

Let us again look at 11Q Melchizedek, the remarkable Qumran document we briefly discussed above. This will give us the opportunity to get a good glimpse of this Jewish sect's expectations for the End Time of "salvation" (I place this word in quotation marks because it is mostly a Christian word now and might lead one to impose foreign categories on Jewish ideas). The fragments which have been published stress the Jubilee "release" of all debts; here "release" (*s^emittah*) comes from Deut 15:2, though Lev 25:13 (regarding the Jubilee) is also quoted. The Qumranites viewed Sacred Scripture as referring to their own days (like the early Christians did); the particular Qumranite commentary (or midrash) on Scripture, applying it to their own time, is called *peshet* (interpretation). This is their commentary here:

for G[od]. Its interpretation] for the last days refers to the captives, who [. . .] and whose teachers have been hidden and kept secret, and from the inheritance of Melchizedek, fo[r . . .] . . . and they are the inherita[nce of Melchize]dek, who will make them return. And liberty will be proclaimed for them, to free them from [the debt of] all their iniquities. And this [wil]l [happen] in the first week of the jubilee which follows the ni[ne] jubilees. And the d[ay of aton]ement is the e[nd of] the tenth [ju]bilee in which atonement shall be made for all the sons of [light and] for the men [of] the lot of Mel[chi]zedek. [. . .] over [the]m . . . [. . .] accor[ding to] a[ll] their [wor]ks, for it is the time for the «year of grace» of Melchizedek . . .¹

Note the following. Various Hebrew Bible passages are interpreted as referring to the End Time. The whole tenor of the passage is that "liberty" (the *d^eror* of Lev 25:10 and Isa 61:1) will be proclaimed to the "captives," from the verb *shuv*. This "liberty" (release from debts, slavery, captivity, etc.) takes on the form also of forgiveness of sins, in the context of the Day of Atonement (on which the Jubilee is to take place, Lev 25:9). It will be on the tenth Jubilee, that is, after 49 x 10 years, or on the 490th year, as in Dan 9. This is called the "year of grace," as in Isa 61:2 (quoted by Jesus in Luke 4:17-21). The Qumran text further on also explicitly refers to "the messenger who proclaims peace, who brings good news, who proclaims salvation," of Isa 52:7, and interprets this messenger as "the Anointed one of the spirit, concerning whom Dan[iel] said, [Until an anointed one, a prince (Dan. ix, 25)]" ²

¹ *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition. Volume 2 (4Q274-11Q31)* (F. García Martínez – E.J.C. Tigchelaar, eds.; Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill; Grand Rapids – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1997), 1207. The last three dots are mine (I stopped quoting); the other dots are in the text. The brackets indicate *lacunae* (gaps) and the conjectured restoration of the passage. I have omitted the verse numbers found in this edition.

² This quotation I took from VERMES, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 501, omitting his italics. The "Anointed of the spirit" is a reference to Isa 61:1. Cf. Acts 10:38.