup>a</sup> with the Masoretic text of Daniel reveals at once that these lines are incomplete. If we reconstruct these lines on the basis of the MT we shall find that approximately three to five words must be added to the left margin of each line of text (or the equivalent of sixteen to twenty letter spaces). So in reconstruction these lines would be increased by approximately two-thirds their present length; and this helps us understand Barthélemy's statement that the height and width of these columns of text are approximately equal. It is this wide-column arrangement which suggested to Barthélemy that in the eyes of the covenanters of Qumran the Book of Daniel may not have been a canonical book, since, as pointed out, he observes that the Qumran scribes distinguished between canonical and non-canonical books by the very size and shape of the columns of text with which they inscribed their manuscripts.

The second piece of evidence which Barthélemy cites in support of his view that the Qumran community ascribed a non-canonical status to the Book of Daniel is the fact that Cave IV has yielded a Daniel fragment written on *papyrus*. He regards this as significant in view of the fact that the numerous fragments of papyrus from Caves IV and VI do not appear to contain any canonical books in an original language. We shall hold in abeyance a discussion of Barthélemy's views regarding the canonicity of Daniel in the eyes of Qumran in order to continue the description of the remaining Daniel fragments which the Dead Sea Caves have

produced.

Barthélemy's published texts include the transcription of two detached fragments from the same column of text, reproducing portions of Daniel 3:22–30. These are the two portions reproduced in Plates III and IV accompanying this article. A comparison of these pieces with the MT indicates that the fragment containing Daniel 3:27–30 was originally a part of the lower left side of the fragment containing verses 22–28. Barthélemy estimates that these lines were originally about 13 centimeters long. He states further that the hypothesis must be considered that two scribes may have collaborated in producing this scroll, since a similar division of work is indicated in the case of a Hodayot fragment found in the same cave.

Barthélemy also points out that this fragment, in agreement with the MT, does not include the apocryphal "Song of the Three Children." (This is the apocryphal prayer of praise and thanksgiving which Shadrac, Meshac, and Abednego are said to have prayed from the burning furnace in gratitude for their miraculous deliverance.) This "Song," together with the apocryphal "Prayer of Azarias," is inserted after verse 23 of Chapter 3 in the LXX, Theodotian's translation, the Peshitta and the Vulgate; but these insertions do not appear in any Hebrew (Aramaic) text known heretofore. This Daniel fragment from 1Q is thus in agreement with all known Hebrew (Aramaic) manuscripts of this book.

In the *Biblical Archaeologist* (No. XII, 1949), G. Ernest Wright wrote a brief description of the Daniel fragments from 1Q. His description includes these comments: "Interestingly enough, the three fragments are from two different scrolls. Two pieces are paleographically near the Isaiah scroll, while the other is similar to the Habakkuk script... The text is substantially the same as that in our current Hebrew Bibles (the Masoretic text). The chief differences, like those in the Isaiah manuscript, have to do with the spelling of words."<sup>2</sup>

Besides those found in Cave I, additional Daniel fragments were discovered in Cave IV. The *Revue Biblique* of January, 1956, brought a collation of first-hand reports, edited by Jules Moreau, concerning the work of editing the various manuscript fragments from Qumran. Included is a report by Dr. Frank Cross in which he makes mention of the Daniel fragments from 4Q. He writes: "A sizeable proportion of the book of Daniel is extant in three relatively well-preserved mss.. The second column of 4QDan<sup>a</sup> which contains Daniel 2:19–35, is practically intact. The transition from chapter 7 to chapter 8 is preserved in 4QDan<sup>a</sup> and 4QDan<sup>b</sup>; in both cases the change from Aramaic to Hebrew is made precisely at the same point as in the received text. The text of Daniel in these scrolls conforms closely to later Masoretic tradition; there are to be found, however, some rare variants which side with the Alexandrian Greek against the MT and Theodotian."<sup>3</sup>

Since the Daniel texts from 4Q have not been published, we can merely file Dr. Cross's report for future reference. It is interesting to note, however, that the 4Q fragments of Daniel include the transition from Aramaic back to Hebrew at the end of Chapter 7 and the beginning of Chapter 8. Together with the fragments from Cave I, these manuscripts show clearly that the Book of Daniel was a bi-lingual document already during the period when the Qumran library was in existence. This is strong evidence against the critical supposition which has been advanced that the Book of Daniel was originally written by two authors, with one author composing Chapters 1 to 6 in Aramaic and a later author subsequently writing Chapters 7 to 12 in Hebrew. The Qumran manuscripts of Daniel serve not to weaken, but only to strengthen the view that the present bi-lingual character of the Book of Daniel is a feature of the original form in which the book existed.

In addition to those already mentioned, there have been reports of other Daniel manuscript discoveries in the Dead Sea region. When in 1953 Hans Bardtke wrote his book, *Die Handschriftenfunde am Toten Meer*, he referred to the manuscripts of Daniel discovered in Cave I and then added: "Ausserdem sollen weitere siebzehn Fragmente vorhanden sein, die sich im Privatbesitz befinden, abet noch nicht veröffentlicht worden sind"<sup>4</sup> Beyond Bardtke's brief reference, however, this writer has been unable to learn more about these seventeen Daniel fragments which are reported to be in private hands.

## II. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Canonical Status of Daniel at Qumran

Reference was made earlier to Barthélemy's suggestion that the format of the Daniel manuscripts from Qumran may indicate that the Qumran covenanters did not regard Daniel as a canonical book. In the *Journal of Theological Studies* of October, 1956, B. J. Roberts reviewed Barthélemy and Milik's first volume of "Discoveries in the Judaean Desert." In his review Roberts dissented from Barthélemy's view about Qumran's estimation of the canonicity of Daniel. He wrote: "Another doubtful conclusion is given on p. 150 where it is said that because of the unique size and shape of a manuscript of Daniel this book was probably regarded as non-canonical by the sect of the scrolls."<sup>5</sup>

In the June, 1956 issue of the *Journal of Biblical Literature* Dr. Frank Cross also reviewed Barthélemy and Milik's volume.<sup>6</sup> He, too, singles out Barthélemy's remark regarding Daniel's "non-canonical dress" in the Qumran library. Cross comments: "This evaluation, based on scribal procedure in copying the document, probably stands. However the data are now more complicated than when he wrote." Professor Cross goes on to explain that the Qumran scribes followed a fairly standard practice in copying Biblical books. Some of the features of their style include the practice of making the length of a column of text twice its width; also this that "the Jewish bookhand or in some instances the palco-Hebrew script—but not the cursive—is used regularly"; and that the Biblical texts are written on leather. He then points out that four copies of portions of Daniel exhibit variations from this so-called "standard practice" of the scribes of Qumran. These variations include the fact that two copies of Daniel from 4Q are "in unorthodox format" (apparently a reference to the column arrangement); one is in cursive script; and another Daniel fragment from Cave VI is written on papyrus. Cross himself points out, however, that such evidence is not an infallible criterion for determining whether or not the Qumran scribes regarded a given book as canonical or non-canonical. The three factors mentioned do *not*, in this writer's opinion, argue in favor of Qumran's rejection of the canonicity of Daniel, since the Qumran caves have produced manuscript copies of other recognized canonical books which exhibit these very same stylistic features which are found in the copies of Daniel. Cross reports, for example, that the Book of Kings, whose canonicity is unquestioned, has been found on a papyrus manuscript in 6Q; also that Cave IV has yielded Biblical scrolls in a true cursive script; and that the column arrangement found in the Daniel copies has been found in Biblical works discovered in other caves. I find it strange, then, that Professor Cross should conclude his discussion of this point with the statement: "We may say at least that the extraordinarily free treatment of Daniel at Qumran in at least four different copies strongly suggests its non-canonical status." On the basis of the evidence which Dr. Cross himself advances, I should like to suggest that the following conclusion is equally valid: The Qumran scribes' manuscripts of Daniel exhibit certain stylistic features not regularly found in copies of Biblical books in the Qumran library; but since these same features of style are found in Qumran manuscripts of Biblical books whose canonicity is beyond question, they cannot be urged as arguments against the canonical status or the authenticity of the Book of Daniel.

While he does not address himself specifically to the point under discussion, Dr. Millar Burrows in "The Dead Sea Scrolls" makes a statement which deserves to be heard in this connection. His observation is this "that the fondness of the covenanters for some of the apocryphal writings raises the question whether our sharp distinction between canonical and non-canonical books existed for them."<sup>7</sup>

### **III. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Dating of the Book of Daniel**

Since only transcriptions and not the actual texts of the Daniel fragments from Qumran have been published to date, we shall in the area of paleography have to content ourselves for the present with the results of the paleographical studies which have been made available by scholars who have been privileged to make first-hand examinations of the original documents. Let it be said that the science of paleography has added much to our knowledge of the Dead Sea Scrolls. On the whole, the conclusions of paleographers regarding the dating of the Scrolls have found general acceptance among Biblical scholars, with the notable exception of extremists like Professor Solomon Zeitlin.<sup>8</sup>

Scholarly opinion, based on the evidence of paleography and supported by the testimony of archaeology

as well as the internal evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves, favors the dating of the Dead Sea manuscripts in the first centuries B.C. and A.D., with generally accepted limits of roughly 300 B.C. to A.D. 70. Millar Burrows summarizes his chapter on “The Evidence of Archeology and Paleology” in these concluding sentences: “All the lines of investigation converge fairly well on a historical period within which all the manuscripts were written, extending from about 300 B.C. to 68 or 70 A.D. The relative age of the different manuscripts is fairly clear also, and the approximate place of each within the period is reasonably assured.”<sup>9</sup> At the close of his chapter on “The Evidence of Text and Language” he gives the approximate dates which the available evidence suggests for the specific documents. He says of the 1QIs<sup>a</sup> Scroll that “it probably comes from a little before 100 B.C., or possibly a little later.”<sup>10</sup> The Habakkuk Commentary he assigns to “perhaps the last quarter of the first century b.c.”<sup>11</sup> Now we have already referred to G. E. Wright’s statement that two Daniel fragments from 1Q “are paleographically near the Isaiah scroll, while the other is very similar to the Habakkuk script.”<sup>12</sup> Combining Wright’s testimony with that of Burrows, we discover that the paleographical evidence suggests that the two older fragments of Daniel from Cave I are to be dated roughly at 125 B.C., while the younger Daniel fragment was apparently written at about 25 B.C.

An important question which deserves to be considered in this connection is whether or not the newly found Daniel manuscripts shed any light on the question of the dating of the original composition of the Book of Daniel as a literary document. The traditional view regarding the dating takes for granted that the historical Daniel wrote the book which bears his name; and the date usually assigned to its composition is 538 B.C. Modern critical scholars, however, generally agree in ruling out the possibility that Daniel himself, in the 6th century B.C., could have been the author of this book. The majority of scholars today prefer to ascribe the authorship of the book to an unknown Jewish writer (or writers) living in the time of the Maccabees, sometime after 168 B.C. What the traditional view accepts as genuine predictive prophecies in the Book of Daniel are regarded by the modern view as mere *vaticinia ex eventu*. Some of the arguments listed in support of the modern view are the following: (a) The Masoretic text of Daniel contains about fifteen words of Persian origin, and their appearance in a Jewish document is said to be indicative of its composition in a period later than that in which Daniel is believed to have lived; (b) a number of words of Greek derivation appear in Daniel, and this is held to be proof of its composition after the time of Alexander the Great; (c) in addition, the form of certain proper nouns, notably the name Nebuchadnezzar, is said to point to a later date inasmuch as earlier writers generally use the form Nebuchadrezzar. On the entire question of the language of the Book of Daniel S. R. Driver has commented: “The *Persian* words presuppose a period after the Persian empire had been established; the Greek words *demand*, the Hebrew *supports*, and the Aramaic *permits*, a date *after the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great* (B.C. 332).”<sup>13</sup> These arguments have not gone unchallenged or unanswered by the adherents of the traditional view. The details of their discussion need not concern us now.

Of immediate interest for our present purpose is a consideration of what new light, if any, the Dead Sea Scrolls shed on these points of argument. If, for example, it were true that the Greek and Persian words which occur in Daniel are characteristic of a religious document written in the Maccabean age (166–63 B.C.), then we should have a valid right to expect to find them also in the Dead Sea documents since they are religious documents which stem largely from that era. It is significant, I believe, that to date there is no evidence that the foreign-language terminology used in certain passages of Daniel is common to any of the Dead Sea writings.

To the questions raised by the form of the name Nebuchadnezzar in the Masoretic text of Daniel, the Dead Sea Daniel manuscripts give no answer to date inasmuch as no published fragment of the Dead Sea Daniel manuscripts includes this monarch’s name. If that section of Daniel 3 from which we have an excerpt in the 1QDan<sup>b</sup> text were intact, Nebuchadnezzar’s name would indeed appear; but unfortunately there are lacunae in the manuscript at the very points where the king’s name should appear (namely in Chapter 3, verses 24, 26, and 28). (In Plate III accompanying this article the blank space which precedes the Aramaic word *malkah* at the beginning of the fragmentary portion of 3:24 is one of the lacunal gaps where the king’s name appears in the Masoretic text.) Any further argumentation based on this point will therefore have to await additional discoveries and/or the publication of Qumran manuscripts of Daniel which actually contain Nebuchadnezzar’s name.

On this matter of the date of the composition of Daniel as well as the date of the writing of the Qumran copies of the book, Charles Fritsch made this statement in his book on the Scrolls published in 1956: “If the Book of Daniel was written around 165 B.C., and if the script of two of these fragments is similar to that of the Isaiah scroll, which is dated about 125 B.C., then we are less than a century from the original—which no one thought possible in Old Testament studies.”<sup>14</sup> The thought which Dr. Fritsch suggests would indeed be an intriguing one—namely of having manuscript fragments of a Biblical book which are only some forty years younger than the literary composition of the book itself. There is, however, another aspect to this question which has been pointed out by Edward J. Young in an article on the Dead Sea Scrolls appearing in *Christianity Today*. Dr. Young refers to the fact that on the basis of paleographical evidence the Daniel fragments from Qumran have been dated “in the late second century B.C., less than a century after the date ‘critics’ give for the origin of the book itself.” He adds the comment: “This is most striking, for it apparently shows that two copies of the book were in circulation very shortly after the alleged time of its composition. It begins to look as though this consideration will make more difficult the maintaining of a late date for the authorship of the prophecy of Daniel.”<sup>15</sup>

In the light of what scholars have reported to the effect that the Book of Daniel was apparently one of the most popular Biblical books in the Qumran library—reportedly ranking next to the books of Isaiah, the Pentateuch, and the Psalms—I believe it would be most difficult to account for such popularity if the Book of Daniel were only a few decades old at the time when the Qumran community flourished. G. R. Driver has recognized that the presence and popularity of the Daniel manuscripts at Qumran conflicts with the modern view which advocates the late dating of the composition of Daniel; Driver however resolves the difficulty for himself by suggesting that the Qumran scrolls must for that reason be assigned to a later date than that which is generally accepted—contrary to the combined testimony or archaeology, paleology, and the internal evidence of the scrolls themselves!<sup>16</sup>

Our answers to the questions concerning the canonical status of the Book of Daniel at Qumran and concerning the light which the Dead Sea Scrolls shed on the dating of the Book of Daniel can at present be only tentative. The world of Biblical scholarship has reason to look with great interest for the publication of additional Daniel manuscripts from Qumran, in the expectation of arriving at more definite answers to these questions.