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Pesher: Towards A Description and Understanding of its Use by the Qumran Sect and the New Testament

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PESHER:

TOWARDS A DESCRIPTION AND UNDERSTANDING

OF ITS USE BY THE QUMRAN SECT AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

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SHORT TITLE

MIDRASH PESHER

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INTRODUCTION

> To say that Paul gives us a pesher quotation of
> the verse and an application relevant to the work
> of God in Christ is to say that he has at least
> done more than rehash his O.T. text; he has seen
> its dynamic relevance to what he firmly believed
> was a historical event surpassing the event which
> Habakkuk himself spoke - namely, the eschaton of
> God's saving history.[1]

Krister Stendahl's, The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New
Testament, has alerted the reader to the intensive effort
of establishing an identity of the Qumran and New Testament
hermeneutics. As a matter of fact it has become established
that the closest ties between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the
New Testament is their hermeneutics. That this is so much
the real case is evident from the fact that we even describe
the principle exegetical method of the Qumran Scrolls, St.
Matthew and even St. Paul as the "Midrash Pesher", taking
the term "pesher" from the scrolls themselves. Infrequent
use of the term pesher before the discovery of the Dead Sea
Scrolls was the rule, however, since Stendahl's dissertation,
School of St. Matthew, the word "pesher" is freely applied
in the N.T. where the hermeneutics resemble that of Qumran
Habakkuk.

Since the term "pesher" is a technical word in the
vocabularly of New Testament research, a description of the
"pesher method" might be a profitable undertaking. The
problem undertaken in this paper is an effort to bring to-
gether a collection of information concerning "pesher" and

to present it in such a manner that the reader will obtain
an understanding of the "midrash pesher" as it was used in
the Qumran Scrolls and even in a limited use in the N.T.
itself.

The study will be presented in two parts. First a
discussion of the "midrash pesher" and the works of F. F.
Bruce, W. H. Brownlee, and B. J. Roberts will comprise this
portion of the presentation. Following the presentation of
materials about the "pesher" by the use of Stendahl's exten-
sive work with the Habakkuk "pesher", a working description
of the Habakkuk "pesher" will be given to complete the first
chapter of the presentation.

In the second chapter two working applications of the
pesher method's use in the New Testament are presented.
Extensive use of Stendahl's, School of St. Matthew, and E.
Earle Ellis', St. Paul and the Old Testament, are utilized
for an effective presentation of "midrash pesher" in the N.T.
It is realized that an extensive use of the works by Ellis
and Stendahl comprise the major presentation of this paper.
It is believed that by this method a mature working know-
ledge of the "pesher" usage in the N.T. will be obtained.

A summary will comprise the third portion of the study
in which the salient portions of Midrash "pesher" and the
"pesher's" limited usage in the N.T. will be restated.

CHAPTER I

DISCUSSION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE MIDRASH PESHER

A. Discussion of the Midrash Pesher

The wealth of materials discovered near the Dead Sea in
1947 have been designated as an important discovery bearing
upon the Bible, the Jewish religion and the beginnings of
early Christianity. In spite of the fact that the Dead Sea
Scrolls have in many instances initiated far more questions
and controversies than they have answered, nevertheless, they
have contributed substantially to a more comprehensive under-
standing of the era between the testaments and the "breaking
in of the fullness of time."

Our interest in the Scrolls lies primarily within the
large mass of material classified as "commentaries" found in
the Qumran Community. One of the first such "commentaries"
to be discovered and published, and which is still the most
complete known, is the Habakkuk Commentary. Other scrolls
have been found and studied which belong to this category.
However, due to their fragmentary state our concern in this
particular study will have reference primarily to the Habakkuk
Commentary. (It shall be abbreviated IQ pHab.)

The number of existing commentaries found in the Qumran
library is not really surprising when we take into consider-
ation the devotedness of the Qumran Community to the study of

the Sacred Scriptures. The evidence of the Qumran Community's
study and interpretation of Scripture is not limited to the
evidence of the commentaries. The large number of copies of
biblical books suggests the importance that these played in
the studies of the sect and sometimes these copies provide us
with significant insights as to the method with which a text
was interpreted. Though most of the other books found in
the caves apply biblical texts as they deal with beliefs and
practices of the sect, the kind of interpretation found in
the commentaries themselves have become known and referred to
as pesharim.[1] It is to this "pesher" that we direct our atten-
tion as we attempt to explicate pesher and the pesher method
in the Qumran Scrolls.

1. The Word Pesher

The word pesher appears in its Hebrew equivalent only
once in the O.T. (Eccles. 8:1), "Who knows the interpretation
of such a thing." Even though the root p-sh-r is not found
in the Hebrew part of Daniel, we find that the same idea is
conveyed by the common roots byn, yd, skl and ngd.[2] In these
cases the pesher is understood as an interpretation which is
beyond the ability of ordinary wisdom--it is given by divine
illumination. In Daniel it is clear that the rāz (the mystery),
is given to one person and the pesher (the interpretation),
is given to another. It is not until this mystery and the
interpretation are brought together that the divine communi-
cation can be understood. This principle that the divine

purpose cannot be properly understood until the pesher as
well as the rāz has been revealed, underlies the biblical
exegesis in the Qumran Commentaries. The rāz was communi-
cated by God to the prophet but the meaning of that communi-
cation remained sealed until its pesher was made known by
God to His chosen interpreter. The chosen interpreter was
the Teacher of Righteousness, the founder of the Qumran
Community. The Teacher of Righteousness would quote a brief
passage ranging from a single clause to three verses in length.
The passage which was quoted would be followed immediately by
its pesher.

2. Examples from the Habakkuk Pesher

Several examples will help to obtain a better understand-
ing of the method of the Teacher of Righteousness:

(IQ pHab. 1:4, Col. I, 11) "Therefore the Law is
slacked." Its pesher is that they have rejected
the law of God.

(IQ pHab. 1:4, Col. I, 12) "And justice never goes
forth, for the wicked surrounds the righteous." Its
pesher is that the righteous is the Teacher of
Righteousness and the wicked is the wicked Priest.

(IQ pHab. 1:5, Col. II, 1) "Behold them ye among
the nations and regard them and wonder marvelously
for I work a work in your days. Ye will not believe
when it will be told unto you." Its pesher concerns
the traitors with the Man of deceit for they did not
believe in all that the Teacher of Righteousness had
heard from the mouth of God and those traitors to
the new Covenant for they have not believed in the
Covenant of God and have profaned His holy Name.
Likewise, the meaning of this word concerns those
traitors at the end of time: There will be violent
. . . who will not believe when they hear all that

will come to pass in the last generation from the
mouth of the priest whom God has given to . . . to
given the meaning of all the words of His servants
the prophets, for through them God has revealed all
that is to come upon His people and upon their land.[3]

3. Principles of Pesher

It should now be observed that there are basically three
principles of Biblical interpretation which are found to be
the guiding principles of the Teacher of Righteousness. They
are the following:

(a) God has revealed his purpose to His servants
the prophets, but this revelation (especially
with regard to the time of the fulfillment of
His purpose) could not be properly understood
until its meaning was made known by God to the
Teacher of Righteousness, and through him to
his followers.

(b) All that the prophets spoke refers to the time
of the end.

(c) The time of the end is at hand.[4]

These principles are put into operation by the use of
the following devices:

(a) Biblical prophecies of varying date and refer-
ence are to apply uniformly to the commentator's
own day immediately preceding and following--
that is, to the period introduced by the minis-
try of the Teacher of Righteousness and the
emergence of the eschatological community of
the elect.

(b) The biblical text is atomized so as to bring
out its relevance to the situation of the
commentator's day; it is in this situation,
and not in the natural sequence of the text,
that logical coherence is to be looked for.

(c) Variant readings are selected in such a way as
best to serve the commentator's purpose.

(d) Where a relation cannot otherwise be established between the text and the situation to which it is believed to refer, allegorization is pressed into service.[5]

When we observe these principles in operation we are alerted to the ease with which the Teacher of Righteousness is able to bring out the desired meaning. It is in this "forced interpretative method" which initiated W. H. Brownlee into a thorough study of comparing the methods of the Rabbinic Schools and that of the Teacher of Righteousness. In this treatment and study Brownlee ellucidates the following principles:

1. Everything the ancient prophet wrote has a veiled eschatological meaning.

2. Since the ancient prophet wrote cryptically, his meaning is often to be ascertained through a forced, or abnormal construction of the Biblical text.

3. The prophet's meaning may be detected through the study of the textual or orthographic peculiarities in the transmitted text. Thus the interpretation frequently turns upon the special readings of the text cited.

4. A textual variant, i.e., a different reading from the one cited, may also assist interpretation.

5. The application of the features of a verse may be determined by analogous circumstance, or by

6. Allegorical propriety.

7. For the full meaning of the prophet, more than one meaning may be attached to his words.

8. In some cases the original prophet so completely veiled his meaning that he can be understood only by an equation of synonyms, attaching to the original word a secondary meaning of one of its synonyms.

9. Sometimes the prophet veiled his message by
writing one word instead of another, the inter-
preter being able to recover the prophet's
meaning by a rearrangement of the letters in
a word, or by

10. The substitution of similar letters for one or
more of the letters in the Biblical text.

11. Sometimes the prophet's meaning is to be derived
by the division of one work into two or more
parts, and by expounding the parts.

12. At times the original prophet concealed his
message beneath abbreviations, so that the
cryptic meaning of a word is to be evolved
through interpretation of words, or parts of
words, as abbreviations.

13. Other passages of scripture may illumine the
meaning of the original prophet.[6]

4. "The Midrash Pesher"

Although the above are the same principles which guide

the Rabbinic schools and the Qumran Community we find that

the basic difference lies in the concern for which each group

writes. The great concern of the Scrolls is not the same as

the Rabbinic Midrashim whose cunning exegesis is dedicated

to the proposition that the legal system or the Oral Law of

Pharisaic Judaism is really implicit with the written text of

the Pentateuch.[7] Rather, Brownlee describes the interest of

the Qumran Scrolls as being devoted to the prophets, the

Psalms and the predictive prophecy. Brownlee also demon-

strates the same forced interpretative methods to extort

desired meanings from the text as were used in Rabbinic

exegesis.

The motivation for such exegesis is mostly a prophetic, rather than a legal interest. A great leader, called the Righteous Teacher, appeared as the true Israel and as the herald of the last days. Spiritual foes attacked the new society which he founded. The principal opponents were the Wicked Priest and the Man of Lies (or false prophet). Possibly these much castigated men are one and the same person. In any case, the Wicked Priest is the Chief Priest; for the former title (hak-kohen ha-rasha') is an opprobrious pun upon the latter (hak-kohen ha-ro'sh). The conflict between the Righteous Teacher and the Wicked Priest had been predicted in Scripture, according to the Qumran commentaries. Likewise, the prophets had foretold the wars and political dissensions of the last two centuries B.C., including the invasion of the Near East by the Romans. The methods of adducing Biblical proofs for these predictions are as fanciful as those of midrash halakah. The orientation, however, instead of being directed toward textual support of the Oral Law, is aimed at the clarification of recent and contemporary history as it relates to the religious life of the Jews. No wealth of Rabbinic authorities is presented in proof of interpretations, but only the inspired authority of the Righteous (and Authentic) Teacher. He is not quoted directly; but implicitly his authority stands back of these sectarian commentaries, for it is to him explicitly that "God revealed all the mysteries of the words of His ambassadors the prophets."[8]

Because of the midrash characteristics and many of its seeming proximities, Brownlee has suggested that the Qumran Commentary be classified "midrash pesher" as a means of distinguishing it from the other types of midrash, midrash halakah and the midrash haggadah.[9]

In point of time, it should also be noted that Brownlee holds that the Qumran Commentaries come from a period when Targum was flourishing. Targum was the Aramaic free translation developed orally when the Hebrew Scriptures were read in the synagogue. Brownlee notes strong affinity between midrash pesher and Targum.

After the reading of each verse of the Law, the
Aramaic interpretation followed, and after the
reading of three verses of the Prophets, an expli-
cation was given. The regular alternating of text
and interpretation in the Qumran Scrolls is prob-
ably derived from Targum--only the interpretative
material of the Scrolls is in Hebrew. Quotations
and interpretations are introduced, moreover, by
exegetical formulas, such as the following: "And
when it says . . . its meaning concerns . . ."
As in Targum, the exegetical rules by which an in-
terpretation was deduced are implicit, rather than
explicit. Another striking likeness is that both
find in the Prophets predictions of historical
events as recent as the interpreter himself, al--
though these seem to be focused largely upon the
period of the Teacher, in the case of midrash
pesher. The actual interpretations of the pro-
phetic Targum strongly influenced those of the
Habakkuk Commentary, as I have shown elsewhere.
All these facts indicate the strong affinity
between midrash pesher and Targum, but the former
is distinguished from the latter by format and
language. Targum as paraphrastic translation
also follows the Hebrew text much more closely.[10]

B. Description of Habakkuk Pesher

We can obtain a more explicit understanding of pesher
from the Habakkuk text in the Dead Sea Habakkuk itself. At
a glance one finds some 50 variants within the IQ pHab. com--
pared to the Masoretic Text, apart from the purely orthograph--
ical variants. To be sure, contends Stendahl, many of these
errors are scribal, however, most of them are of such an
intimate and organic part of the exposition of the text that
they cannot possibly be dismissed as such.[11]

"They show themselves to be either deliberate corrections
or variant readings know to IQ pHab., which supplied a basis
for its interpretation."[12]

I. Krister Stendahl

On the basis of Brownlee's study, (the principles cited previously) together with Rost and Van Der Ploeg's remarks about the relation between IQ pHab. and the Masoretic Text, the LXX and other versions, Stendahl cites a few examples of IQ pHab. use of Scripture.[13]

First, there are differences relating to number and suffix.

> (Hab. 1:13, col. v, 8) "Wherefore look ye traitors, and holdest thy peace when the wicked man leads astray one more righteous than he?

The M.T.'s תַּחֲרִישׁ, the singular as in the Targum and the LXX, corresponds to IQ pHab. תחרישו, a plural which is made use of in the reading "the house Absalom and the men of their counsel". (line 10f.)

> (Hab. 2:5b, col. viii, 5) "All the nations shall be gathered toward him and all the peoples will assemble close to him."

IQ pHab. ויקבוץ and ויאסף are the equivalents of the singular in the M.T. and IQ pHab. reads them as niphal. In this way it was possible to emphasize how the wicked priest was successful to start with, as is also suggested in the exposition. (line 9)

> (Hab. 2:6, col. viii, 6) "Shall not all these take up a parable against him? He will have expounders of visions who will say: 'Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! How long shall he load himself with a pledge?'"

IQ pHab. has מליצי ("scoffers" or "interpreters") as the subject of the plural ישאו. The M.T. has מליצה ("taunt"). IQ pHab. text is adapted to contain a more concrete interpretation of actual events.

To this must be added differences in the suffixes; for example 1:10, there IQ pHab. has the masculine, whereas the M.T. has the feminine suffix. In 2:1b

IQ pHab. has 'מאיך which would, however, be due
to the influence of the parallel in 2:1 a.   In 2:15
IQ pHab. has the suffix for the third person, while
the M.T. has it for the second, and in 2:18 the
M.T.'s suffix is missing from IQ pHab.

There are also more substantial variants in IQ pHab.'s

use of the biblical text.

> (Hab. 1:8, col. iii, 6f.) "Their horses
> also are swifter than leopards and nimbler
> than the evening wolves. Their horsemen
> spread themselves and come from far; they
> fly as an eagle that hasteth to devour."

The M.T. reads: "From afar shall they come . . .,
they shall fly . . ." IQ pHab omits "shall they
come" but in the exposition this reading is taken
up in lines 10f., while the reading "they shall
fly" is not explicitly made use of, but is natural
in connection with the reference in the exposition
"to the eagles".

> (Hab. 1:9b, col. iii, 8f.) "They come,
> all of them, for violence: the counte-
> nance of their face is like the east
> wind.

The M.T. has מגמת פניהם קדימה, "The . . . (?)
of their faces is forward." IQ pHab. has קדימ
מגמת פנוהמה, "As for the (mutterings) of his
face, they are the East Wind." The absence of the
heh-locale can hardly be explained as a defective
script, since in general IQ pHab. is more generous
than the M.T. with final -heh. קדימ is taken as
a noun, and רוח which we find explicitly in the
Targum, Symmachus and the Vulgate, is implied. Their
readings support such an interpretation of IQ pHab.'s
text, as against the LXX. In Hab. 1:11 (col. iv,
9ff.) the M.T. reads אשמ ("sin-burdened"), the
LXXἐξιλάσεται but IQ pHab has ישמ. It should be
possible to make this reading an argument in favour
of Budde's emendation ישמ adopted in Kittel's Biblia
Hebraica (3rd edition), but the case is complicated
by the fact that we come upon אשמתהו in line 11
of IQ pHab.'s exposition.

> (Hab. 1:17, col. vi, 8f.) "He shall there-
> fore draw his sword continually to slay
> nations and he shall show them no mercy."

IQ pHab. is like the LXX, the Peshitta and the
Vulgate, without the M.T.'s and the Targum's inter-
rogative form. The reading found in the M.T. looks
like a dittography, but has the support of the Targum.
In Hab. 1:17 IQ pHab. contains yet another variant
which is of greater interest, namely יריק for the
M.T.'s יחומ, i.e. Giesebrecht's and Wellhausen's
emendation. On this point no use is made of the
reading יחומ in IQ pHab.'s exposition. The LXX,
however, agrees with the M.T. whereas cod. 86 mg
informs us: καὶ ἐκκενῶσαι μαχαίραν αὐτοῦ,
a reading is supported by the Greek O.T. fragments
published by Barthelemy, where this is one of the
two places in which IQ pHab. and this Palestinian
LXX text coincide. וריקל is good biblical Hebrew.
The reading יחומ in the M.T. can be explained by
the influence of vv. 15 and 16 where the word occurs.

The Targum is strongly paraphrastic, but its version
is of great interest for vv. 15-16 in that "net" and
"seine" are interpreted as "arms" and "standards"
just as in IQ pHab. In v. 17 it would seem that the
Targum read "net" (as also the Peshitta), and inter-
preted it in a martial sense: "He shall surely send
his armies."

> (Hab. 2:5a, col. viii, 3f.) "Moreover,
> wealth shall lead the arrogant man to
> treachery. He will not live, who has
> enlarged his mouth as the Sheol, who is
> as death, and cannot be satisfied.

IQ pHab. reads ןוה ("riches") for the M.T.'s ןייה
("sine") as in the LXX and the Targum. The Peshitta's
more paraphrastic form lies closer to IQ pHab.:
, "A presumptuous and avaricous
man does not become satisfied." The IQ pHab.'s
reading is clearly a tendentious interpretation
from the Sect's ideal of poverty, but at the same
time the O.T. Peshitta indicates that it had some
support in traditional interpretation.

> (Hab. 2:15, col. xi, 3) "Woe unto him that
> causeth his neighbors to drink of the mix-
> ture of his fury unto drunkenness that he
> may look on their feasts (stumbling).

IQ pHab. has מ הידעומ לע טיבה, while
the M.T. has םהירועמ לע טבהו. Again
in the exposition both readings are made use of:
"their festivals" and "their shame" (םתורע =
"his denudation").

(Hab. 2:16, col. xi, 9) "Thou are sated
with shame instead of glory. Drink thou
too, and reel! The cup of the Lord's
right hand shall be turned against thee
and shame against thy glory."

Here we find the third example of the way in which
IQ pHab. makes use of the two readings, IQ pHab.
הרעל, "to cause to stagger" and M.T. ערל = "to
uncover one's nakedness". The Targum follows the
M.T. while both the LXX (καρδία σαλεύθητι καὶ
σείσθητι) and Aquila (καὶ καρώθητι) have read
רעל cf. Is. 51:17 where Aquila has καρούν for
רעל. The Peshitta and the Vulgate uphold this
interpretation.

IQ pHab.'s exposition is clearly conscious of the
reading "to uncover his nakedness" since there stands
in line 13: "for he has not circumcized the foreskin
of his heart", while at the same time the reading of
the text makes allusion to the immediate continuation
"without having wandered along the paths of drunken-
ness". It can therefore scarcely be a question of a
scribal error, although in the same verse such an
error obviously occurs (מבט for מכבד).

The relation between IQ pHab., the M.T. and the
Versions is of great interest. In many cases IQ pHab.
appears to be created _ad hoc_. What is more remark-
able is that some of these readings are supported by
one or more of the Versions. Such coincidences occur
even in the case where adaptation to the dogma and
situation of the Sect could sufficiently explain
the text of IQ pHab. The coincidences are as follows:

Hab.	IQ pHab.	M.T.	Targ.	LXX	Pesh.	Vulg.
1:9	קדים	קדימה	IQ pHab.	MT	-----	IQ pHab.
(1:17a	not in-terroga-tive	inter-rogative	MT	IQ pHab.	IQ pHab.	IQ pHab.)
1:17b	חרבו	חרמו	(MT)	MT	MT	MT
2:1	מציבי	מצור	IQ pHab.	MT	MT	MT
2:5	יזד	יין	MT	MT	IQ pHab.	MT
2:6	אליצי	מליצה	IQ pHab.	MT	IQ pHab.	MT
2:8	ישלוכה	ישלוך	MT	MT	MT	MT

2:15 וַהֲמֹתֵ֫ חֲמָ֫תְ֫ךָ (no   (no   no   IQ pHab.
                             suffix)   pro-   suffix
                                     noun)

2:16 הֵעָרֵ֫ל הֵרָעֵ֫ל MT   IQ pHab. IQ pHab. IQ pHab.

Moreover, a group of Lucianic manuscripts (Ziegler's group II, consisting of min. 46-86-711) has a text which is the counterpart of IQ pHab.'s unique Habakkuk text which is found in 1:15f. The gap in col. v may be filled in with the help of this reading and the slight traces of consonants in IQ pHab. agree with such a reconstruction. In the exposition, however, the different parts of the text are found with the word and sentence order of the M.T. and it is hard to find any motive for the transposition in IQ pHab.[14]

Stendahl feels that the above must be more than chance agreement. The peculiar way in which IQ pHab. coincides both with those readings differing from the M.T. and with the M.T.'s own makes it possible to say that IQ pHab. Hebrew text was the one which is supported by the said Versions. Rather, Stendahl states, that we must presume that IQ pHab. was conscious of various possibilities, tried them out and allowed them to enrich its interpretation of the prophet's message, which in all its forms was fulfilled in and through the Teacher of Righteousness.[15]

What then can be said about the pesher? As we have already viewed a working description of the pesher in IQ pHab. we can succiently state the following points which are indicative of the author's method utilized in IQ pHab.:

1. He quotes the text of Habakkuk, a verse, or a few words from a verse, at a time.

2. Immediately after the quotation the author adds his commentary or pesher (explanation of the hidden meaning of the Biblical text).

3. The author sets out to explain how the statements of the Biblical text will go into fulfillment and how they should be applied to certain events of the day.

4. At times the same verse, or some part of the verse is given two different _pesharim_ or interpretations.

5. Each sentence or phrase is taken by itself, without inhibitions imposed by the context; similarity of meaning or of sound may suggest an application, words may be combined or separated without regard to the plain intention of the author, and even the spelling of words is sometimes changed to produce a new meaning.[16]

In summary then, we find that pesher is best understood to be an interpretation which has its proximities to the midrashim of the Jewish schools. However, because it does have its own peculiar characteristics and in order to distinguish it from the Jewish principles of hermeneutics we are to understand pesher as "midrash pesher". This midrash pesher was operative within the Qumran Community which was guided by three principles, (1) The community was living in the end time, (2) all that the prophets spoke referred to the end time, and thus their time and them, and (3) God revealed His purpose to the prophets, but this revelation could not be fulfilled until its meaning was made known to the Teacher of Righteousness and his followers by God.

CHAPTER II

A WORKING APPLICATION OF THE PESHER METHOD
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A. Pesher Method and St. Matthew

Stendahl has undertaken the task of demonstrating that
the Matthaen type midrashic interpretation closely approaches
the midrash pesher of the Qumran sect. As we have pointed
out above the fulfilling of prophecy is a constant in the
thought of the Qumran Sect. The New Testament also conveys
the conviction that the fulfillment of prophecy is being
accomplished and the promises fulfilled. This was the focal
point in the kerygma and the teaching of the church. The
problem is, however, to what extent does the other assumption
of the IQ pHab., the advanced study of the Scriptures, have
its parallel in the N.T.

Stendahl holds the translation of the N.T. to be the
important factor to be considered in the above problem. If
in its Hebrew form the O.T. text had already become the object
of what we consider an over-ambitious revision and interpreta-
tion, the translation makes possible an adaptation to the
messianic understanding and application. Thus both the depend-
ence upon and the freedom from the LXX translations are seen
to be quite natural, but even in the cases in which the LXX,
in the form most probably known to Matthew, would have served
his purpose, Matthew follows his own way to a large extent.[1]

What follows is a detailed presentation of Stendahl's
argument for an advanced study of the Scriptures within the
N.T. and at the same time provides us with an exemplary use
of pesher in St. Matthew.

> In Mt. 27:9 and the adjacent verses we come
> across a N.T. example of the retention and use of
> two parallel readings as in IQ pHab. It even
> appeared to adapt the verbs to subjects, which suit-
> ed Matthew's new understanding of the Zechariah text.
> It unmistakably alludes to the parallels in Jeremiah
> where a field was mentioned and the יוֹצֵר was a real
> potter. At the same time, the passage was perhaps
> influenced by the LXX and other Greek interpretations.

> The basis of Matthew's understanding of the
> text was certain historical facts known to Matthew
> by tradition as parts of the Messiah's career, and
> thus considered fulfilment of prophecy. The rela-
> tion between historical facts and O.T. quotation is
> often regarded as an influence of the O.T. on the
> facts recorded particularly in the accounts of the
> passion. This is surely true in such a case as
> Ps. 22 which in its entirety has become a liturgical
> text on the Passion. An increasing number of details
> creep into the story and it is hard to distinguish
> between the facts which related the Psalm to the
> Passion and the details in the story evoked by the
> Psalm. In IQ pHab., on the other hand, we have
> found good reason for assuming the opposite ten-
> dency. The facts have affected the Habakkuk text.
> In the same way the Zecharian quotation is affected
> by the facts, rather than that these are invented
> as suitable fulfillment of the prophecy. So we
> must start with the facts, as Matthew knew them,
> which gave new understanding to the prophecy:

> a) There existed a graveyard called the
> Field of Blood. The author of Acts 1:15ff. is more
> concerned with this fact and his account is an
> aetiological story around the name. The name is
> referred to and explained in another way by Matthew,
> but it belongs only to the periphery of his account.

> b) Judas returned the money he received. In
> 26:15 it is said to be thirty pieces of silver, in
> accordance with Zech. 11:12f. The exact number
> could be an adaptation to the prophecy.

c.. It was a potter's field which was pur-chased with the money.

d. The temple authorities were said not to have placed the coins in the treasury; in this way they unwittingly revealed the right meaning of the prophecy. Matthew's understanding seems to have been that the interpretation אוצר יוצר = Κορβανᾶς was true in the past, but that the genuine intention of the prophecy came to light in the handling of Judas' money.

It is possible that the introductory Τότε in the quotation formula stresses this understanding. In acting as they did, the Temple authorities ful-filled the prophecy hitherto concealed beneath the interpretations of the Jews. Welhausen wrote "Merk-würdig wie hier die Kenntnis nicht bloss der Bibel selber, sondern auch ihrer Interpretation und Text-kritik historisch fruchtbar gemacht wird". Now this is precisely what we have seen in IQ pHab. more ex-plicitly than anywhere else. We have thereby got a forceful parallel. It implies, however, that even for a Matthew quotation such as this we must presume a function of the study of the Scriptures in the Matthaean church. The second condition of the IQ pHab. pesher type of text must also be supposed in the Matthaean church.

The text in Mt. 27 is not an isolated feature in the First Gospel. As we saw in our examination of the quotation from Is. 42:1-4 in Mt. 12:18-21, this too was a Christian translation which showed knowledge of various possible renderings. The O.T. Peshitta (ἐρίσει), the Targum (θήσω --ἀπαγγέλλω), Theodotion (ἰδοὺ ὁ παῖς μου -- ᾗ ἐσδόκησεν ἡ ψυχή μου) and the LXX (ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι . . .) had left their imprint in the N.T. text and the Hebrew Text which had been given a more concrete interpretation, suitable to the N.T. context. Over and above what is shown in the quotation in 27:9, the LXX character here is remarkable. It indicates that the school which has here been at work had in view a Greek rendering of the prophecy.

Matthew's reference in 2:33 to a prophecy that Jesus should be called Ναζωραῖος was not accompa-nied by an explanatory translation, as the saying about Immanuel in 1:23. It must therefore be thought to have been intelligible to a Greek reader without such an explanation. This is reminiscent of Judges

13:5, 7, 16:17 where ‏נזר‎ is rendered in the LXX
by ναζιραιον, and in cod. B by ναζι. Even
the closest parallels in Luke (1:35) point in
this direction, for its ἅγιον is one of the LXX's
translations of ‏נזר‎ .

In Matthew, however, the form of the adjective
is ναζωραιος which in Acts is the term for Jesus
and the Christians before those in Antioch came to
be called Christians. In all Semitic forms (Syriac,
Mandaean, Aramaic) the middle radical is a sade.
The rendering with ζ instead of the regular s is
consistent in the N.T. and does not lack parallels
in the LXX. A messianic prophecy, which could ex-
plain the puzzling fact that Jesus did not come
from Bethlehem, the town of David, was required.
In the light of 1Q pHab.'s interpretation we are
bound to raise the question whether the reference
to the messianic ‏נצר‎ is not more natural than that
to ‏נזיר‎ . Matthew relates to the messianic proph-
ecy in Is. 11:1. His allusion did not, however,
allow for translation and could not be checked in
the Greek text, nor could it be elucidated in a
single explanatory clause as in 1:23; it had to be
issued on Matthew's authority. On the other hand,
the form shows that the term was known to the
readers and was not merely created from the name
of the town.

This may seem to modify our understanding with
regard to the Greek character of Matthew's formula
quotations--but it is not necessary to presume a
ready Aramaic gospel in which the reference to
Is. 11:1 was embodied, and which eluded the trans-
lator's capabilities. In this way the school
tradition built on Semitic words could be of use
even for the Greek gospel.

In 1:23 we found a changing of the number and
person of the verb, in the LXX "thou shalt call"
and in Matthew "one (they) shall call", a change
which was clearly prompted by the quotation's
application to Jesus. In his Πμρθένος Matthew
follows the LXX; this interpretation is essential
to the function of the quotation, but a direct
dependence on the LXX was not absolutely necessary,
though more natural.

Mt. 2:6 showed clear signs of an independent
interpretation without agreeing with either the
Targum or the O.T. Peshitta. The hermeneutic

principles which came into use were distinguished
by changing the sentence structure (through
θυδμιῶς ——γωρ), and by actualizing and
modernizing the geographical terms (γᾷ ʼΙουδω);
this interpretation refers to persons instead of
abstract items (ἡγεμόεν). Here again the
LXX might have afforded Matthew a rather suitable
text, but the text's character of a revised school
text explains its "freedom".

In 2:15, Matthew agrees with Aquila, who in
this case may have taken up a Palestinian Greek
interpretation known to Matthew. On the other
hand Matthew diverged from the Targum and Theodotion,
thereby obtaining the only reading useful to him.

In 2:18 we had a shortened form of the M.T.
with a certain agreement with the LXX^A.

In 8:17 Matthew interpreted the M.T. _ad_ _hoc_.
His rendering was certainly a correct reproduction
of the M.T. but it may nevertheless be regarded as
an _ad_ _hoc_ interpretation since it differed from
every Greek and Aramaic interpretation known to us.

Mt. 13:35 was a reading created for the occa-
sion from the Hebrew text, both in its Κεκρυμμερω
and in its ἀπό Κατ/βορῇς (Κοσμου). The theology
implied in the quotation as Matthew rendered it is
a close parallel to IQ pHab. vii, lff. where the
Sect expressed its attitude to the Scriptures.

Mt. 21:5 confronted us with the question
whether the two asses come from Matthew's under-
standing of the text or whether a tradition which
related to two asses has given rise to Matthew's
interpretation of the Scriptures, so that he is
anxious to break up the _parallelismus_ _membrorum_
with reference to it. In breaking up the par-
allelism Matthew deviated from the common messi-
anic interpretation of the Rabbis. The only
reason for such a treatment of the O.T. text must
be that Matthew knew a tradition, which spoke about
two asses. That is why he stresses the two asses
more than he does the LXX in the rendering of the
prophecy, which to him was fulfilled in a very
exact way. The textual support for his rendering
is the Hebrew חמר. A secondary reason for
Matthew's form of the quotation might have been
that he has pondered upon the virginity of the
foal, cf. Mk. 11:2.

Thus all of Matthew's formula quotations give evidence of features of text interpretation of an actualizing nature, often closely associated with the context in the gospel. This feature justifies us in speaking of a _pesher_ type in Matthew's quoting. Because of this the hope to find in these quotations an example of the Greek O.T. text which might be derived from a text known to the evangelist, is an illusion. Plausible as this showed itself to be for the quotations which the Synoptics had in common, efforts in this direction with regard to the formula quotations are misdirected.

It is true that even the formula quotations may occasionally afford material of Palestinian Greek O.T. text, but as a whole they are not available for such a hypothesis. It is similarly misleading to see in them a meticulous translation of Aramaic Targums, though they afford readings which may be dependent upon Targums both known and unknown to us. In their type and _Sitz im Leben_ they are not cultic texts of the authorized type, but are scholarly interpretations. The IQ pHab. material shows that such an interpretation did not thereby become a text without conclusiveness and authority. When we called Matthew's text targumic, this does not mean that they are "paraphrasing freely" and therefore of less relevance. The method of the Targum is here used rather in the same way in which it influenced IQ pHab. Matthew's formula quotations seem to us therefore to be a decisive indication that we must postulate a School of Matthew.[2]

B. Pesher and the Pauline Corpus

E. Earle Ellis, with considerable documentation of the pesher usage in the N.T. based upon K. Stendahl's presentation of the School of St. Matthew takes cognizance of a number of Pauline quotations which vary from the LXX and/or the M.T.

Several of these variant readings are noted by Ellis as having a direct bearing on the N.T. application which he

thinks suggests either an _ad_ _hoc_ rendering or an interpreta-
tive selection from the various known texts. The following
example is a specific text/passage in which Ellis observes
this phenomena:

> In Romans 12:19 the variation apparently follows
> the rendering of the Targum; by making this selec-
> tion, Paul secures the desired interpretation:
>
> NT: Vengeance is mine, I will repay
> Heb.: To me belongs vengeance and retribution.
> Targ.: Vengeance is before me and I will repay.[3]

It also should be noted that in Paul's resurrection pass-
age (1 Cor. 15:54) that the word ‏נצח‏ in Isa. 25:8, which Paul,
against the LXX and the Targum ‏לעלמין‏, renders εἰς νῖκος ,
is usually translated "forever" or "utterly". Ellis makes the
point that the Aramaic ‏נצח‏ can mean "excel" or "overcome", and
this connotation is probably not entirely absent from the Hebrew.
The point of interest is that Paul uses a selective interpreta-
tion; and this interpretation is essential for the application
of the passage in I Corinthians 15.[4]

In Romans 11:26f. Ellis recognizes the same motives of
interpretation. Where the M.T. reads "to those who turn from
transgression in Jacob", Romans 11, with the LXX, has "and
shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob". Ellis views the LXX
in this passage as an interpretative rendering of the Hebrew,
one which follows with the argument in Romans 11:26f. Ellis
recognizes the possibility of Paul's using the text which lay
before him, but Ellis feels that it is likely that Paul retains
the LXX reading because it gives the sense which he himself

finds in the passage. The number of variations should not be
viewed as capricious, or arbitrary, or merely incidental.
Similar features found in other writings of the N.T. and of
the Qumran Sect indicate that this procedure has a more signif-
icant purpose: Paul utilizes ad hoc renderings and the delib-
erate selection and rejection of known readings to draw out
and express the true meaning of the O.T. passage as he under-
stands it.[5]

Ellis notes some twenty citations in which the LXX and
Hebrew agree and Paul's text varies. He believes that the
evidence of pesher quotation is more certain in these cases.
In almost all of these Ellis takes the variation to be a
deliberate adaptation to the N.T. context; in some cases he
feels that the alteration has a definite bearing on the
interpretation of the passages. He notes that changes in
person and number are especially prevalent. e.g. Romans 3:18
(αὐτοῦ τὸ αὐτῶν); 10:19 (αὐτοὺς τὸ ὑμᾶς).

In many of the instances the variations point to a selec-
tion from among various readings. Although there is no hard
and fast rule concerning this, nevertheless, the choice of a
particular text for interprative reasons appears probable in
several Pauline quotations. Romans 12:19 modifies the Hebrew
with the Targum; the Targum also may be the source of the
rendering "confess" which is important for the sense of the
citation in Romans 14:11. Ephesians 4:8 substitutes the third
person for the second and rejects the M.T. and the LXX rendering

"take" or "receive" in favor of the translation "give" found in the Targum and Peshitta.[6]

Perhaps the most notable instance of pesher quotation in the Pauline literature, as seen by Ellis, is the passage in I Corinthians 15:54f.:

> Death is swallowed up in victory.
> Where, O Death, is your victory?
> Where, O Death, is your sting?

Ellis works out the following argumentation for the pesher usage by Paul:

> The interrogative of the LXX is followed (the MT נצח is uncertain), and for the MT לנצח ("forever") εἰς νῖκος ("in victory" is substituted. The rendering εἰς νῖκος, which follows a number of Greek texts, may originate in the Hebrew (or Aramaic) root itself (נצח, "leader", "success"). The Peshitta conflation, "to victory forever", witnesses to two known versions of the passage; but whether the Peshitta, Aquila and like readings reflect a textual tradition derived from the Pauline usage is a moot point. The variant εἰς νῖκος is interwoven into Paul's exposition and indicates that the merged quotation was probably known to him in this form. But the idea of death being "swallowed up in victory" is so intimately connected with the "victory" of Christ's resurrection that, if a conjecture must be made, the probability is that this interpretation of the Hebrew is one created (or recovered) in the early Church.[7]

Ellis notes that taken as a whole, the Pauline citations reflect in substantial measure a pesher-type moulding of the text which in some cases is determinative for the N.T. application of the passage. While this involves at times a choosing and rejecting between texts and/or Targums known to the Apostle, Ellis believes that more often than not the interpretative paraphrase appears to be created ad hoc by Paul or by the early Church before him.

This type of pesher arises from the N.T.'s atti-
tude towards and understanding of the concept of
"quotation" itself, as Manson has noted: "We are
long accustomed to distinguish carefully between
the text which--in more senses than one--is sacred,
and the commentary upon it and exposition of it.
We tend to think of the text as objective fact and
interpretation as subjective opinion. It may be
doubted whether the early Jewish and Christian
translators and expositors of Scripture made such
a sharp distinction. For them the meaning of
the text was of primary importance; and they seem
to have had greater confidence than we moderns in
their ability to find it. Once found it became a
clear duty to express it; and accurate reproduc-
tion of the traditional wording of the Divine
oracles took second place to publication of what
was held to be their essential meaning and immedi-
ate application. Odd as it may seem to us, the
freedom with which they handled the Biblical text
is a direct result of the supreme importance which
they attached to it.[8]

In selecting a particular version or in creating
an _ad hoc_ rendering Paul views his citation as
thereby more accurately expressing the true mean-
ing of the Scripture. For Paul, as for the rabbis,
the "letter" was sacred; but unlike the rabbis,
Paul valued the "letter" not for itself alone but
for the meaning which it conveyed. His idea of a
quotation was not a worshipping of the letter or
of "parroting" of the text; neither was it an
exegesis which arbitrarily imposed a foreign mean-
ing upon the text. It was rather, in his eyes, a
quotation-exposition, a Midrash pesher, which drew
from the text and meaning originally implanted
there by the Holy Spirit and expressed that mean-
ing in the most appropriate words and phrases
known to him.[9]

Ellis states explicitly that the pesher method is not

used extensively in the Pauline quotations, but where it does

occur, Ellis believes that if often appears to go behind the

Greek to reflect an interpretation of the Hebrew Ur-text.

Further, some of the most significant instances of pesher

usages are seen by Ellis to point back to pre-Pauline usage

in the early Church.[10] It is then that E. Earle Ellis
concludes, "Midrash pesher as a hermeneutical method is
present not only in the Gospels of Matthew and John but in
the Pauline writings as well."[11]

SUMMARY

In summary, by the methodological program of collecting
materials and arranging and citing a working application of
Midrash Pesher, it is hoped that a basic understanding of
Midrash Pesher has been obtained. To a large extent, this
study has been limited to the gathering of sources which
would enable the study to progress within the researcher's
intention of presenting the basics of the Midrash Pesher, a
working application in the Habakkuk commentary and two work-
ing applications of Pesher in the New Testament. This study
has been intentionally conducted along this course in order
that the limited materials dealing with Midrash Pesher, as
a method, may be presented in an arranged and fully documented
presentation so that a thorough and complete working knowledge
of Midrash Pesher may be the final result.

In our presentation of _Pesher: Towards a Description and_
Understanding of Its Use by the Qumran Sect and the New
Testament, we have come to understand Midrash Pesher as a
technical term for a type of interpretation which has its
proximities to the Jewish Schools of Interpretation. We have
also observed that the Midrash Pesher was operative within
the Community which was guided by three basic principles:
(1) the community was living in the end-time, (2) all that
the prophets spoke referred to the end-time, and (3) God
revealed His purpose to the prophets, but this revelation

could not be fulfilled until its meaning was made known to
the Teacher of Righteousness and his followers by God.

In the detailed presentation of Stendahl above it should
be observed that Stendahl, as he particularly dealt with the
variant readings and showed the differing quotations of the
Habakkuk and the New Testament, indicates to us that there
was no established authoritative text of the Old Testament
before the Masoretic collations beginning in the second
century A.D. Stendahl contends "We must . . . presume that
IQ pHab. was conscious of various possibilities, tried them
out and allowed them to enrich its interpretation of the
prophet's message, which in all its forms was fulfilled in
and through the Teacher of Righteousness."[1] Such Stendahl
feels was the case also for Matthew. We have pointed out
in our study that E. Earle Ellis applied the same reasoning
to Pauline hermeneutics and he too states:

> Taken as a whole, the Pauline citations reflect in
> substantial measure a pesher type moulding of the
> Old Testament text which in some cases is deter-
> minative for the New Testament application of the
> passage. While this at times involves a choosing
> and rejecting between texts and/or targums known
> to the apostle, more often the interpretative
> paraphrase appears to be created _ad hoc_ by Paul
> or by the earlly church before him.[2]

Thus we have become alerted to the freedom with which
the Qumran and the early church had to choose and select
among equally viable Old Testament readings in their period.
They both felt to adapt the prophet's message to their situ-
ation and to thereby let the prophetic word be enriched.

This appears to be dangerous, even frightening, to us today.
However, we can obtain some confort in the words which were
stated above by T. W. Manson:

> We are long accustomed to distinguish carefully
> between the text which - in more senses than one -
> is sacred, and the commentary upon it and exposi-
> tion of it. We tend to think of the text as objec-
> tive fact and interpretation as subjective opinion.
> It may be doubted whether, the early Jewish and
> Christian translators and expositors of Scripture
> made any such sharp distinction. For them the
> meaning of the text was of primary importance; and
> they seem to have had greater confidence than we
> moderns in their ability to find it. Once found
> it became a clear duty to express it; and accurate
> reproduction of the traditional wording of the
> Divine oracles took second place to publication of
> what was held to be their essential meaning and
> immediate application. Odd as it may seem to us,
> the freedom with which they handled the Biblical
> text is a direct result of the supreme importance
> which they attached to it.[3]

We have observed the manner and approach of the Qumran
Community concerning the Old Testament. We have demonstrated
that the early church also handled the Scriptures in similar
fashions as the Qumran Community. It was with faith that
they proclaimed the message which they found in the Old
Testament. Today, we too, need to boldly with confidence
proclaim the message as we have found it. This means study-
ing the Scriptures and proclaiming it boldly, especially as
it is to be adapted to our situation today.

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

[1]J. A. Sanders, "Habakkuk in Qumran, Paul and the Old Testament," _Journal of Religion_, XXIX (1959), 242.

Chapter I

[1]F. F. Bruce, _Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts_ (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), p. 7.

[2]_Ibid._, p. 8.

[3]Geza Vermes, _Discovery in the Judean Desert_ (New York: Desclee Company, 1956), p. 124.

[4]F. F. Bruce, _Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls_ (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), p. 76.

[5]_Ibid._

[6]W. H. Brownlee, "Biblical Interpretation Among the Sectaries of the Dead Sea Scrolls," _The Biblical Archaeologist_, XIV (1953), 60-63.

[7]W. H. Brownlee, _The Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls for the Bible_ (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 63.

[8]_Ibid._ Pp. 63-64.

[9]Krister Stendahl, _School of Saint Matthew_ (Lund: Uppsala, 1954), p. ;84.

[10]Brownlee, _Meaning_, Pp. 64-65.

[11]Stendhal, p. 185.

[12]_Ibid._

[13]These examples are cited in relation to their bearing upon Matthew's method of quoting.

[14]Stendahl, Pp. 186-190.

[15]<u>Ibid</u>.

[16]Menahem Mansoor, <u>The Dead Sea Scrolls</u> (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 91.

CHAPTER II

[1]Stendahl, p. 196.

[2]<u>Ibid</u>. Pp. 196-201.

[3]E. Earle Ellis, <u>Paul's Use of the Old Testament</u> (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), p. 140.

[4]<u>Ibid</u>.

[5]<u>Ibid</u>. p. 141.

[6]<u>Ibid</u>. p. 144.

[7]<u>Ibid</u>. p. 145.

[8]T. W. Manson, "The Argument from Prophecy," <u>Journal of Theological Studies</u>, XLVI (1945), 135.

[9]Ellis, p. 146.

[10]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 147.

[11]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 149.

SUMMARY

[1]Stendahl, p. 190.

[2]Ellis, p. 147.

[3]Manson, p. 135.

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ABBREVIATIONS

col.	column
Cor.	Corinthians
Eph.	Ephesians
IQ pHab.	Habakkuk Commentary
LXX	Septuagint
Matt.	Book of St. Matthew
MT	Masoretic Text
N.T.	New Testament
O.T.	Old Testament
Rom.	Book of Romans