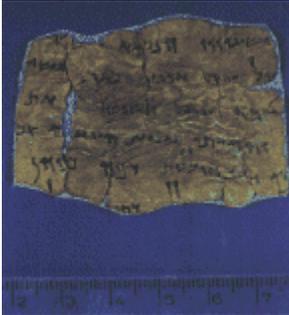


The War Rule

Serekh ha-Milhamah



4Q285 (SM)

Parchment

Copied early first century C.E.

Height 4 cm (1 1/2 in.), length 5 cm (2 in.)

Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority (12)

This six-line fragment, commonly referred to as the "Pierced Messiah" text, is written in a Herodian script of the first half of the first century C.E. and refers to a Messiah from the Branch of David, to a judgement, and to a killing.

Hebrew is comprised primarily of consonants; vowels must be supplied by the reader. The appropriate vowels depend on the context. Thus, the text (line 4) may be translated as "and the Prince of the Congregation, the Branch of David, will kill him," or alternately read as "and they killed the Prince." Because of the second reading, the text was dubbed the "Pierced Messiah." The transcription and translation presented here support the "killing Messiah" interpretation, alluding to a triumphant Messiah (Isaiah 11:4).

In September 1992, "Time Magazine" published an article on the War Rule fragment displayed here (object no. 12) exploring the differing interpretations. A "piercing messiah" reading would support the traditional Jewish view of a triumphant messiah. If, on the other hand, the fragment were interpreted as speaking of a "pierced messiah," it would anticipate the New Testament view of the preordained death of the messiah. The scholarly basis for these differing interpretations--but not their theological ramifications--are reviewed in "A Pierced or Piercing Messiah?"

References

Vermes, G. "The Oxford Forum for Qumran Research: Seminar on the Rule of the War from Cave 4 (4Q285)," **Journal of Jewish Studies** 43 (Spring 1992):85-90.

Richard N. Ostling *Is Jesus in the Dead Sea Scrolls?* **Time** (September 21, 1992) Unbound serial. Hebraic Section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress.

James D. Tabor *A Pierced or Piercing Messiah? -- The Verdict is Still Out* **Biblical Archaeology Review** 18 (November - December 1992) Unbound serial. Hebraic Section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress.

English Translation of The War Rule (Serekh ha-Milhamah)

4Q285 (SM)

Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority (12)

1.]Isaiah the prophet: [The thickets of the forest] will be cut [down
2. with an axe and Lebanon by a majestic one will f]all. And there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse [
3.] the Branch of David and they will enter into judgement with [
4.] and the Prince of the Congregation, the Bran[ch of David] will kill him [
5. by stroke]s and by wounds. And a Priest [of renown (?)] will command [
6. the s]lai[n] of the Kitti[m]

Transcription and translation by G. Vermes

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