Duhaime, Jean

_The War Texts: 1QM and Related Manuscripts_

Companion to the Qumran Scrolls 6


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_The War Texts_ by Jean Duhaime provides a first-class introduction to the war manuscripts found at Qumran. As an expert in Qumran war texts, Duhaime presents the complex material and the scholarly debate in a profound and cautious way, offering the first complete introduction to the war-related texts of Qumran.

While the War Scroll from Cave 1 is one of the largest and most well-known texts from Qumran, there are a number of other, more fragmentary, manuscripts from the Dead Sea that are related to the topic of a holy war. Some of these texts have been published only recently. In his first chapter Duhaime describes the history from the discovery of the texts to the official edition of the war material. According to the official editions of the war texts, there exist about a dozen manuscripts: 1QM and 1Q33; 4Q285 Sefer ha-Milhama; 4Q471 War Scroll-Like Text B; 4Q491–496 Ma-f; 4Q497 War Scroll-Like Text A; and 11Q14 Sefer ha-Milhama.

Chapter 2 not only provides information on all these manuscripts and details regarding their contents but also discusses their relationship with one another. The different war texts reflect a most interesting process in which traditions were used and reworked again...
and again in priestly circles over more than a hundred years (ca. 100 B.C.E.–first years of the first century C.E.).

Chapter 3 deals with the composition and genre of 1QM. The War Scroll 1QM in its actual form seems to have achieved its final form through some kind of literary growth. A comparison between 1QM and the various recensions from Cave 4 show that the 4Q manuscripts provide in almost all cases (five cases have been studied by Duhaime) a shorter and earlier text. Thus, 1QM seems to have taken shape in a late stage of redaction of the war material circulating in the Qumran circle. The composition of 1QM in its current form does not belong to the literary genre of the apocalypses. Rather, it is “an eschatological rule that parallels, in a religious and utopian way, the genre of the Graeco-Roman tactical treatise … a sort of guide-book for priests and Levites in charge of leading the eschatological war” (61). Although their precise usage is unknown, the war texts—which define the present and future history as a conflict between two camps and leave no doubt about its final outcome—“contributed to legitimating the decision of the sectarians to cut off themselves from a corrupted environment” (61). Furthermore, the texts provided the sectarians “with a strong sense of identity as the true remnant of Israel” (61) and “may also have motivated part of the congregation to join the Great Revolt against Rome” (61).

One of the most debated issues is dealt with in chapter 4: “The Date of 1QM.” Duhaime presents here the different scholarly opinions with their arguments (e.g., that of von der Osten-Sacken, Davies, Gmirkin, and Ibba). While the terminus a quo (around 164 B.C.E.) is indicated by the dependence of 1QM on Dan 11–12 and its historical background, the terminus ad quem (middle of the first century B.C.E.) derives from the paleographical dating of the manuscript. Duhaime concludes that the date of 1QM’s composition remains elusive. A dating in the Hellenistic period in a setting close to Maccabean circles seems possible, as does a composition or reworking of the text in the Roman period. The difficulties in dating the text derive from its lack of explicit reference to a specific context, which might even have been deliberate.

Chapter 5 provides an example of the war texts’ use of the Hebrew Bible in. Duhaime’s thorough interpretation of 1QM XI, 1–12 leaves this reader wishing for more. It would be excellent to have—in another book, of course—an entire commentary by Duhaime on the war texts.

Each chapter of the book is completed by a valuable bibliography (see, e.g., the one on editions, translations, and bibliographies [1–3]), and there is also a cumulative bibliography at the end the book. Summaries at the ends of the chapters remind the reader of the most important features, focusing on Duhaime’s own conclusions after an
informed survey of the scholarly discussion in each chapter’s main part. Further, the
tables offered by Duhaime (41–43) are quite helpful for orienting the reader to the
discussion. An index of references is found at the end.

Beginners as well as senior students of the Dead Sea Scrolls will find much of benefit in
Jean Duhaime’s excellent introduction to the war texts.