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ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN STUDIES

SUPPLEMENT 50

“WHAT MEAN THESE STONES?” (JOSHUA 4:6, 21)

Essays on Texts, Philology, and Archaeology in
Honour of Anthony J. Frendo

Edited by

Dennis MIZZI, Nicholas C. VELLA and Martin R. ZAMMIT

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PURE MATTER: ON THE RITUAL-PURITY STATUS OF GLASS AT QUMRAN

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It is a great honour to contribute a paper to this *Festschrift* in honour of Anthony Frendo: mentor, colleague, and trusted friend. It is thanks to Anthony that I developed a passion for both texts and archaeology, and I owe my various academic endeavours to bridge the gap between these two sources to him. It is only fitting, therefore, that here I explore a topic which invites the use of text *and* artefact, employing the sensible methodology advocated by Anthony himself in his recent monograph.¹ While Anthony dedicated his scholarly efforts to untangling textual and archaeological sources relating to ancient Israel, my focus here will be on Qumran, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the classical sources on the Essenes. More specifically, I will tackle the question of the ritual-purity status of glass at Qumran, with a view to gain further understanding of the site's inhabitants and the group(s) depicted in the Scrolls as well as to explore how texts and archaeology can be amalgamated in a methodologically sound manner in the case of Qumran.

QUMRAN, THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS, AND THE ESSENES

The site of Qumran is a small site that has generated big debates, the majority of which revolve around the function of the site and the identity of its inhabitants. The main scholarly consensus is that, during the late Second Temple Period (roughly between the beginning of the 1st century BCE and ca. 68 CE, henceforth Period I/II),² Qumran was a “sectarian settlement” and that its inhabitants (henceforth the Qumranites) were related to the group(s) depicted in the Dead Sea Scrolls, a large corpus of manuscripts found in eleven caves close to the settlement. The larger group behind the Scrolls is often identified or associated with the Essenes, whom Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* 5.15.17) locates in

¹ Frendo 2011.

² For ease of reference, this phase of occupation — which represents the zenith of the Qumran settlement — is henceforth referred to as Period I/II, in accordance with the chronological nomenclature developed by de Vaux (1973). See Mizzi and Magness 2016 for the conclusion that there was no gap of occupation between Periods I and II (*pace* de Vaux 1973; Magness 2002), which means that the late Second Temple phase at Qumran should be considered as one long, uninterrupted occupation. The post-Second Temple phase (post-68 CE), which is characterized by the arrival of a new population at Qumran and the reuse of only a small part of the Period I/II buildings, is designated as Period III. In this paper, any references to the archaeology of Qumran, the Qumran settlement, or the Qumranites unqualified by chronological designations pertain to the Period I/II occupation.

the north-western shores of the Dead Sea.³ Consequently, the archaeology of Qumran, the Scrolls, and the classical sources on the Essenes have often been read in association, the result being that the archaeology is sometimes interpreted through a textual framework; in some instances, it is the archaeology that impinges on the texts, thereby encouraging a Qumran-centric approach to the Scrolls or the sources on the Essenes; and sometimes, it is the latter — two different bodies of textual evidence — that are read in light of one another.

A small but vocal group of scholars have questioned the so-called sectarian interpretation of Qumran.⁴ One of their central arguments — indeed their very starting point — is that the link between the Scrolls, the Essenes, and the Qumran settlement is questionable. While it is true that this connection is not necessarily explicit, there is a significant convergence of circumstantial evidence that strongly supports such a link. This includes the geographical proximity of the manuscript caves to the settlement at Qumran; the fact that some of these caves (7Q–9Q) were only accessible through the built settlement; the existence of ceramic links — namely ovoid and cylindrical jars — between the caves and the settlement;⁵ the roughly analogous chronological timeframe of the settlement's occupation in Period I/II and of the majority of the Scrolls' dating;⁶ the evidence for a scribal culture at the site, attested by the presence of numerous inkwells (found in Period I/II levels), which also happen to be very rare finds in Second Temple contexts; the occurrence of considerable similarities between the communities depicted in the Scrolls and the descriptions of the Essenes in Flavius Josephus (*War* 2.119–161; *Antiquities* 18.18–22), and Philo of Alexandria (*Every Good Person Is Free* 75–91; *Apology for the Jews* 11); and Pliny's placement of the Essenes in the north-western shores of the Dead Sea (*Natural History* 5.15.17), roughly corresponding to the geographic location of Qumran. On their own, many of these pointers constitute circumstantial evidence; but taken altogether, they create a very strong argument for an intrinsic connection between the settlement at Qumran in Period I/II, the Scrolls within the caves, and the Essenes, however this connection is defined. The convergence of evidence is too strong to ignore.

This means that the Scrolls, as physical artefacts, have to be understood in an archaeological analysis of the site because they are an integral aspect of the site's archaeology, just like architecture, pottery, and other finds. The integration of this body of evidence strongly

³ There are different versions of this scholarly consensus, but they all agree on this basic outline. See, for example, de Vaux 1973; Broshi 1992; Cross 1995; Magness 2002; Taylor 2012.

⁴ See, for example, Donceel and Donceel-Voûte 1994; Golb 1995; Hirschfeld 2004; Zangenberg 2004; Magen and Peleg 2006, 2007; Stacey in Stacey and Doudna 2013. Some scholars accept the hypothesis that Qumran was a "sectarian settlement" linked with the group(s) depicted in the Scrolls but question the group(s)'s identification with the Essenes. See, for example, Goodman 1995; Baumgarten 2004.

⁵ Although ovoid and cylindrical jars are attested beyond Qumran, they still remain virtually unique to the site, as attested by the large number and variety of types present, a feature unparalleled elsewhere. It is also significant that the only caves in the Judaean Desert to yield ovoid or cylindrical jars are the caves at Qumran. This continues to solidify the link between the caves and the settlement. For a detailed discussion of this point, see Mizzi, 2016, pp. 148–149, n. 77.

⁶ See the comprehensive table listing the palaeographic dates of all the Scrolls in Webster 2002. The chronological range of the Qumran Scrolls spans from the late 3rd century BCE till the 1st century CE, but the largest majority of Scrolls date to the 1st century BCE.

suggests that Qumran *was* indeed inhabited by a group related to the Scrolls, and potentially one with Essene connections. Nonetheless, the contents of the manuscripts and the classical sources on the Essenes should still be treated separately in the first stage of the research process and therefore left out of an archaeological inquiry of the site. This also applies *vice versa*. As Frendo rightly states,⁷ texts and archaeology are two very specialized fields — written and material evidence cast light on different facets of the past, and both are characterized by a number of particular limitations and shortcomings concerning the kind of information they can provide; therefore, texts and archaeology need to be subjected to various forms of analyses which are specific to the respective disciplines, and scholars have to ask different questions through each body of evidence. Accordingly, text and artefact should ideally be studied separately at first — even if the relationship between them is strong, as is the case with the Scrolls, the Essenes, and Qumran — so that one does not influence the interpretation of the other. Any integration of texts and archaeology has to happen at a secondary stage in the research process and, even then, it is the *interpretations* of textual and archaeological data that should be brought into dialogue with each other and not the *data* themselves.⁸

All the while, “the crucial point is to remember that text and archaeology stand to each other just as apples and oranges do, namely that they are clearly distinct. Indeed, the correlation is only made possible through the historian’s hypotheses.”⁹ In our case, the correlation between text and artefact is justified by the hypothesis that the Qumranites were somehow related to the Scrolls and, plausibly, the Essenes, a hypothesis that has proved itself to be very resilient.¹⁰

The issue concerning the relationship between written and material evidence — a question which has been debated extensively in biblical studies and classical archaeology¹¹ — is of course much more complex, but the above methodological outline suffices for the purposes of this paper. In the field of Qumran studies, there has been no lack of discussion regarding this matter,¹² and a number of scholars have emphasized the need for an epistemic independence between the Scrolls, the classical sources on the Essenes, and the archaeology of Qumran, with differing views on whether or not these three sources should ever be brought to bear on each other at some point. As noted, it seems to me that there are strong enough grounds to justify the integration of these different sources of evidence — the question is

⁷ Frendo 2011, pp. 10–38.

⁸ Cf. Frendo’s conclusion (2011, p. 38) that “archaeology and history are in reality two sides of the same coin, and that in our quest to understand the human past they should be clearly kept distinct and yet viewed as being indivisible.” Therefore, “epistemic independence” (the term is borrowed from Kosso 1995) between texts and archaeology must be temporary; at some point, the two types of evidence need to be amalgamated, which does not mean that they have to confirm one another. The relationship between text and artefact could be one of contrast (see further below).

⁹ Frendo 2011, p. 38.

¹⁰ For an excellent and up-to-date overview of the so-called Essene hypothesis, see Klawans 2016.

¹¹ The literature is vast. See, for example, the various contributions to Edelman 1991; Small 1995; and Moreland 2004. See further de Vaux 1970; Andréon 1998; Frendo 2011.

¹² Works that discuss this issue specifically include Davies 1988, 2011; Petersen 1998; Humbert 2003, pp. 419–421; Falk 2004; Galor and Zangenberg 2006; Vieweger 2011; Hüttig 2011; Zangenberg 2011, pp. 121–131; Taylor 2012, pp. 244–259. In addition, several other scholars have made passing remarks on this question.

how. Accordingly, the aim of this paper is to enter this conversation by applying the above methodology — the inspiration of which I owe to Frendo — and to explore ways how the integration of texts and archaeology can take place at a secondary stage of the research process in the case of Qumran. But first, a word about the methodological challenges we face, which are not insignificant.

To begin with, the fact that the Scrolls are part of the site's archaeology does not mean that they are necessarily "about" it.¹³ Despite the fact that I am borrowing Frendo's methodological template, for which he has biblical texts or classical sources in mind, it must be acknowledged that the case of Qumran is somewhat different. Thus, although there are clear archaeological links between the Scrolls and the Qumranites, one must understand that there are still scholarly disagreements regarding the history and process of deposition of the Scrolls. Why exactly were these deposited in the caves of Qumran, and when? Was the deposition a singular event or a long, drawn-out process? Where *all* the Scrolls were owned and used by the Qumranites or did some of them come from other (related) "sectarian settlements" for final deposition? How do different Scrolls, deposited in different caves, relate to each other? Therefore, what is exactly the nature of the connection between the Scrolls, as a textual collection, and the Qumranites?¹⁴ To me, all indications point towards a more intrinsic connection between the Scrolls and the inhabitants at Qumran; the best explanation of the evidence seems to be that the Qumranites owned and used this textual collection and that its contents, therefore, might have had an impact on their lives.¹⁵ Still, the Scrolls are immensely diverse and a substantial part of the collection comprises texts that are surely not "about" the site by anyone's reckoning. This leaves some of the so-called rule texts and a small portion of Scrolls containing legal traditions and interpretations as possible sources "about" the Qumranites or Qumran. But these sources present their own set of challenges.

For instance, the complex literary history of some of the rule texts, such as the *Community Rule* (the S tradition) and the *Damascus Document* (the D tradition), as well as the uncertain relationship between these two documents — and the groups depicted therein — preclude one from applying, uncritically, the data inferred from these Scrolls onto the archaeological remains at Qumran.¹⁶ These two literary traditions have often been used to reconstruct the history, social structure, organisation, and lifestyle of the community believed to have lived at Qumran. But do the S and D traditions legislate for different branches within the same larger group, do they diachronically represent the same group at two different points in time, or do they reflect two separate but closely related groups? Accordingly, which tradition are we to relate specifically to Qumran, S or D? And what if neither is actually

¹³ One may recall, as an analogous example, the many texts found in Egyptian tombs which have nothing to do with the sites of their deposit.

¹⁴ For different views on such issues, see, for example, Doudna 2006; Stökl Ben Ezra 2007; Pfann 2007; Schofield 2009; Collins 2010; García Martínez 2010a, 2010b; Taylor 2011, 2012; Popović 2012; Hempel 2013, pp. 303–337; Mizzi, forthcoming.

¹⁵ This issue is discussed at length in Mizzi, forthcoming.

¹⁶ For the literary development of the S tradition, see Alexander 1996; Metso 1997; Alexander and Vermes 1998; Schofield 2009. For the literary development of the D tradition, see Davies 1983; Baumgarten 1996; Hempel 1998. See also Hempel 2013 for a thorough analysis of the development of and the relationship between S and D. On the latter, also see Regev 2003, 2007; Collins 2003, 2006, 2010.

representative of the group living there? And even if they do relate to Qumran, which of these texts' many literary strata do we relate with the settlement? What if the archaeological remains at Qumran and the descriptions in S or D pertain to different chronological realities? More importantly, how can we ascertain whether or not these texts are direct windows onto daily practices at Qumran or any other related settlement? As Charlotte Hempel has aptly noted, the rule texts from Qumran are not "candid camera[s] producing 'reality literature,'" but "complex literary artefacts whose own claims need to be treated with caution."¹⁷ The same holds true for the use of the classical sources on the Essenes, which have their own set of issues — like the Scrolls, the different portrayals of the Essenes have to be filtered through a critical lens first;¹⁸ moreover, the exact nature of the Qumran-Essene connection remains somewhat unclear, which means that any historically reliable insights we gain on the Essenes through a critical reading of the classical sources cannot be taken as applicable to Qumran or the Qumranites.

The way we address the above issues affects the dynamic between the Scrolls, the Essenes, and the Qumranites in profound ways, and this will in turn impinge on how we would integrate text and artefact. In the end, we must acknowledge that it is entirely possible that the Scrolls and the sources on the Essenes might tell us very little on the settlement at Qumran or its inhabitants, and *vice versa*.¹⁹ In other words, it may be the case that there is little to no overlap between texts and archaeology in the case of Qumran, despite the presumed correlations between the human subjects of our sources and despite the fact that the Scrolls, as physical artefacts, are an integral part of the site's archaeology. But this also means that a thorough archaeological analysis of Qumran might elucidate further the world *behind* the Scrolls — that is, the socio-cultural world of the people who collected, used, and deposited these manuscripts — and, possibly, what stands behind the literary portrayals of the Essenes. Qumran, therefore, could have the potential to cast new light on at least one settlement that was related to the group(s) depicted in the Dead Sea Scrolls and/or the Essenes with regard to facets that might have been ignored by the texts; the archaeology of Qumran could also provide an important contrast to the idealized (and ideological) world of the texts by presenting a picture that is untainted by such flourishes or the dynamics of cultural memory. In many ways, contrast, rather than identification, is epistemologically more rewarding.

In view of all the above issues, it is evident that the integration of sources cannot be characterized by the use of texts as ciphers to explain and interpret archaeological features; rather, texts and archaeology should be seen as analogies, the intersection of which could create a context in which their respective interpretations could be compared and contrasted, in the process leading to the formulation of new insights. The outcome would be a much richer understanding of Qumran, the world of the Scrolls, and (perhaps) the Essenes than that which would be achieved if we were to just aim at establishing an identification or correspondence between text and artefact. Indeed, the latter would be a very narrow approach to the sources and one which limits considerably the potential to which they could be put to use.²⁰

¹⁷ Hempel 2013, p. 8. See further Grossman 2002; Metso 2009; Davies 2011, pp. 326–338.

¹⁸ The most recent and systematic analysis of the classical sources on the Essenes is Taylor 2012.

¹⁹ See also Vieweger 2011, pp. 98–99; Davies 2011, pp. 320, 323–334.

²⁰ This brief discussion has been extracted almost *verbatim* from a longer discussion in Mizzi, forthcoming.

As far as the field of Qumran studies is concerned, it is perhaps time that the methodological debate ceases to focus on whether Qumran, the Scrolls, and the Essenes are related or on whether or not Qumran was a “sectarian settlement;” instead, we could concentrate on how actually to relate the archaeology of Qumran with the textual sources, both those that are artefactual at Qumran and those received from the classical world. With these brief reflections in mind, I will now explore the question of the ritual-purity status of glass at Qumran during its occupation in Period I/II.

THE GLASS VESSELS FROM QUMRAN

I have already discussed the glass corpus from Qumran in detail in another venue;²¹ thus, a brief summary should do here. Fragments of glass vessels were found both in the excavations conducted by Roland de Vaux in the 1950s and in those carried out by Yizhak Magen and Yuval Peleg between 1994 and 2004. The assemblage recovered from de Vaux’s excavations is made up of ca. 150 glass fragments belonging to at least 89 different vessels, most of which come from within the built settlement;²² as to the glass unearthed in the Magen and Peleg excavations, it appears to have been found in the eastern dump, but no quantitative data have yet been published.²³

The most common forms of vessels are bowls and cups, followed by bottles and flasks. The majority of these are naturally coloured, generally described either as blue/bluish or green/greenish in colour,²⁴ but there are also two colourless vessels, two others which are *possibly* colourless, and a fragment which has a dense mauve (light purple) colour. The majority of the vessels excavated by de Vaux are of the free-blown kind; there are also four examples of sagged ribbed and grooved bowls,²⁵ one mould-blown “Sidonian” vessel, and four or five vessels that might be imports from the western Mediterranean.²⁶ Magen and Peleg have reported that during their recent excavations they discovered “a large number of receptacles of the kind known as ‘Sidon ware,’” boasting Greek inscriptions,²⁷ as well as goblets, bowls, and bottles.²⁸

The glass corpus from Qumran serves as an excellent case study regarding the problematic nature of some conclusions about the site when these are reached on the basis of an improper integration of texts and archaeology.

²¹ See Mizzi 2010.

²² Only a few pieces of this glass assemblage are listed in de Vaux’s official inventory and in the lists of objects published in Humbert and Chambon 1994. However, the whole assemblage, including those items which de Vaux did not catalogue, has been published in preliminary format by Wouters *et al.* 1999/2000. See also Fontaine 1993 and Donceel 2010. The latter is a detailed report which seems to have been intended as a final publication of the material. For various reasons, however, it was published online without undergoing peer review.

²³ See Magen and Peleg 2006, pp. 59–64, 71; 2007, p. 22.

²⁴ See Wouters *et al.* 1999/2000 as well as figs 4–13, which clearly show that the colours of the glass vessels were achieved naturally since none of them show distinctively deep colours.

²⁵ There are a number of other ribbed bowls and beakers, but these are free-blown ribbed vessels.

²⁶ See Mizzi 2010 for details.

²⁷ Magen and Peleg 2006, p. 71.

²⁸ Magen and Peleg 2006, p. 71; 2007, p. 22, fig. 27.

A number of those scholars who reject the so-called “sectarian interpretation” of Qumran have claimed, for example, that the glass from Qumran signifies luxury and wealth, and that this body of evidence is therefore incongruous with the presence of a “sectarian community.”²⁹ Note, for instance, the argument in Wouters *et al.* that the glass from Qumran is “hard to reconcile with the hypothesis ... of a community seeking detachment from worldly affairs and poverty,”³⁰ and Yizhar Hirschfeld’s remark that the “presence of a large collection of glassware at the site ... is an indication of industrial and commercial, rather than religious, activity.”³¹ At the other end of the spectrum, there are those who are advocates of the “sectarian interpretation” of Qumran but who minimize the significance of this material. Magen Broshi, for instance, states that “the only signs of opulence are remains of unstratified glass vessels (much of which were found in rubbish dumps) that were brought *most probably* to Qumran as booty by the Roman garrison that occupied the site after 68 AD;”³² whereas for Roland de Vaux the glass fragments from Qumran were insignificant.³³ These conclusions, in one way or another, subtly conflate, at too early a stage, the data from the Scrolls and the sources on the Essenes with the archaeology of Qumran, leading both to a misreading of the texts and to a misinterpretation of the archaeological evidence. If text and artefact are analysed separately, our conclusions would be quite different.

Indeed, a thorough comparative archaeological analysis of the glass from Qumran reveals that the site’s corpus largely comprises the least expensive types of glass vessels — that is, free-blown vessels — showing that previous assumptions about the nature of the corpus were erroneous.³⁴ What we have at Qumran are vessels that are largely functional and not status symbols. Probably, it would not be far off the mark to suggest that the value and significance of the Qumran glass has been overstated owing to the need to find evidence that sits in tension with evidence from the Scrolls or with descriptions of the Essenes, an uncritical reading of which gives the false impression that these groups were poor (see below). This is a clear, if subtle, example of the conflation of text and artefact at too early a stage in the research process.

The dating of the glass fragments likewise needs to be adjusted. A detailed cross-examination of the date of registration of the glass from Qumran and de Vaux’s excavation notes allows for a “virtual” reconstruction of the stratigraphic context of these vessels.³⁵ This eliminates both the problem of “unstratified glass vessels”³⁶ and that of dating this material on the basis of educated guesses, which often appear to be influenced by preconceived notions about the nature of the site — that is, some scholars seem to have attributed

²⁹ See, for example, Donceel and Donceel-Voûte 1994; Wouters *et al.* 1999/2000, p. 18; Hirschfeld 2004, p. 145.

³⁰ Wouters *et al.* 1999/2000, p. 18.

³¹ Hirschfeld 2004, p. 145.

³² Broshi 2007, p. 27 (italics in the original source).

³³ De Vaux 1953, p. 95.

³⁴ Mizzi 2010.

³⁵ Here, it should be pointed out that, owing to de Vaux’s excavation methodology and the fact that he passed away before producing a final report, the stratigraphic context of many of the excavated objects at Qumran remains unknown. The present author (Mizzi 2009 and forthcoming), however, developed a method through which the stratigraphic context of such finds can be reconstructed.

³⁶ Pace Broshi 2007, p. 27 (see above).

all or most glass vessels either to Period III or Period I/II not because of indicative archaeological evidence but based on whether or not Qumran is perceived to have been a “sectarian settlement” (this is because of the erroneous notion that the presence of glass would conflict with such an identification; see the above quotes). Once again, it is hard not to see the premature conflation of sources behind such conclusions. In fact, the analysis of the stratigraphic context of the glass reveals that the vessels within this corpus cannot be lumped together as one assemblage, belonging either to Period I/II or III, since fragments come from both contexts, more or less in equal measure. It is also significant that the few expensive glass vessels — such as the “Sidonian” wares, the colourless and purple fragments, and the possible imports from the western Mediterranean, these being the only vessels that could qualify as possible “status symbols” — happen to come either from clear Period III levels, or from dumps, or from unclear contexts.³⁷

A critical reading of the rule texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls (*cf.* S and D) reveals that the group(s) depicted therein must have had access to a degree of wealth. The Scrolls themselves, as physical artefacts, are in fact evidence of this.³⁸ Moreover, there is no definite evidence in the Scrolls that wealth in itself was viewed negatively; rather, what is condemned is opulence and illegitimate wealth acquired by theft, oppression, or corruption (*cf.* the critiques against other Jewish contemporaries interspersed in S, D, and *Pesher Habakkuk* [1QpHab], for example; *e.g.*, 1QS 10:19; 11:1–2; CD 6:15–17a; 1QpHab 6:1–8; 8:3–17; 9:2–16; 11:17–12:10).³⁹ Descriptions of the Essenes as a wealth-eschewing group should not be taken literally either, but need to be understood within the respective rhetorical frameworks of Philo, Josephus, and Pliny.⁴⁰ Therefore, there is no necessary correlation between poverty and the group(s) in question, which means that the glass vessels, expensive or not, can tell us nothing about the identity of the Qumranites. All that we could say is that the glass from Qumran is not at all incompatible with the presence of a group associated with the Scrolls and/or with the Essenes, contrary to what some scholars have maintained.

But to focus solely on matters of identity would be a very narrow approach to the data. The more interesting questions pertain to the light the glass from Qumran can shed on the Qumranites and their practices as well as the socio-cultural worldview of the group(s) depicted in the Scrolls and/or the Essenes. It is to one such question that we now turn.

³⁷ Mizzi 2010.

³⁸ The majority of the Scrolls are made of parchment, a product that must have been quite expensive owing to the complicated process of production as well as the more limited and, therefore, expensive raw materials (*i.e.*, animal skin) needed to manufacture it (see also Gamble 1995, pp. 43–47; Hezser 2001, pp. 138–140; Alexander 2003, p. 8). As for the cost of papyrus, which is less common at Qumran, the question remains somewhat open, although it is agreed that it would have been unaffordable to people living close to subsistence levels (see Lewis 1974; Harris 1989, pp. 193–196; Hezser 2001, pp. 131–133; Skeat 2004; Johnson 2010, pp. 17–21).

³⁹ See Collins 2010, pp. 185–186; Mizzi 2010, p. 122. For a detailed analysis of wealth in the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Murphy 2002.

⁴⁰ See Taylor 2012. In her critical analysis of the classical sources on the Essenes, Taylor demonstrates that the Essenes are not described as collectively poor; rather, they are individually “poor” in that they have common ownership of goods. In other words, the Essenes are portrayed as spurning individual money making, opting instead to deposit their earnings in a common fund.

THE RITUAL-PURITY STATUS OF GLASS AT QUMRAN

How does the presence of glass at Qumran fit in the picture we already have about the site? A look at the glass-vessel corpus reveals a few interesting features: 1) unlike the case of pottery, there is no evidence that glass was produced locally at Qumran — waste material and large numbers of identical vessels, important indicators for glass production, are missing;⁴¹ 2) in contrast to pottery, which amounts to thousands of fragments, there is a very small number of glass-vessel fragments; and 3) the vessels that can be securely attributed to Period I/II are, for the most part, functional vessels — tableware and bottles — and not status symbols. The data, therefore, indicate that glassware was imported from outside and that the need to produce glass locally was not felt, in contrast to pottery. In particular, the evidence also highlights a stark contrast between the consumption of pottery and glass at Qumran.

Does the small number of glass-vessel fragments indicate that glass was not commonly used in daily life? Were glass table vessels reserved for special occasions? And did glass bottles perhaps hold a special type of liquid, which might have been sold in these same bottles? Could the data also suggest that glass had a longer ritual “shelf life” than pottery at Qumran? Could glass, therefore, have been considered to be insusceptible to impurity or else to be open to purification, unlike pottery?⁴² Certainly, glass appears to have been less frequently used than pottery, but could the acute discrepancy between pottery and glass fragments be explicated through a ritual-purity framework? In other words, is it possible that the ratio of glass-to-pottery is skewed and that the disproportionate ratio reflects not a minimal use of glass at Qumran but an overconsumption of pottery due to purity concerns? This is highly plausible and sensible, but still, it remains a mere educated conjecture. Archaeology can only take us so far and, thus, we need to turn to the textual sources to see if they can shed any further light on the matter.

Unfortunately, however, there is no straightforward answer to be found here. Neither biblical texts — the legislation in which might have been authoritative for the Qumranites, as they were for other Jews — nor the non-biblical Scrolls tell us anything about the ritual status of glass vessels. The term זכוכית, “glass,” occurs only once in the biblical material — namely, Job 28:17⁴³ and, therefore, outside of a legal context — whereas, in

⁴¹ See Mizzi 2010, pp. 120–121 and bibliography there. In contrast, there is clear evidence for pottery production, including kilns, wasters, and stacks comprising hundreds of identical pottery vessels, not to mention the discovery of thousands of pottery fragments in the settlement and the dumps adjacent to it. See de Vaux 1973, pp. 7, 11–12, 16–17, pls Vb, X, XII, XIIIb, XIV; and the data reported in Magen and Peleg 2006, 2007.

⁴² According to Lev 11:33, once ritually impure, ceramic vessels could only be purified through breaking. Since biblical texts were among the main legislative sources for late Second Temple Jews, it is not at all improbable that, in accordance with Lev 11:33, some or the majority of Jews discarded pottery that became ritually impure. Though it cannot be definitely proven, the high consumption rate of pottery at Qumran, as attested by the thousands of pottery fragments but also by discarded whole vessels, might have something to do with ritual purity and the legislation in Lev 11:33. Some scholars have also linked the production of pottery at Qumran with purity concerns (see, for example, Magness 2002, p. 116; 2011, pp. 62–64).

⁴³ Rüger 1993, p. 444.

the non-biblical Dead Sea Scrolls, it does not occur at all.⁴⁴ The sources on the Essenes are equally silent on this issue, as they are on many others.

On the other hand, rabbinic literature preserves various statements and rulings dealing with glass, and these decree that glass was susceptible to impurity. A few of these traditions (*y. Shabbat* 1.4, 3d; *y. Pesahim* 1.6, 27d; *b. Shabbat* 14b) are attributed to Yose ben Yo'ezer of Šereda and Yose ben Yoḥanan of Jerusalem, who lived in the 2nd century BCE, which is precisely when glass begins to be increasingly attested in archaeological contexts in ancient Palestine.⁴⁵ In *y. Ketubot* 8.11, 32c, it is Simeon ben Shetah (late 2nd–early 1st century BCE) who decrees impurity upon glass vessels, whereas *b. Shabbat* 15a relates the promulgation of this edict to the late 1st century BCE, 80 years before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. According to Grossmark, these different attributions might reflect various decrees that ratified earlier ones or that expanded their content.⁴⁶ Therefore, the rulings on glass probably represent a drawn-out process of development, starting in the mid-2nd century BCE.⁴⁷ The edicts simply state that impurity was decreed upon glass (גזרו תומאה על ארץ העמים ועל כלי זכוכית), but they do not elaborate the details of the purity decree.

It is in *m. Kelim* 2.1, 15.1, 30.1, and *t. Kelim Baba Batra* 7.7 that the details of the halakhah on glass are expounded. Here, glass vessels are put on a par with wooden, leather, and bone utensils (כלי עץ כלי עור כלי עצם וכלי זכוכית פשוטיהן טהורין ומקבליהן טמאין [*m. Kelim* 2.1; 15.1]).⁴⁸ According to these passages, glass becomes susceptible to impurity only when it is formed into a receptacle — although, as far as wood and leather are concerned, this rule is contradicted in other passages of the Mishnah⁴⁹ — and presumably the same sources that render wooden, leather, and bone utensils unclean affect glass vessels; these sources of impurity probably correspond to those specified in the Torah (Lev 11:32; 15:12, 17; Num 31:20)⁵⁰ and the opening

⁴⁴ See Abegg Jr 2003.

⁴⁵ Glass begins to be increasingly evidenced in archaeological contexts from the 2nd century BCE onwards, and it becomes especially common in deposits post-dating the mid-1st century BCE, indicating a correlation between the invention of free-blowing around this time and the widespread distribution of glass. For a survey on this issue, see Mizzi 2010 and bibliography there.

⁴⁶ Grossmark 2010, pp. 199–203, 211.

⁴⁷ Grossmark 2010, p. 204. In fact, it is most probable that these early edicts on glass were of an *ad hoc* nature, enacted because of new economic circumstances, namely the growing popularity of glass in the 2nd and (especially) 1st centuries BCE; the availability of new types of vessels in the household must have necessitated regulation in terms of their purity status, owing to the absence of explicit laws to this effect in the Torah. The use of the term *gezera* (גזרה) in connection with these decrees on glass might be suggestive of this, although these Talmudic passages may also contain anachronistic elements. For the meaning of גזרה, see the discussion in Heger 2003, pp. 85–91, 268–277; Grossmark 2010, p. 192.

⁴⁸ See also Grossmark 2010, p. 203.

⁴⁹ Neusner 1974a, p. 45; 1974b, pp. 49, 51.

⁵⁰ According to Lev 11:32, if any of the eight swarming creatures spelled out in Lev 11:29–30 (*e.g.*, rats and lizards, which would have been commonly found in the kitchen [see Milgrom 1991, p. 671]) falls and dies on artefacts of wood, skin, and textiles, such objects become unclean. The same artefacts also become unclean through corpse impurity (Num 31:20), and wooden utensils are mentioned again in the context of legislation dealing with the *zab* (Lev 15:12), and leather and textiles in connection with semen impurity (Lev 15:17). On the basis of the clause כל כלי אשר יעשה מלאכה בהם in Lev 11:32, the rabbis infer that objects must be functional artefacts for them to become susceptible to impurity. The same halakhic principles must have been applied to glass vessels and bone artefacts (which are likewise not mentioned in biblical legislation concerning artefacts and impurity).

section of the mishnaic tractate *Kelim* (*m.Kelim* 1.1).⁵¹ The halakhah on glass in these Tannaitic passages further stipulates that wooden, leather, bone, and glass utensils are to be cleansed by breaking, therefore in a manner reminiscent of the treatment due to unclean ceramic vessels according to Lev 11:33;⁵² per rabbinic halakhah, any new vessel/utensil made from the broken raw material will once again be pure, but susceptible to impurity.⁵³ However, other halakhot (*m.Miqwa'ot* 9.5; *b.Shabbat* 15b) seem to preserve an alternative view on the purification of glass and suggest that glass could be purified by immersion in water.⁵⁴

It is unclear whether these contrasting views reflect a diachronic development or whether they reflect opposing but synchronous viewpoints. According to Neusner, *m.Miqwa'ot* 9.5 stems from Ushan times (post-135 CE), whereas *m.Kelim* 2.1 as it now stands is post-Ushan; *m.Kelim* 15.1 and *t.Baba Batra* 7.7 contain material associated with Ushan authorities (Simeon b. Gamaliel), and *m.Kelim* 30.1 might be Ushan because its formulation parallels *t.Baba Batra* 7.7.⁵⁵ This suggests that the halakhah on glass in *m.Kelim* 2.1, despite the post-Ushan formulation of the passage in which it occurs, goes back, at least, to Ushan times. It is also possible that some of these halakhot are even earlier; in *m.Kelim* 15.1 and *t.Baba Batra* 7.7, the association with Ushan authorities, for example, is tangential. In the former, the dispute recorded between R. Meir and R. Judah is independent of the opening statement declaring utensils of wood, leather, bone, and glass to be susceptible to impurity when they form a receptacle; likewise, in *t.Baba Batra* 7.7, the statement attributed to R. Simeon b. Gamaliel is peripheral to the opening statement declaring — “by word of the scribes” (מדברי סופרים) — glass vessels as objects susceptible to uncleanness. Therefore, the details of halakhot on the (im)purity of glass might well be pre-Ushan, but how early they go remains difficult to confirm.

Of course, even if we could trace the details of these rabbinic decrees on glass to the Second Temple Period with a degree of certainty, we can never conflate the views on glass preserved in rabbinic literature with the worldview of the group(s) depicted in the Scrolls or the Essenes. In view of the competing legal traditions and interpretations known to have existed in the late Second Temple Period, shared views or traditions on certain issues cannot be assumed. Therefore, the views preserved in rabbinic discussions, whatever their source

⁵¹ Neusner 1974a, p. 47. According to *m.Kelim* 1.1, creeping things, semen, corpse impurity or the one impure because of a corpse, one suffering from scale disease, and the waters of purification the volume of which is insufficient for sprinkling convey uncleanness to vessels by contact.

⁵² This halakhah departs from the biblically prescribed means of purification for wooden utensils, skins, and textiles (see also Grossmark 2010, p. 203, n. 57). Lev 11:32, Lev 15:12, 17, and Num 31:20 demand that such unclean objects be immersed in or sprinkled with water, so that at sunset they revert back to their original purity. In the case of metal vessels, Num 31:22–23 also stipulates that they be put through fire in the event of contamination by corpse impurity.

⁵³ The situation with broken ceramic vessels is more complicated (cf. *m.Kelim* 2.2; 3.4; 4.1–3). See the discussion in Neusner 1974a, pp. 51–62, 87–89, 101–111, 317–323.

⁵⁴ *b.Shabbat* 15b discusses the reason rabbis declared glass susceptible to impurity, this being the fact that glass is manufactured from sand and, thus, reminiscent of ceramic vessels. This elicits another question: if glass is like pottery, how is it that it was stated that glass could be purified in a *miqweh*? The answer, according to *b.Shabbat* 15b, is that the tradition refers to perforated glass vessels that were “patched” by molten lead. This seems like an Amoraic explanation of an earlier ruling which declared that glass could indeed be purified in a ritual bath. Interestingly, a cache of glass vessels have been found on the stairs leading into a *miqweh* at Alon Shevut (see Amit 1999).

⁵⁵ Neusner 1974a, p. 46; 1974c, pp. 261, 271, 284, 293, 336–337, 344–345, 364; 1976, pp. 169, 177.

(and here I want to emphasize that I am not equating the later rabbis with the Pharisees), cannot be indiscriminately attributed to Jews of the 1st centuries BCE-CE. Nonetheless, the rabbinic evidence indicates that halakhic considerations concerning the ritual status of glass go back to the late Second Temple Period, when glass started to become more widely available. Therefore, even if not expressly stated in any of the extant texts, it is quite likely that other groups would also have developed their specific views on the matter.

Given the different ways of dealing with the (im)purity of glass we find in rabbinic material, what would the group(s) depicted in the Scrolls and/or the Essenes have done? In the following section of this discussion, we will begin by considering the biblical verses on which glass (im)purity regulations could have been established, and then consider how these verses are used in the extant literature among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and then review the archaeological data. As noted above, while there is no specific mention of the (im)purity of glass in the Scrolls, there are interpretations of biblical material that are helpful in pointing to how the group(s) depicted in these texts understood glass (im)purity. On the contrary, the sources on the Essenes offer no information whatsoever that is pertinent to the question at hand and, so, they are left out of the discussion.

The key biblical passages which served as a foundation for later legislation on artefacts and ritual impurity are Num 31:22–23 and Lev 11:32. Here we find the lists of vessels or utensils that are susceptible to impurity and the corresponding procedures for their purification. Num 31:22–23 and Lev 11:32 respectively read:

[22] Surely/Only (אך),⁵⁶ gold and silver, bronze, iron, tin, and lead [23] — any object⁵⁷ which can go through fire (כל דבר אשר יבא באש) — you shall pass through fire and it will be clean. Yet (אך),⁵⁸ it shall (also) be purified with the waters of sprinkling (במי נדה). And anything which cannot go through fire (וכל אשר לא יבא באש), you shall pass through water.

[32] And anything on which one of them [with reference to the creeping things mentioned in Lev 11:29] falls shall be unclean when they die (וכל אשר יפל עליו מהם במתם יטמא),⁵⁹ whether

⁵⁶ אך can be used to express an emphatic affirmation (hence “surely”) or a restriction (hence “yet, but, only”). The emphatic use may seem more apt in view of the all-inclusive clauses — כל דבר אשר יבא באש and וכל אשר לא יבא באש — in v. 23; in this case, it could loosely be rendered as follows: “Make sure to pass gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, and lead — as well as any other objects that can withstand fire — through fire and it will be clean.” Nonetheless, it is also possible to read אך as a restrictive particle emphasizing that the stipulation in Num 31:22–23 applies only to metals in contrast to the materials mentioned in Num 31:20 (*i.e.*, garments, skins, goat hair, and wood). Loosely rendered, this would read: “Only gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, and lead — that is, every (metal) object which can withstand fire — must be passed through fire, and it will then be clean.” The rabbis adopted a reading along these lines (see further below).

⁵⁷ See previous note.

⁵⁸ Here, אך is best translated in a restrictive sense, the main purpose being to provide a contrast either with the preceding statement in Num 31 or with other known regulations beyond this immediate context (for the latter, see Milgrom 1990, p. 261).

⁵⁹ Many translations render this in such a way as to imply that the objects in question become unclean only if the carcass of the mentioned creeping creatures falls onto them. The NIV, for example, reads: “When one of them dies and falls on something ... it will be unclean;” the NRSV translates this as: “And anything upon which any of them falls when they are dead shall be unclean” (*cf.* the KJV and the NJPSV for a translation along similar lines). However, as Wenham (1979, pp. 178–179) rightly argues, the Hebrew may also be indicative of instances when a *live* creeping thing falls onto an object and, subsequently, dies there. Indeed, the fact that Lev 11:32 does not use a construction that includes the term נבלה (*cf.* מנבלתם עליו יטמא in Lev 11:35) strongly suggests that the stipulation is not limited to those instances when creeping creatures fall dead onto a utensil (Milgrom 2009, p. 673). Moreover, the temporal clause comprising the infinitive with the preposition

it be any article of wood (מכל כלי עץ), or cloth, or skin, or sack — any implement with which one can do work (כל כלי אשר יעשה מלאכה בהם).⁶⁰ It shall be immersed in water, and it will be unclean till the evening; then, it shall be clean.

Two main extrapolations could have been made on the basis of these two passages. A straightforward reading of Num 31:22–23 would have included glass among the category of vessels that cannot be passed through fire owing to the fact that glass would melt or break under high temperatures. The inclusive nature of the language employed in the passage — “anything which cannot go through fire” must be immersed in water — could have invited the inclusion of glass in this second category of materials.⁶¹ Likewise, Lev 11:32 could have been open to such an interpretation owing to the clause כל כלי אשר יעשה מלאכה בהם, which could easily have been read as an all-inclusive statement, recalling וכל אשר at the beginning of the verse.⁶² The text specifies wooden articles, cloth, skin, and sack because these would have been the items most commonly attested in domestic contexts in the earlier 1st millennium BCE; but the subsequent broad clause ensures that working implements made from other materials are also included.⁶³ Glass would have been one such material; once it became commonly available in the second half of the 2nd century BCE, and especially in the later 1st century BCE, it could very easily have been considered as one of the “implements with which one can do work.” In accordance with both scriptural injunctions, impure glass could have been purified by immersion in water and not by breaking or melting/reshaping (which is the dominant view we find in rabbinic literature). This understanding of Num 31:22–23 and Lev 11:32 would not be incongruent with the typically straightforward interpretation of scriptural law in the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁶⁴

ב (במתם) implies temporal proximity between the act of falling and dying and not temporal immediacy between the act of dying and falling, for which the use of the infinitive with the preposition כ would have been more suitable (for the subtle distinctions between the use of these two prepositions with the infinitive construct, see Waltke and O’Connor 1990, p. 604 [§36.2.2b]; Joüon and Muraoka 2006, pp. 588–589 [§166*l-m*]). Therefore, a translation along the lines proposed here, paralleling that of Wenham (1979, p. 163, 178), is preferable.

⁶⁰ The NIV translates this as follows: “When one of them dies and falls on something, that article, whatever its use, will be unclean, whether it is made of wood, cloth, hide or sackcloth. Put it in water; it will be unclean till evening, and then it will be clean.” This translation gives the impression that Lev 11:32 limits its stipulation to wood, cloth, skin, and sack, and that the clause כל כלי אשר יעשה מלאכה בהם functions to emphasize the fact that the ruling applies to any type of functional object made of the aforementioned materials. However, one could also read this clause in such a way that it includes *any* type of functional object made from *any* type of raw material (*cf.* the opening phrase, וכל אשר, with the exception of fired clay (*cf.* the stipulation in Lev 11:33)). Most translations give a vague rendition of the passage, like the one above.

⁶¹ Taking the first occurrence of אך in an affirmative rather than a restrictive sense, and the clauses כל באש דבר אשר יבא באש and וכל אשר לא יבא באש as references to *any* object or material — rather than as references, respectively, to metals or to the materials listed in Num 31:20 (*i.e.*, garments and utensils of skin, goat-hair, and wood) — is a more straightforward reading of Num 31:22–23.

⁶² For the all-encompassing meaning of these phrases, see also Milgrom 2009, pp. 673, 674.

⁶³ See also Milgrom 2009, p. 674.

⁶⁴ For the idea that legislation in the Scrolls generally follows the plain sense of scriptural laws, see Harrington 2000, pp. 77–78; Noam 2009. Noam (2009) emphasizes that this approach could, at times, lead to a lenient interpretation. Thus, Noam refines the oft-repeated statement that legislation in the Scrolls always opts for the more stringent interpretation; rather, it so happens that the plain sense of scripture often — *but not always* — leads to stringent readings. Heger (2011) agrees with this general conclusion, but underlines that the simple approach to scriptural law does not imply that legislation in the Scrolls is, therefore, unrefined. Both Noam and Heger discuss the different routes adopted by the people behind the Scrolls and the rabbis with regard to the interpretation of biblical law, but they disagree on the core principles that distinguished the

Alternatively, the lists in these two passages could have been interpreted in such a way that their omission of glass would have implied that it was insusceptible to ritual impurity, either because glass is simply not listed among the vessels/utensils that can be defiled⁶⁵ or because of a highly restrictive reading of these verses.

In fact, some rabbinic interpretations of Lev 11:32 and Num 31:22–23 show that the lists therein were not necessarily read as all-inclusive. *Sifre Numbers* 126,⁶⁶ for example, discusses the biblical legislation regarding corpse impurity in Num 19:14–15 in light of Num 31:20, 22–23. *Sifre Numbers* examines what the phrase **וכל אשר באהל** (“and anything which is in the tent”) in Num 19 encapsulates, and asks whether this includes vessels of dung, stone, and unfired clay, as well as domestic animals (**ועדין כלי גללים וכלי אבנים וכלי אדמה ונפשות בהמה**) (במשמע). It concludes that **וכל אשר באהל** is limited to: garments and utensils made of skin, goat-hair, and wood, citing Num 31:20, which stipulates the purification of these specific objects in the case of corpse impurity; metal vessels made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, and lead, referring to Num 31:22, which specifically lists these metal vessels in the same corpse-impurity instruction;⁶⁷ and unsealed ceramic vessels, interpreting the phrase **וכל כלי עליו** in Num 19:15 strictly with reference to pottery. In this case, the specification of vessels in these lists is taken as a limiting device, which restricts the types of vessels that could become polluted in a corpse-impure house.

The aforementioned passage uses Num 31:20, 22–23 to interpret Num 19:14–15. In *Sifre Numbers* 158,⁶⁸ Num 31:22–23 is the focus of the discussion. Here, *Sifre Numbers* dislodges these verses out of their immediate corpse-impurity context and reinterprets them with reference to gentile vessels or utensils.⁶⁹ The phrase **כל דבר אשר יבוא באש** is interpreted restrictively as a reference to specific metal utensils, “for example (כגון), cauldrons, knives, pots, spits, and grills — because of the **גויות גוים**,”⁷⁰ whereas **וכל אשר לא יבוא באש**

interpretative systems of these two groups from each other. See also the extensive discussion on this issue in Heger 2007.

⁶⁵ Magness (2011, p. 67) makes this suggestion in connection with the Sadducees.

⁶⁶ Citations from the *Sifre Numbers* are based on the critical edition by Horovitz (1917; here pp. 162–163).

⁶⁷ Here, the list of metal vessels in Num 31:22 is interpreted restrictively because of the particle **אך**, which the rabbis understood in its restrictive sense, despite the all-inclusive language that follows immediately in v. 23. As for the objects that cannot withstand fire, which remain unspecified in Num 31:23, it seems that the rabbis understood these with reference to v. 20, since garments and utensils of skin, goat-hair, and wood, which obviously do not withstand fire, would have had to be purified in water, in accordance with Num 31:23.

⁶⁸ See Horovitz 1917, p. 214.

⁶⁹ According to Vered Noam (2011, p. 33), the divergent purification instructions in this passage and in Num 19, both of which relate to corpse impurity, might have served as an impetus for this reorientation of Num 31:22–23, although one must note that the Midianite setting of Num 31 lends itself to an interpretative link with gentiles.

⁷⁰ So Horovitz 1917, p. 214. The meaning of the phrase **גויות גוים** remains obscure. However, the manuscript tradition of *Sifre Numbers* preserves a number of variants, including **גוית**, **גאות**, **גיאית**, and **גוית** (see Horovitz 1917, p. 214; Noam 2011, p. 39, n. 42). Noam (2011, pp. 39–40), on the basis of evidence from the best witnesses to *Sifre Numbers*, favours the reading **גוית** and suggests that it could be a denominative of **גוי** — cf. the occurrence of a form of **גוית** or **גויתא** in *b.Kethubbot* 11a (Jastrow 2004, p. 236) — thus rendering the phrase as “the gentile status of gentiles” or “the gentleness of gentiles.” In fact, it is quite possible that **גויות** or **גוית** are scribal errors for **גוית** or perhaps **גויות**, which is not implausible considering the rare occurrence of the word in rabbinic literature. Other manuscripts read something altogether different, namely **גויעולי גוים**, meaning “vessels of gentiles which require cleaning with boiling water before they may be used by Jews” (Jastrow 2004, p. 241).

תעבירו במים is limited to utensils “such as (כנון) water vessels, cups, ladles, kettles, and boilers — because of the גויות גוים.” Therefore, *Sifre Numbers* 158 interprets Num 31:22–23 as an instruction to cleanse (through fire or water) any gentile vessels or utensils that could have been used to cook forbidden foods, thereby ensuring that any such scraps of food are removed and that the vessels are suitable for use by Jews.⁷¹ Accordingly, the seemingly all-inclusive language is understood restrictively with reference to kitchen utensils.⁷²

A similar restrictive interpretation is also applied to Lev 11:32. Its interpretation in the *Sifra* (Shemini Pereq 8), for instance, is reminiscent of the NIV translation.⁷³ The phrase כלי אשר יעשה מלאכה בהם elicits the following response: “any utensil [with which work is done]:’ this includes a sling, an amulet, and a phylactery; or else, may I include wood or chain/rope? Scripture says: ‘with which work is done’ and not one that does work for other objects” (כל כלי לרבות הקלע והקמיע והתפלה או יכול שאני מרבה את העץ ואת העבות תלמוד) (לומר אשר יעשה מלאכה בהם לא העושה מלאכה באחרים).⁷⁴ This shows that, for the *Sifra*, the clause “any utensil...” relates to the valid types of functional objects that fall within the category of wooden utensils, textiles, or skins; it is not taken to refer to other materials, such as glass, metal, stone, or bone.⁷⁵ Indeed, even skins, wooden, or textile objects — such as the piece of wood or the chain/rope mentioned in the text — that serve no direct functional purpose (being mere parts of a larger functional object) are excluded. In other words, *Sifra* Shemini Pereq 8 understands the clause כלי אשר יעשה מלאכה בהם as a device limiting which vessels or utensils are susceptible to impurity — these must be objects that serve a direct purpose for humans — and, within the context of Lev 11:32, the *Sifra* limits its application of the clause to the previously specified materials, that is, wood, skins, or textiles.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Noam 2011, pp. 33, 39–40.

⁷² *Sifre Zuta* Num 31:23 (Horovitz 1917, p. 330) preserves a more inclusive interpretation of the verse, one which includes weapons, jewellery, and other domestic objects. This understanding betrays a concern that objects might be impure by mere association with gentiles and not merely because of the possible remnants of forbidden food. See also Noam 2011, pp. 40–41.

⁷³ See n. 60 above.

⁷⁴ Citations from the *Sifra* are based on the Weiss edition, accessible online at <http://www.responsa.co.il>. Also see Neusner’s translation in Neusner 1988, vol. 2, pp. 186–193.

⁷⁵ The sling, the amulet, and the phylactery are all objects that fall within the category of textiles or skin. The amulet (קמיע) refers to an amulet made of parchment and not of stone, bone, glass, or metal; similarly, the chain/rope (עבות) refers to a woven object and not to a metal chain (see Jastrow 2004, pp. 1037, 1385).

⁷⁶ Therefore, it is evident that the rabbis included glass into the category of vessels/utensils that are susceptible to impurity *not* on account of an expansive reading of Lev 11:32 or Num 31:22–23 *but* as a result of their conceptual view of the world. The rabbis make a distinction between nature and products of culture. For the rabbis, anything that belongs to the realm of nature is insusceptible to impurity in contrast to products of human civilization (*cf.* Lev 11:36–37, which states that a spring and a cistern [*i.e.*, rock, earth] as well as seeds that are to be planted and on which no water has been poured are unaffected by ritual uncleanness; this may be one of the sources underlying the rabbinic worldview). This protection is extended to vessels/utensils made out of stone or earth, for instance, despite the fact that these are still products of culture; apparently, the fact that vessels of stone and unfired clay retain their natural properties make them closer to nature than culture. The same logic lies behind the rabbinic principle that incomplete or damaged vessels/utensils (of any material) are immune to impurity. On the one hand, incomplete or damaged artefacts are unusable because they fail to fulfil their intended purpose, and thus they are not objects with which work can be done; on the other hand, their unfinished or imperfect state also make them closer to the natural world than to the realm of culture. See further Lockshin 2001, pp. 64–66, nn. 71, 76–77, 79–80; Noam 2009, pp. 4–5, n. 12.

It is therefore also possible, in theory, that Lev 11:32 and Num 31:22–23 could have been interpreted in a way that would have exempted glass from ritual impurity.⁷⁷ This is certainly a less straightforward reading of scriptural legislation but one which would still be compatible with the exegetical techniques identified in the Scrolls.⁷⁸ Critically, Num 31:22–23 is re-contextualized and reformulated in an injunction concerning gentile metals in the *Damascus Document* (4Q271 2, 8–10).⁷⁹ Here, the exact list of metals spelled out in Num 31:22 is reproduced, but the stipulation understands the metals not as domestic utensils/vessels but as matter used in the making of idols; such metals are considered impure and, hence, they are banned for use by Jews (ומכול [ל] הזהב והכסף [ההנחושת וה] בדיל).⁸⁰ (ועון פרת אשר עשו הגואים פ) סל אל יביאהו איש אל טהר [תו כי אם מן החד] ש הבא מן ה [] []⁸⁰ The latter part of the quoted text is ambiguous, and it may either imply that such metals had to be purified before they could be reused, or that they had to be melted and reshaped, or that only new metals were to be used. It is possible that the Midianite context of Num 31 played a role in this connection with idolatry, even though the immediate context of Num 31:22 is corpse impurity. This passage shows that Num 31:22 could have been interpreted in a restricted manner in the Scrolls; 4Q271 specifically restricts the identification of the metals listed in v. 22 as matter used to make idols.

Nonetheless, it is unlikely that the group(s) depicted in the Scrolls would have omitted glass from the list of vessels/utensils which are susceptible to impurity. For while 4Q271 2 8–10 preserves a creative reading of Num 31:22–23, its primary concern is idolatry (and its associated impurities) not the susceptibility of materials to impurity. More relevant to our purpose is 4Q271 2 10–12, where the text proceeds with a new stipulation — about corpse impurity — which harmonizes Lev 11:32 with Num 19:14–22 and 31:20. The instruction states that no one is to bring any skin or cloth or *any* vessel/utensil whatsoever with which work is done (אל יב [א איש] כול עור ובגד ומן כל הכלי אשר יעשה מ[לאכה בהם])⁸¹ if they have been polluted by a human corpse; any such vessels/utensils have to be sprinkled with the *מִי נְדָה* first. The all-inclusive nature of this stipulation is unmistakable (*cf.* ומן כל הכלי).⁸² And this is all the more significant because it specifically deals with the status of vessels/

This explains why, for the rabbis, glass was susceptible to impurity — just like ceramics and metals, glass was manufactured through a process involving kilns/furnaces, a process that altered the natural properties of its raw material; glass was, therefore, very much a product of human civilization and technology.

⁷⁷ Of course, this does not mean that the resulting interpretation would have been necessarily identical to any of the rabbinic ones discussed above.

⁷⁸ Although exegesis is generally straightforward and based on the plain sense of scripture, there are preserved examples of creative readings in the Scrolls (see Noam 2011, pp. 35–39; Heger 2007, 2011).

⁷⁹ Baumgarten 1996, p. 174. See further Noam 2011, pp. 36–39.

⁸⁰ Baumgarten 1996, pp. 173–175. The reconstructions are based on the other 4Q copies of the *Damascus Document*, namely 4Q269 and 4Q270. Baumgarten (1996, p. 173) reads the last word as ה[כור] (“furnace”), but this is not based on parallels in any of the other 4Q copies. Noam (2011, p. 36, n. 34) reconstructs this as ה[טהור].

⁸¹ Baumgarten 1996, pp. 173–175. Reconstructions are based on parallels in 4Q269 and Lev 11:32.

⁸² The use of *ומן* before *כל הכלי* clearly shows that this clause is intended to provide a third, open category in which all other materials besides leather and cloth could be included. Indeed, it is quite probable that *ומן כל כלי אשר יעשה מלאכה בהם* of Lev 11:32, which, as noted above, can ambiguously refer back to the materials listed previously in the same verse or to an open category of vessels/utensils in addition to the ones just specified (see n. 60 above). In 4Q271, this ambiguity is eliminated.

utensils vis-à-vis ritual uncleanness. 4Q271 2 10–12, therefore, adopts the more straightforward reading of Lev 11:32, with the difference that it is harmonized with Num 19:14–22 and 31:20.⁸³

Another clear instance of an all-inclusive interpretation of corpse impurity's effect on vessels/utensils is found in another passage of the *Damascus Document* (CD 12:17b–18), which expressly states that “all vessels/utensils, (*even*) nails and pegs” (וכל כלי מסמר או יתד) hammered into the walls of a corpse-impure house, become impure and that such implements become impure just like any other working utensil (וטמאו בטמאות אחד כלי מעשה). One of the key points of this ruling is that everything (working and non-working utensils) contracts corpse impurity.⁸⁴

The *Temple Scroll* (11QT^a 49:5–21) betrays a similarly expansive interpretation of Lev 11:32, Num 19, and Num 31:20–23.⁸⁵ It states that *everything* becomes unclean in a corpse-impure house, including pottery vessels, wooden, bronze, and iron vessels/utensils, mills (רחים) and mortars (מדוכה), garments, sacks, and skins, as well as a house's floor, its walls, its doors, together with the doorsills, lintels, *mezuzot*, and any bars or bolts. Of particular significance is the recurring use of כול,⁸⁶ which underlines the all-inclusive nature of this purity rule. Moreover, it is important how the inclusion of mills and mortars appears to be underscored (כול כלים רחים ומדוכה), as if to indicate, unambiguously, that these stone vessels/utensils — which are never mentioned in the various biblical texts dealing with the impurity of vessels/utensils — belong to the category of כלים as well. This clearly shows that the lists in Lev 11:32 and Num 31:20–23 could be expanded, especially if read in conjunction with Num 19:14 (וכל אשר באהל). Glass vessels are missing in 11QT^a 49:14–16, but so are artefacts of gold, silver, tin, and lead (cf. Num 31:22). Most probably, 11QT^a only mentions vessels that were commonly found in domestic contexts in the 2nd century BCE — most households would not have had gold or silver utensils; and the distribution of glassware was still relatively limited in this period compared to the late 1st century BCE and (especially) the 1st century CE, when the introduction of free-blowing made glass affordable to a wider spectrum of the population.⁸⁷

Finally, 4Q*Tohorot A* (4Q274 1 1:4–5 and 4Q274 2 1:4) legislates that *any* vessel/utensil can become impure through contact with a *zab* (זב) (וכל כלי זב) or semen (א[א]שר יגע בו הזב).⁸⁸ This expansive

⁸³ Since Num 31:22–23 is decontextualized from its corpse-impurity context in lines 8–10 and reread with reference to idolatry, it is not picked up at all in lines 10–12.

⁸⁴ Hoenig 1969, pp. 566–567. Baumgarten (in Baumgarten and Schwartz 1995, p. 53, n. 189) also suggests that the reason that nails and pegs are singled out is to make up for the fact that, in Lev 11:32, the phrase כלי מעשה (which corresponds to כלי מעשה in CD 12:18) is qualified with reference to implements made of wood, cloth, skin, and sackcloth. Therefore, CD 12:17b–18 inserts metal implements in the definition of כלי מעשה.

⁸⁵ See Yadin 1983, vol. 1, pp. 325–334; vol. 2, pp. 212–217; Noam 2011, pp. 35–36. Once again, Lev 11:32 is here re-contextualized in an instruction that deals with corpse impurity.

⁸⁶ 11QT^a 49:14–16: יש: יעשה מלאכה בהם כלי מעשה (which corresponds to כלי מעשה in CD 12:18) is qualified with reference to implements made of wood, cloth, skin, and sackcloth. Therefore, CD 12:17b–18 inserts metal implements in the definition of כלי מעשה.

⁸⁷ For the date of the *Temple Scroll*, see White Crawford 2000, pp. 24–26. While 11QT^a dates to the 1st century BCE, the composition itself utilizes earlier sources, and it also appears that an early edition of the *Temple Scroll* existed (4QRT), dating to the mid-2nd century BCE.

⁸⁸ See Baumgarten (1999, pp. 103–105) for the text.

reading probably harmonizes Lev 15:12 and 16–18 — which respectively specify textiles, pottery, and wooden utensils, and leather and textiles as objects susceptible to the aforementioned impurities — with the lists and all-inclusive language in Lev 11:32 and, perhaps, Num 31:22–23. In this and the previously mentioned Scrolls, it is difficult not to see the inclusion of glass vessels into the category of objects susceptible to impurity.

It emerges, therefore, that there are no positive indications that the group(s) depicted in the Scrolls would have considered glass to be inherently impure or that it had to be rendered useless through breaking for it to be purified; and despite some minor differences on corpse-impurity matters between the *Damascus Document* and the *Temple Scroll* and the different social contexts in which they emerged,⁸⁹ they represent a unified view on the present question. Accordingly, the group(s) behind in the Scrolls would probably have considered glass to be susceptible to impurity *but also* open to purification through immersion in or sprinkling with water.

What happens when we amalgamate the interpretations of the archaeological and textual evidence? Archaeology reveals that, during Period I/II, glass was used by the Qumranites, but in small quantities relative to pottery. This is not because the glass at Qumran was of the expensive kind. But it could be because glass vessels were used on rare occasions or because they were imbued with a ritual-purity status along the lines traced above. Both possibilities are, in fact, not mutually exclusive. We can never confirm whether any of the stipulations in the Scrolls or whether the legislation in Lev 11:32 and Num 31:20–23 was ever applied by the Qumranites; however, the latter evidence provides us with an analogy as to how the archaeological evidence could be interpreted. Therefore, it is possible that glass could have been purified whenever it acquired impurity, which would explain the small number of glass vessels in contrast to pottery; unlike ceramic vessels, hundreds of which appear to have been broken and discarded (possibly because they became impure), the ritual life of glass could have been recharged through immersion in or sprinkling with water and its lifespan, thereby, extended.

It cannot be emphasized enough that what we have here are two interpretations at an intersection, but the analogy between text and artefact can never be proven. Nevertheless, what is proposed here is highly plausible, all the more so because two separate analyses seem to point, independently, in the same direction.⁹⁰ Therefore, neither the texts nor the archaeology has been forced to fit a particular interpretative framework; rather, both happen to converge without any tension. This means that probably this is the best reading of the evidence.

At the same time, however, the integration of the archaeology of Qumran with the Scrolls has also highlighted an element of contrast between them. The discovery of glass at Qumran sheds light on a facet of daily life that we would never have gauged from the Scrolls alone. In addition, this raises the question of why no legal views are attested in the Scrolls

⁸⁹ See Werrett 2007 for a detailed comparative study of the different purity texts from Qumran. The literature on the *Temple Scroll's* relationship to the rest of the Qumran sectarian texts is vast; a good starting point are the various studies collected in Schiffman 2008.

⁹⁰ It is worth emphasizing, once again, that “the crucial point is to remember that text and archaeology stand to each other just as apples and oranges do, namely that they are clearly distinct. ... the correlation is only made possible through the historian’s hypotheses. In this process archaeological evidence is such that it can refute a historian’s hypothesis, but it can never prove it” (Frendo 2011, p. 38).

concerning the purity status of glass. This silence can perhaps be attributed to the fact that the proliferation of glass came about in the late 1st century BCE, that is, after many of the legal texts had already been written/copied.⁹¹ Then again, this would not explain why no such texts were composed to address new material circumstances. Alternatively, this apparent silence could be the result of the highly fragmentary nature of the manuscript collection, or else it could be that the Scrolls simply did not cover each and every facet of daily life, especially if they were never intended to function as prescriptive texts or if some legal views were obvious enough not to have merited any written endorsement. Therefore, the silence of the Scrolls on the matter of glass does not mean that it was not used by the group(s) behind these texts. After all, the Scrolls preserve no instructions on how to bury the dead, for example; does this mean that deceased members were left unburied? Of course not. Rather, this continues to confirm Sarianna Metso's conclusion that many of the so-called rule texts are not law codes as such but collections of random legal traditions and decisions, the main purpose of which was didactic.⁹² As noted above, there is much to learn from contrast.

There are, of course, more questions that one could ask regarding glass and what it can tell us about the Qumranites. In this paper, I focused on the ritual-purity status of glass at Qumran and in the Scrolls, with the secondary aim of highlighting how texts and archaeology can be meaningfully integrated.

ABBREVIATIONS

KJV	<i>King James Version</i>
NIV	<i>New International Version</i>
NJPSV	<i>New Jewish Publication Society Version</i>
NRSV	<i>New Revised Standard Version</i>

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⁹¹ For a comprehensive table listing the palaeographic dates of the Scrolls, see Webster 2002. An overview of the rule and halakic texts among the Scrolls (which are the most pertinent texts for the present discussion), with brief remarks concerning their date, can be found in Harrington 2004, pp. 44–67. The dates of S and D are also discussed in the works cited in n. 16 above.

⁹² See Metso 2010.

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