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The Florilegium (4Q174)

Regardless of its apparently short length 4QFlorilegium (4QFlor.), through its interpretations or midrash of various Hebrew Scriptures, delivers insight into the realm of Second Temple Judaism. Various authors have used this text to aid their understanding of the Temple Scroll and other Qumran texts. This paper will, in short, explore the historical context and scholarly viewpoints regarding the Florilegium.

The contents of 4QFlorilegium is likely dated earlier than the manuscript itself. Knibb suggests that "The manuscript dates from the end of the first century BC or the beginning of the first century AD, but the work itself may be older than this."¹ Brooke discusses the date of the text extensively and uses Paleographical evidence to substantiate both his arguments and the arguments of those he quotes.

A suggested date for this "Herodian" script can be deduced by paleographical evidence... distinguished by its "strict formal hand" and propose that the date for this class of scrolls is roughly 50 B.C. to A.D. 70.²

Brooke concludes his remarks on 4QFlor. with a more definitive range of dates.

Paleography, archaeology and style show the date of the actual manuscript to be somewhere in the first century A.D.; study of the content enables that date to be fixed with a great degree of probability in the second or third quarter of the first century.³

These dates, however, do not pinpoint the actual date of authorship, instead as Knibb suggested it was likely an older work that was used during the Qumran period.

For those in Qumran 4QFlor. acted as an interpretation of biblical texts. It is this

1 Michael A. Knibb, The Qumran Community (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 257.

2 George J. Brooke, Exegesis at Qumran 4QFlorilegium and Its Jewish Context (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 83. see also footnotes 21-24 on pp. 326-327.

3 Brooke, Exegesis, 217.

functionality as well as the first known word in the text, *Pesher*, that lead to various names for this work prior to its final name of Florilegium. These names have been generally named after the genre and goals of the text. "This work has also been called 'A Midrash on the Last Days.' This title is appropriate inasmuch the work is very much concerned with with 'The End of Days.'"⁴ The final name for this text was provided by J.M. Allegro as *Florilegium* in 1956.⁵ Schiffman gives some insights into this final title as well.

A text known as Florilegium was found in Cave 4. Its name derived from the latinized form of a Greek term for "anthology," and this is indeed an anthology of biblical passages with messianic implications, at least interpreted here.⁶

Florilegium is therefore a fitting name for the book and is general enough to meet most scholars understanding of the book.

4QFlor. named as a "Midrash on the Last Days" or an "anthology" shows the variation in genres represented in this text. Brooke suggests "The whole document or part of it may be categorized as Qumran Midrash."⁷ Others choose to use the first word of the text, *Pesher*, to derive its genre.⁸ A *pesharim* is a work that includes a group of scriptural passages that are interpreted usually with a common theme or purpose.⁹ It is certainly not difficult to see how 4QFlor. fits this mold of *pesharim*, in fact Knibb argues that the title, *Florilegium*(anthology), does not reflect the interpretation portion of the text, which makes it a *Pesher*.¹⁰ Although there is a general agreement that 4QFlor. is a *Pesher* and possibly a *Midrash Pesher* they disagree on whether or not it is rabbinic form. According to Knibb "it would be misleading to think of 4QFlor. as if it were a midrash of type familiar from the

4 Knibb, 217.

5 George J. Brooke. "Florilegium." in David Noel Freedman (Ed.), Anchor Bible Dictionary. Vol. 2. (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 817.

6 Schiffman, JPS, 230.

7 Brooke. "Florilegium." 817.

8 Brooke, Exegesis. 152.

9 Lawrence H. Schiffman. Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994), 230.

10 Knibb, 257.

later rabbinic literature."¹⁰ His argument is based on the subtle differences that distinguish 4QFlor. from the stereotypical rabbinic form. Brooke does not see this distinction and explains that its "orientation is irrelevant for the same intent is to be found in some if not all Rabbinic midrash."⁸

The general intent and goal of the author of 4QFlor. can be found in the first few known lines.

[«And] an enemy [will trouble him no mo]re, [nor will] the son of iniquity [afflict him again] as at the beginning. From the day on which ₂ [I established judges] over my people, Israel». (4QFlor 1i1–2)

This quote sets the stage for the author's eschatological viewpoint, namely the very sharp contrast between "my people, Israel" and "the enemy (sons of Belial (4QFlor 1i8))" or "the just" and "the wicked" from Dan. 12:20. This eschatological viewpoint as is the case with works declared as pesharim is "a presaged reality, either envisaged as emergent or else observed as already actualized."¹¹

The principle underlying this document (and indeed the commentaries themselves) is the belief that the biblical texts quoted were really concerned with 'the end of days', the time in which the author thought himself to be living, and the purpose of 4QFlorilegium is to explain the significance of the texts for the community to which he belonged.¹²

The Israelites or more specifically those of Israel who are ritually pure are thought of as "my people, Israel" will be those who "seek justice eagerly" (4QFlor 1–3i17) and are the "remnant" that "shall put into practice all the law" (4QFlor 1–3ii2). It is therefore implied that those of the author's time period should be of the class of the righteous not that of the wicked. Those who are not members of the class of the righteous should "turn aside from the way of [sinners] (4QFlor 1ii14, Brooke)".

The most probable understanding of the peshar that follows Psalms 1:1a is that it is

11 Rabinowitz. "Unriddling the Riddle, A Study in the Structure and Language of the Habakkuk Peshar," *Revue de Qumran* 3 (1961–62) in Brooke, *Exegesis*. 152.

12 Knibb. 258.

concerned with the members of the community. Those who have walked in the counsel of the wicked, in joining the community, have turned from the way of "this people;" and, in terms of the Ezekiel quotation, two groups do not defile themselves any more with their idols, the Sons of Zadok and the men of her council (if the restoration is correct). The Sons of Zadok are part of the house of Judah (Ezek 37:16, 1QpHab 8:1).¹³

4QFlor. therefore identifies the community as those who "do not defile themselves" and everyone else the "counsel of the wicked," those listed in (1:3). This designation and interpretation brings to mind Redford's definition of *apocalyptic* as the author acts as a seer unto whom the interpretation or "pesher" of the heavenly visions in biblical passages is disclosed.¹⁴ Furthermore, as an *eschatological* text, 4QFlor. explores the trials (4QFlor 1ii1) and plots set against YHWH's people (4QFlor 1–3i18) in the author's time.

Beyond these two categories of people, 4QFlor. reaffirms certain understandings of the society of Second Temple Judaism, which directly pertain to the *eschatological* flavor of the text. These are mainly, but not limited to, the principles of Temple(s) and Messiah(s). Schiffman suggests that 4QFlor. describes three distinct temples.

Florilegium discusses three temples: The eschatological one to be built by God, the present one that is depicted as desecrated, and the "Temple of Man" —a reference to the sect that for its members replaces the Temple in the present age.¹⁵

4QFlor. does not focus on the physical eschatological temple¹⁶, instead it focuses on the later two as they fit with the present anticipation of the temple, a reminder that the author seeks fulfillment of the scriptures that are quoted to be fulfilled in the near future or presently.

13 Brooke, *Exegesis*. 156–157.

14 Paul D. Hanson. "Apocalypses and Apocalypticism." in David Noel Freedman (Ed.), *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Vol. 1. (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 280.

15 Schiffman, 230.

16 Brooke, "Florilegium." 817.

This takes us into the second conception of the temple, which is characteristic of Qumranic thought: the spiritualization of the cult and the temple which leads members to consider the community as the only place where expiation and adoration are now possible, that is the transfer of the notion of temple to the community, and the conception of community as if it were the temple.¹⁷

It becomes, therefore, important for the audience to understand that the current state be similar to that of the prophetic *end times*. One issue that Brooke points out is that this "sanctuary of men" spoken of in Fragment 1 line 6 of 4Q174 "is not conceived apart from the waited heavenly building; rather it is that building in anticipation."¹⁸

This anticipation is also centered around two messianic figures who would realize the word of the prophets in the authors time. The first is the "seed" after David that 4QFlorilegium derives from 2 Sam. 7:12–14.

The biblical text is interpreted to refer to a messiah from the line of David, who is to be identified with 'the messiah of Israel' (1QS IX.11) and with 'the prince of the whole congregation' (CD VII.20). His task in the present passage is 'to save Israel'.¹⁹

This aspect of Messiah in its keeping with the Qumran traditions of other Second Temple texts. In general "the messiah of Israel turns out to be a descendant of David, as one might have expected... he is often described as one who will defeat Israel's foes and execute justice."²⁰

Justice would come both from this messiah and the second messianic figure the "Interpreter of the law," a figure who is likely after the line of Aaron, but no direct evidence has been found to this end.²¹

Through the examples shown and a brief overview of the prevalent issues regarding 4QFlorilegium, it is obvious that the various understandings of Qumran Apocalypticism is not

17 Florentino García Martínez. Qumran and Apocalyptic : studies on the Aramaic texts from Qumran. (New York : E.J. Brill, 1992), 206.

18 Brooke, Exegesis. 178.

19 Knibb, 261.

20 James C. VanderKam. The Dead Sea scrolls today. (Grand Rapids, Mich. : Eerdmans, 1994), 118.

21 Brooke, "Florilegium," 817.

unique to this text. The Florilegium, indeed, provides scholars with a greater understanding of the issues that were important to the Qumran community during the Second Temple era.