SUMMARY — The article is discussing in its first part the explicit priestly nature of the sacred library of thousand Hebrew and Aramaic scrolls, known as The Dead Sea Scrolls. The explicit priestly content of the scrolls is analysed according to references to holy time (priestly calendar of 364 days and 52 Sabbaths), holy place (Divine Chariot in heaven and in the holy of holies in the Jerusalem Temple on Mount Zion), holy ritual (priestly-angelic ritual of 24 priestly watches serving in pre-calculated liturgical cycle the Temple) and holy memory (the history of divine covenants and the history of the Levitical priesthood commencing with Levi). The second part of the article is contesting the accepted scholarly assumption about the imminent connection between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Essenes.

Between the years 1947 and 1956, nearly one thousand fragments of parchment scrolls were discovered in eleven caves at Qumran, an archeological site located on a dry plateau about a mile inland from the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea. During the ensuing seven decades, this discovery has been considered the most significant treasure of ancient written Jewish heritage found in the Land of Israel.

In the course of the 62 years that have since passed, all of these written fragments have been gathered together, sorted, realigned, and transcribed into a printed version in their original languages – Hebrew, Aramaic, or, in a few cases, Greek. All have been published by the Oxford University Press in a bi-lingual series comprising 39 volumes, entitled: Discoveries in the Judaean Desert 1955-2002 (hereafter DJD). Each of the 39 volumes of DJD series includes an extensive translation of the entire textual evidence into English or French as well as introductory and editorial remarks; a concordance and high quality photographic reproductions of the original fragments are appended. The entire textual material has been further translated into German, French, Spanish, Dutch, Polish and many other languages, thereby generating a vast body of scholarly literature.1

1 The website of the Hebrew University Orion center for the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls presents systematically most of the scholarship in this field. See: http://orion.msc.huji.ac.il.
From the outset and even now these previously unknown parchment scrolls have been described by three differing synonymic geographical names as ‘The Judaean Desert Scrolls’, ‘The Qumran Scrolls’ and ‘The Dead Sea Scrolls’. This geographic description of the place where the scrolls were found has sidestepped the issues concerning the authorship of these writings or, more precisely, the curious question concerning the identity of the writers and the circumstances surrounding their composition.

The vast accumulation of ancient scrolls, some nearly intact and whole, others badly torn to small fragments, immediately raised numerous questions: Who wrote these scrolls? When were they written? Why were they found in the desert caves? What is their textual theme? Are the different scrolls related to each other? Had the contents of the scrolls been known to us previously, either in full or only a partial rendition? To what subject or subjects do the scrolls relate? How does this discovery explain previous historical or archeological knowledge that we possess concerning the period of its writing? Numerous conflicting answers have been offered to some of these questions by archeologists, historians, Bible scholars, philologists of the Hebrew and Aramaic languages, historians of religion, scholars of Jewish Studies, Late Antiquity and Early Christianity, and students of other fields during the last 62 years and have generated enthusiastic scholarly debate. Only now, however, is the entire corpus of this library freely available, entirely transcribed, and translated into many editions, a most remarkable achievement that has been achieved through the common work of 106 scholars from all over the world on numerous individual, previously unknown texts that are now fully published in the *DJD* series. Only now, therefore, may we begin to assess and comprehend the full meaning of this extraordinary finding.

The most remarkable single common denominator shared by all the Hebrew and Aramaic scrolls lies in the irrevocable fact that they all are *sacred writings*, composed in a language closely related to biblical Hebrew or biblical Aramaic. This library of holy writings contains no private correspondence, no individual letters, no commercial transactions, no private testaments or any sort of personal documentation. The scrolls reflect a religious vantage point founded on divine law and sacred covenant, a view that expresses divinely guided history pursuing justice, and prophetic vision that elaborates on the gap between the

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divine ideal and the constraints of historical reality. The scrolls include the four letters of the Tetragrammaton, the ineffable name of God known from the Bible, the details of the commandments along with numerous references to holy time, holy place and holy ritual. Noticeably, holy angels and holy priests are represented respectively as the sacred heavenly and earthly guardians of the holy precinct in the ideal Jerusalem Temple and its holy counterpart, the heavenly sanctuary. Angels and priests are introduced as the sacred guardians (shomerei mishmeret ha-qodesh) of the eternal sevenfold cycles of the Sabbaths, the seven holy festivals, the sevenfold cycle of the fallow years (shenat shemit-tah), and the sevenfold cycles of Jubilee years (Lev 23 and 25). The different texts discuss issues concerning holy time, counted by eternal cycles of sevenfold divisions; holy place, divided within heaven into seven sanctuaries ('seven holy precincts', 'the seven devirim [shrines] of the priesthood')⁴ and defined on earth by strict borders of purity and sanctity and graded inaccessibility; holy ritual, performed in sevenfold cycles by twenty-four priestly watches, members of the tribe of Levi and by their brothers the Levites in the Temple (1 Chr 24) (Scroll of Priestly Watches),⁵ and, in the heavenly precinct, by angels and 'spirits of knowledge, truth and justice' (Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice); and sacred memory, focusing on the history of covenants and angels, altars and sacrifices, priestly dynasties, and heavenly writings (Book of Jubilees; Testament of Levi) told and written by angels, Priests and Levites. The scrolls include detailed discussions concerning the divine covenants of God with Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Levi, Moses, Aaron and the Israelites. They further discuss various Chariot visions, i.e. angelic and divine revelations granted to Enoch, Moses, David and Ezekiel. The scrolls elaborate on issues of holiness, purity, sacred history, divine commandments, holy precincts, divine consecration of angels and priests, and various ritual concerns referring to the ritual of holy time (kept by sacrificial cycles in the Temple as performed by the priests [kohanim]) and to the sacred place (the Temple in Jerusalem where sacrifices were offered by the priests and liturgical cycles of song were performed by Levites). The scrolls include elaborations on the divine biblical commandments, enhancement of the prophetic narratives, elaborations on biblical history and sacred covenants; in addition, they discuss various dimensions of mystical, ritual, and liturgical holiness as reflected by their respective titles. The titles of the scrolls, given by the various editors over the course of seven decades of study, precisely define their content and indicate the references to those holy issues, expressing meanings embedded in the biblical narrative in general and in the priestly memory in particular: The Temple Scroll;

⁴ Carol Newsom, Songs of the Sabbath sacrifice, Atlanta 1985, 272: 4Q405 42:1; 347: 4Q405 7:7.
The Scroll of the 24 Priestly Watches; The Scroll of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice; The Scroll of Priestly Blessings; The Scroll of Melchizedek (that archangel who functions as High Priest in heaven); The Testament of Levi (founding father of the priestly tribe and the priesthood, according to the scrolls, and grandfather of Moses and Aaron); The Visions of Qehat (the son of Levi); The Visions of Amram (the father of Moses and Aaron); The Book of Jubilees (relating the sevenfold cycles of history as told by the Angel of the Presence to Moses on Mount Sinai, after the Sinai Covenant, focusing on Levi and on covenants with angels, on altars and sacrifices, and on the priestly written tradition that originated in eternal heavenly knowledge written on ‘heavenly tablets’); Miqtsat ma’aseh ha-torah (referred to as MMT and containing observations on the biblical laws pertaining to holy time and holy place; the text starts with a priestly annual calendar of Sabbaths and appointed times of the Lord); Genesis Apocryphon (an elaboration upon some of the stories of the first book in the Bible); Ezekiel Apocryphon (the priest-prophet Ezekiel describing the vision of the chariot); The Words of Moses (describing heavenly revelation in Sinai); The Qumran Psalms Scroll (relating to the Temple liturgy and cycles of sacrifices); The Zadokite Document also known as the Damascus Covenant; New Jerusalem; and Testaments of the Twelve Sons of Jacob. All of these and many others reflect the obvious biblical context and the particular priestly and Levitical concerns (as indicated above with bold letters) and an expanded biblical world-view within the newly discovered ancient sacred writings.

Scholars have established that most of the scrolls were written during the last two centuries before the Common Era, a date further confirmed by carbon-14 tests, paleographic criteria and historical references. Some few might be dated to a period somewhat earlier or a bit later, but the lion’s share of the thousand fragments reflects the world of the second and first centuries before the Common Era, that period known in Jewish history as the Maccabean or Hasmonaean period (167-164 BCE; 152-37 BCE) when a revolutionary change in legitimacy and authority occurred within the ruling power, a period marked by the closing of the biblical world and the commencement of a new era. This new era is known in the general history of the Middle East as the Hellenistic period; it, in turn, was followed by the Roman period.

This time saw the end of the biblical order in which the ideal royal leadership or chief governance was reserved to the house of David of the tribe of Judah and the religious leadership represented by the high priesthood was reserved to the dynasty of Zadok of the tribe of Levi. The new period commencing in 175 BCE was marked by the appearance of new political and religious powers (Seleucid-Syrian-Greek rulers: Antiochus IV, Alexander Balas and Demetrius II; Hellenized priests: Jason, Menelaus Alkimos; Hasmonaean priests and rulers: Jonathan, Simon, John Hyrkanos) as well as new social and cultural ideologies that were reflected in the pseudepigraphic literature and the
Apocrypha. The latest book to be included in the Old Testament is the book of Daniel, probably written around 165 BCE. The book took final shape during the persecutions of the Jews by the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV, known as Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 BCE), whose persecutions, included the desecration of the Jerusalem Temple in 167 BCE.6

Before the Dead Sea scrolls were found, we knew very little concerning the history of this period between this last biblical prophetic narrative (165 BCE) and the earliest rabbinic traditions that reflect the written or edited version of the oral tradition of the sages of the Mishnah, known as rabbinic literature, dating from around 200 CE. Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947-1956 very few texts in Hebrew or Aramaic were preserved from this time between the book of Daniel and the Mishnah.

The Dead Sea Scrolls reveal to us a huge library, composed or copied at the end of the biblical period, in the last few centuries BCE – the period of the ‘changing of the guard’ when new order was replacing the old regime. The scrolls shed new light on the history of the Seleucid-Hasmonaean period, which preceded Christianity, the Roman conquest of Jerusalem 70 CE, and rabbinic Judaism by two centuries. A closer inquiry into the scrolls will reveal that this unknown library of holy writings may be divided roughly into four basic groups:

(1) Scrolls that represent the earliest recognized copies of the biblical library, those texts known to us as the 24 books of the Hebrew Bible or the Hebrew Old Testament. Twenty-three of those books have been found in many copies on separate scrolls in the caves. The only book not found is the Book of Esther, which does not include the name of God and does include a foreign calendar, thus is not defined as a holy book that should be reserved in a sacred library. The biblical scrolls represent various versions of the biblical tradition.7

(2) Scrolls that represent expanded biblical history. This group includes those holy books concerning biblical figures who are the recipients of divine revelations or who hear angelic voices as well as those who present an expanded version of a historical narrative previously known from the Bible. These books are called para-biblical texts, apocryphal texts or rewritten Bible. These fascinating examples of the extended biblical narrative reflect a differing version of the known biblical account and a retelling of the story of its protagonists. The common denominator of the various additions to the biblical narrative is that they add

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knowledge concerning holy time, holy place, holy ritual and holy memory. The very process that entailed the freedom to rewrite the sacred tradition and re-edit its sequence was hardly recognized before the scrolls were found. Scrolls such as the *Genesis Apocryphon* or *The Book of Noah* tell us much more comprehensive stories figuring Noah offering sacrifices and seeing dreams and visions, Abraham going to Jerusalem and offering tithes to Melchizedek, and significantly expands the biblical narrative. The *Scroll of Melchizedek* adds an intriguing account concerning this High Priest on Mount Zion who is portrayed as living eternally among the angels and leading the hosts of angels to the great jubilee. The book of *Jubilees* asserts that the first altar on Mount Zion was built by Abraham, where the binding of Isaac took place in the middle of the first month (Jubilees 18:14) and states explicitly in the concluding verses of its first chapter that Mount Zion in Jerusalem is the place chosen by God where the Temple will be built (1:28-29). The non-canonical Psalms found in Qumran describe the beauty of Jerusalem as God’s chosen city (‘Jerusalem is [the city which YH]WH [chose] for ever and [ever]… holy ones [for the Na]me of YHWH is invoked over her, [and his glory] is seen over Jerusalem [and] Zion’, 4Q380). The scroll elaborates on the poetic, prophetic wisdom of David and on the holiness of Zion. The concluding psalm of the *Qumran Psalm Scroll* from cave 11 describes a liturgical-ritual solar calendar of the annual sacrificial cycles that took place in the Temple, said to be composed by David, son of Jesse, renowned as ‘the sweet psalmist of Israel’. Additional examples of the priestly concern of the para-biblical texts include the Testament of Qehat, the second son of Levi, who was chosen to continue the priestly tradition, and or Second Ezekiel, which elaborates upon the Masoretic (traditional) Vision of the Chariot [of the cherubim], related by ‘Ezekiel son of Buzi the priest’. The latter work transforms the cherubim from figures in the holy of holies in the Temple into eternal heavenly beings, adding the word ‘chariot’ (not found in the traditional biblical version) to Chapter 1. All these para-biblical traditions related to exclusive priestly issues and angelic traditions were previously unknown. The Testament of Levi relates in detail the history of the third son of Jacob, recounting his election by the angels to officiate as a priest, and accentuating his concern with heavenly holy books. The Book of Enoch relates the story of Enoch, son of Jared (Gen 5: 21-24), the first human being who learned to read, to write and to calculate, a skill he was taught by the angels themselves (Jub 4: 6-21). Enoch, the founder of the antediluvian priesthood, brought not only the

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9 Sanders, *DJD* IV, 48, 92.
divine books from the angels but also the holy, 364-day solar calendar of the Shabbats from heaven, thereby inspiring the ritual cycles of Temple worship (1 Enoch, chapters 72-82). The Book of Jubilees further retells the biblical history from the day of creation until the Sinai revelation, focusing on the first literate person, Enoch, on the 364-day calendar divided symmetrically to 52 weeks that he brought from heaven and on Levi, a priest chosen and consecrated by the angels who inherited all the books of his fathers: ‘And he [Jacob] gave all of his books and his fathers’ books to Levi, his son, so that he might preserve them and renew them for his sons until this day’ (Jub 45:15). These themes were previously known from later translations as the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, but only in Qumran were their original Aramaic and Hebrew versions discovered and revealed within the full context of this priestly-angelic history, founded on heavenly books, angelic teaching, consecration dreams and divine-chariot visions. All of these fascinating texts expanded the biblical narrative to previously unperceived dimensions by crossing the boundaries between heaven and earth. They present an alternative memory focusing on eternal cycles and divine writings claiming eternal authority while representing new dimensions of literary creativity and the freedom to retell sacred traditions.10

(3) *Liturgical-mystical scrolls*, which reflect the eternal cycles of sacred worship performed by both priests and angels. This group presents the eternal cycles of time and worship by means of mystical poetry, reflecting the divine service of priests and angels within their respective earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. This kind of liturgical-mystical literature which unites the divine worship of angels and priests was almost totally unknown to us before the scrolls were found; we had only a few hints at it in the psalms that were connected to Temple worship. Noticeable among this group are *The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* which represent a liturgical solar calendar by which a particular song accompanying the Sabbath Sacrifice in the Temple is designated to be sung on a particular Sabbath in both the heavenly shrine by the angels and on Earth in the Jerusalem Temple by the priests, according to a pre-calculated schedule that corresponds to the priestly year of 364 days divided symmetrically into four seasons of 91 days. Each season or each period of 91 days is further divided into 13 Sabbaths pre-calculated with fixed date. The solar year of 364 days (described in detail in I Enoch chapters 72-82, Jubilees chapters 4, 5-8, the Qumran Psalm Scroll from Cave 11, column 27; *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*; the calendar in the beginning of *Miqvat Maa’she Torah* [4Q394]; the flood

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10 All the texts mentioned in this section are described in detail with full bibliographic references in my Hebrew book: *Memory and oblivion: The mystery of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, 2009, 80-111, to be published in English by De Gruyter.
story told as a way to calculate an annual priestly calendar in 4Q252 and in the Scroll of Priestly Watches) contains 52 Sabbaths symmetrically divided among the four seasons, each one has a special song marking that particular Sabbath. To this mystical-liturgical group of texts that connect priests and angels through eternal annual cycles of liturgical ritual, sacrifices and blessings around a solar calendar of 52 Sabbaths, we can add the priestly blessings that were found in Qumran, the particular blessings to the High Priest from the dynasty of Zadok, and the specific blessing to the priestly sons of Zadok and the members of their covenant (ha-kohanim le-beit tsadok ve-anshei beritam). These blessings are found in the Rule of Blessings that is appended to the Community Rule and in other texts designated as Blessings.

(4) Polemical literature, representing a bitter struggle between the ‘Priest of Righteousness’ and the ‘Priest of Evil’ and between their respective supporters the ‘Sons of Light’ and the ‘Sons of Darkness’, or between the forces of righteousness keeping the ideal biblical order focused around the divine solar calendar of 364 days; and the forces of evil those who destroyed the biblical order and the ancient priestly hegemony, when they instituted a new Seleucid-Greek lunar calendar. This literature was likewise entirely unknown to us before the scrolls were discovered. This group includes the War Scroll (portraying the struggle between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness) and the Pesherim, commentaries on biblical prophetic books that are rewritten and reinterpreted so that all consoling prophecies refer to the Sons of Light, the keepers of the solar calendar, and all rebuking prophecies relate to the Sons of Darkness, keepers of the lunar calendar. The Sons of Light are lead by the Priest of Righteousness (kohen tsedeq) and the Angel of Light while the Sons of Darkness are lead by the Evil Priest (kohen resha) and by the Angel of Darkness. The Sons of Light are those who adhere to the priestly leadership chosen by God and to the pre-calculated priestly solar calendar of 364 days taught by the angels (Jub 4:17-18), considered sacred and eternal by the Zadokite priesthood. The Sons of Darkness, on the other hand, are those who follow the new Hashmonaean leadership, Jonathan and Simon, who were nominated by the Seleucid rulers who succeeded Antiochus IV, Alexander Balas and Demetrius II in the middle of the second century BCE. The Seleucids – Syrian rulers of Greek origin, heirs of Alexander the Great – imposed on their kingdom and

11 On the priestly calendar that was found in Qumran see: James VanderKam, Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Measuring time, London 1998; Talmon et al., Qumran Cave 4: Calendrical Texts (DJD XXI); Rachel Elior, The three temples: On the emergence of Jewish mysticism, Oxford 2004, 45-53, 82-87; and previous bibliography there.

on their appointed local rulers a Greek lunar calendar commencing in the autumn, based on human observation of the changing moon. We may infer the imposition of this calendar from a disguised prophecy about Antiochus IV (175-164 BCE) in the last biblical book: ‘[o]ne who shall attempt to change the sacred seasons and the law’ (Dan 7:25); in addition, we have literary evidence from the period relating to changes in the order of Sabbaths and festivals (cf. 1 Macc 1:41-53; 2 Macc 6:1-10). The scrolls describe the followers of the lunar calendar imposed by the Seleucids and adopted by the Hasmonaean in blunt words: ‘They will forget statute and festival and Sabbath and covenant. And they will violate everything and they will do what is evil in my eyes (…) And the Angels of Mastemot will rule over them (…) and they will walk in the willfulness of their heart’. This scroll titled 4Q Apocryphon of Jeremiah C has another description of the sin and its crucial meaning: ‘They will defile my Temple, [they will profane my Sabbaths,] they will forge my festivals, and with foreigners [they] will profane their offspring. Their priests will commit violence’. The biblical calendar commences in the spring in the month of Passover (Ex 12:2) and according to the scrolls it is a solar calendar. A significant number of texts that were found in Qumran describe a sacred sabbatical calendar preserved by priests and angels, based on pre-calculated solar calendar of 364 days and the 52 Sabbaths.

It is from this polemical literature that we first learn about the bitter disputes that arose between the priests from the dynasty of Zadok, who described themselves as Sons of Light, and the usurper Hasmonaean priests, who were described in the scrolls as Sons of Darkness, those who were appointed by the foreign Seleucid rulers and had to follow and serve according to the Seleucid lunar calendar. Antiochus IV banished the last Zadokite priest, Onias III, in 175 BCE and appointed several Hellenized high priests (2 Macc 4:7-35; 14:3-4,13). In general history the dismissed and banished biblical Zadokite priests became known as the Sadducees, a name that gained a negative connotation in the literature of Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity since its bearers, the representatives of the traditional priestly order, were perceived as the opponents to the new order. However according to the biblical order and throughout the first millennium before the Common Era, the Zadokite priests were the only family from which the incumbents of the office of High Priest could have been elected. The son of Aaron, Moses brother, is Elazar the High Priest, who is the father of Pinhas the High Priest, who is the father of Avishua the High Priest.

14 4Q390 frg. 2:9-10; Devorah Dimant, *Qumran Cave 4 (DJD XXX)*, 246.
who is the father of Buki the High Priest, who is the father of Uzi the High Priest, who is the father of Zerachia the High Priest, the father of Merayot the High Priest, the father of Zadok who served as a High Priest in the days of David. All the High Priests from the time of the planning and establishment of the first Temple in the days of David and Solomon son of David (10th century BCE) until the year 175 BCE were descendents of Zadok, generation after generation, thus they were called the Zadokite Priests or ha-kohanim benei tsa-dok (1 Kings 1:32-45; 1 Chr 5:29-41; 6:34-38; 23:13; 24; Ezra 7). With the murder in 171 BCE of the last officiating Zadokite High Priest, Onias III, (2 Macc 4:34) and the nomination of the usurper, his brother Jason who was appointed by Antiochus IV as a High Priest, the Zadokite dynasty, from which the officiating High Priest traditionally came, lost the monopoly it had held for centuries. The dethroned Zadokite priests described the usurping illegitimate Hasmonaean priesthood that took their place and defiled the Temple in the worst possible way in the Dead Sea scrolls.

When we take a broad look at the content of all the scrolls after a comprehensive reading, we can confidently assert that the authors, copyists, readers and keepers possessed an overwhelming interest in predominantly priestly concerns, all of which were embedded in biblical historiography and biblical law. Further, the writers were desperately attempting to preserve the sacred ancient priestly order after their violent removal from their exclusive hegemony in the Temple. Within the traditional and sacred world view of the Zadokite priestly circles and those who upheld the biblical order, the appointment of the Hellenized high priests (175-159 BCE) as well as the appointment of the Hasmonaean high priesthood (153-37 BCE) was perceived as an illegal and unholy seizure of power. The Zadokites thus saw themselves as fighting against these usurpers and their supporters who were attempting to change the old sacred order based on the divine pre-calculated eternal solar calendar. The Zadokite writers and their supporters did not refrain from expanding the biblical tradition in the attempt to repulse the usurpers and in order to underscore the foundation of their own sacred order. They were willing to elaborate on the sacred tradition and supplement it with a striking emphasis on four interrelated priestly concerns that were threatened in the Hasmonaean period:

*Holy time*: This refers to the mathematically pre-calculated ritual-solar calendar of 364 days, commencing in the spring. It was maintained by priests and angels, who used sacrifices and liturgy to monitor its sevenfold divine covenantal divisions that were heard/revealed from heaven (7×52, that is, the weekly course of Sabbaths) and fourfold universal visual divisions (4×91, that is, the 91-day seasons marked by the equinoxes and the solstices). The sacrifices and liturgy included the Sabbath sacrifice, the daily sacrifice, and the seven holiday
sacrifices as detailed in Leviticus and Numbers, and the synchronization between them. The Scroll of Priestly Watches found at Qumran describes this calendrical-ritual order and the Psalms Scroll detailed the different liturgical cycles. When the banished priests could no longer serve in the defiled Temple, they replaced the sacrificial service with liturgical cycles performed together with the angels.

**Holy place:** This refers to the ideal Temple in Jerusalem on Mount Zion, where the binding of Isaac took place (Jub 18:14), where the angel of the Lord appeared before David (2 Sam 24:16-25); and where the holy cherubim (‘the paradigm of the chariot’ 1 Chr 28:18) stood when the Temple was built (1 Kings 6:23-28). The scrolls maintain the tradition of the divine chariot of the cherubim in the heavenly sanctuary in paradise as a celestial paradigm for the earthly shrine (Jub 4:26; 8:19; Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice 4Q405, 20 ii-21-22: 6-10;4QBlessings, [4Q286, Frg. 1a:1-4]);17 the holy place is a place of divine presence where death has no command and angels are present in sevenfold cycles. For this reason extreme rules and criteria of purity and sanctity were applied within the confines of the holy place (Temple Scroll; MMT; Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice; Blessings).

**Holy ritual:** Those who maintained the twenty-four priestly watches as detailed in 1 Chronicles 24 and in the Scroll of Priestly Watches were in charge of the eternal cycles of liturgy and sacrifices. The priests were joined by the angels in their liturgy every seven days, as indicated in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice. Sabbath in the Dead Sea Scrolls is described as the day of the angels. The angelic presence demanded such strict rules of purity and sanctity from all members of the community (Rule of the Community; Damascus Covenant; Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice; Jubilees).

**Holy memory:** The biblical narrative had been retold by the Angel of the Presence while accentuating the role of the angels, focusing on the history of the priesthood commencing with Enoch and culminating with Levi, the grandfather of Aaron. It was further retold by Enoch, the founder of the antediluvian priesthood (I Enoch) and by Levi, the inheritor of the ancient priestly writings according to the Book of Jubilees 45:15 and the Testament of Levi found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. An eminent place is devoted to the 364-day calendar kept by priests, Levites and the angels and to the day of its commencement: Wednesday, the first day of the first month of spring. According to the scrolls, Levi and

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15 Mount Zion here does not refer to the present day Mount Zion in Jerusalem, but it relates to the biblical Mount Zion, which is identified with the mountain known presently as the Temple Mount. See: Rachel Elior, ‘From priestly (and Early Christian) Mount Zion to rabbinic Temple Mount’, in: O. Grabar & B.Z. Kedar (Eds.), Where heaven and earth meet: Jerusalem’s sacred esplanade, Jerusalem-Austin 2009, 308-319.

16 Newsom, Songs of the Sabbath sacrifice, 303.

17 Newsom, Nitzan et al., Poetical and liturgical texts, 12.
his son Qehat were born on this very date, when the land was promised to him and to his seed in this very date (Jub 27:19-25) Enoch was taken to heaven on this date, and the Israelites inaugurated the desert tabernacle on this date (Exod 40:1). This is the day of the entrance of the people of Israel into the Land of Israel according to Joshua Apocryphon (4Q379, Frg. 12:1-7). A central place in the scrolls is dedicated to the holiness of those writings, in whose composition no human hand was involved (the ‘heavenly tablets’; the ‘Books of his Fathers’ [Jub 45:15]), and to the imparting of the written tradition from heaven to earth, from angels to priests. A central place is given to universal eternal time cycles of creation (day and night, four seasons; twelve months), which are called the heavenly chariots (1 Enoch 75:3) and to those eternal time cycles of rest occurring every seven days, every seven holy appointed times of the Lord, every seventh year during the fallow year, and every seventh seven-year cycle, known as the Jubilee year. All of these eternal sevenfold cycles were commanded by God and affirmed by covenant according to the biblical narrative (Lev 23 and 25) and the detailed expansion in Jubilees; they are called ‘appointed times of freedom’ (mo’adei deror) (4Q286). The ‘heavenly chariots’ are perceived as a universal divine gift to all creation and to all creatures and are based on human observation of the recurrent changes of creation monitored by the angels. The ‘appointed times of freedom’, meanwhile, are a divine bequest reserved exclusively to the ‘keepers of the covenant’ (those who observe divine law and the sevenfold cycles of rest); they are founded on human obedience to written divine instructions relating to Sabbaths and the seven holidays, as kept by priests and angels.

The scrolls reveal an alternative memory going beyond the biblical tradition and yet based profoundly on its foundations. This alternative memory was created, for the most part, in a time of persecution and struggle against the perceived illegal and unholy seizure of power, the unlawful dethronement of those maintaining the legitimacy of the High Priesthood, and their banishment. The Seleucid conquest and persecutions (175-164 BCE), including the dethronement of the High Priest of the family of Zadok and the appointment by the Seleucid kings of the Hasmonaean dynasty to be high priests and local rulers (152-37 BCE), generated a profound resentment in the deposed priestly circles – those who defined themselves in historical terms, substantiated by the biblical tradition, as the priests from the dynasty of Zadok, and in mystical terms as Sons of Light who held to the sacred solar calendar of Sabbaths. These are the authors who, sensing a great risk of annihilation of all that they cherished, com-

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19 See: Newsom, Nitzan et al., *Poetical and liturgical texts*, 12.
posed their version of biblical history and sacred memory focusing on eternal recurrent cycles of holy time kept by priests and angels, in divinely chosen holy place on earth that was eternally connected to a heavenly paradigm of divine sanctuary. The unity of holy time and holy place was demonstrated by cyclical ritual kept in heaven and on earth by holy angels and holy priests, the keepers of the covenant. That version of biblical history was focused on divine covenants, sacred calendar, holy books relating divine and angelic history, narratives and laws, eternal liturgical sacrificial cycles, sacred altars, a sacred written tradition reflecting a chosen priesthood, and holy cycles of appointed times kept by priests and angels, guardians of the holy place and holy time. The Zadokite priests and their supporters lost their hegemony in 175 BCE and never served again in the holy place on Mount Zion. Onias III, the last High Priest from the dynasty of Zadok, refused to adopt, for the Jerusalem Temple, the Seleucid lunar calendar of 354 days, commencing in the autumn, requiring a frequent leap year, and he therefore was deposed by Antiochus IV. This banishment of the traditional priestly circles meant the disappearance, never to return, of, the pre-calculated, permanent holy solar calendar of 364 days divided into 52 Sabbaths, commencing in the spring and celebrated together with the angels. It was replaced by the Greek lunar calendar – a variable calendar based on human observation and unable to be used for the keeping of fixed dates, since the declaration of the new month depends on the rising of the moon. In addition, the Greek calendar required an occasional leap year, a concept entirely unknown in the Bible. The priestly solar calendar, the calendar of ‘appointed time of liberty’ guaranteed by an eternal divine covenant kept in heaven and on earth – divided the year into 12 months of 30 days each, adding a 31st day at the end of the third, sixth, ninth and twelfth months. The months started on fixed days – the first month (30 days long) on Wednesday, the second month (30 days long) on Friday and the third month (31 days long) on Sunday – and this cycle was repeated eternally through each one of the four quarters of the year. Every day had a pre-fixed date and every Sabbath was enumerated and dated in a cycle of 91 days four times a year – the first Sabbath on the fourth of the first month, the second on the eleventh etc. But the Hellenized high priests and Hasmonaean high priests appointed by the Seleucids served under the variable Greek lunar calendar and desecrated the Temple, to the great consternation of the Zadokite priests.

The deposed and dethroned Zadokite priests removed the only source of legitimacy they possessed for their long lasting claims of heavenly choice and divine consecration (1 Chr 23:13): the sacred writings in the Temple library, those parchment scrolls recounting in detail the divine law and the sacred history of covenants entrusted into the hands of the tribe of Levi and the priestly dynasty (Lev 10:10-11; Det 18:1-2; 32:8-11; Jub 45:15). This narrative intertwined divine ideals, sacred laws and covenants, priestly consecration, and the
long history of recurrent human failure to follow these ideals and laws intended to guard freedom, justice, equality, benevolence and holiness.

We do not know when exactly the Zadokite priests and their allies took the scrolls from Jerusalem and when the scrolls were placed in the caves in the Judaean desert, but we know that all the scrolls that were found are sacred writings, delineating ancient covenantal history, sacred laws and divine paradigms, eternal ritual calendar of appointed times of liberty, angelic teaching on letters and numbers, culture law and sanctity and priestly and prophetic records on sacred memory. They include many copies of the biblical books as well as expansions on the biblical narratives. These expanded versions explored the fourfold unity of sacred time, founded on a holy, eternal, pre-calculated calendar of Sabbaths and ‘appointed times of the Lord’; sacred place, founded on the divine presence in the holy precinct on Mount Zion, on Mount Sinai and in Garden of Eden Holy of Holies (Jub 8:19-20); sacred ritual, founded on eternal liturgical and sacrificial cycles performed by Priests and Levites, monitoring permanent changes of twofold and fourfold visual time and seven fold audible time; and sacred memory, founded on covenants and divine guided history, in their heavenly mystical paradigm and earthly ritual counterpart. The last authors of the sacred library and its keepers, those who kept their anonymity and left their holy writings in clay jars in those eleven caves in the Judaean desert, disappeared from the historical arena, probably at the time of the Roman conquest of Jerusalem, in the sixth and seventh decades of the first century CE, following the rebellion against Rome.

Scholars who have studied the legal tradition reflected in the scrolls associate it with the legal tradition of the Sadducees (a name derived from the Zadokite priests) pertaining to sacred time and sacred place – a tradition portrayed in rabbinic literature as the rival of the tradition of the Pharisees, favored by men who rejected the authority of the rabbis. Scholars of the solar calendar associate it with the Sadducean calendar that was a central feature of the controversy between Sadducees and Pharisees. Scholars of biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, those who have studied the language of the scrolls, have established the affinity to biblical Hebrew and post-biblical Hebrew, with a further unique priestly vocabulary. The scrolls frequently mention ‘the priests from the family of Zadok’, or the dynasty of the high priesthood, or ‘the Zadokite Priests, the seed of Aaron holy of holies’, known in English as Sadducees. But despite all of these factors that point directly to the biblical worldview of the writers of the scrolls and focus on and demonstrate their priestly identity and priestly orientation, priestly vision and Levitical identity, scholars have believed for many years that Qumran as an archeological site and the scrolls as an epigraphic find should be associated with the Essenes, a peaceful group of celibates living a secluded life with no family and children, mentioned by Philo of Alexandria, by Pliny
the Elder, and by Josephus in Greek or Latin documents written in the first century CE.

The Essene context was suggested early in the study of the scrolls by the archeologist Eliezer Sukenik, who saw a tiny part of the huge priestly library in November 1947. Upon reading a few lines from the *Rule of the Community* (*Serekh ha-yahad*) discussing the gradual acceptance of new members into the community, Sukenik said that it reminded him of the descriptions of the Essenes. Sukenik might have reached a different conclusion, however, and associated the scrolls not with the Essenes but with the biblical Zadokite priests, had he been shown the very next page of the document, where the priestly leadership of the community, ‘ha-kohanim bnei tzdadoq,’ is described. So, too, might he concluded had he seen the detailed description of the blessing for the priests of the family of Zadok in *Rule of the Community* found in cave 1, or the repeated references to their priestly leadership in the *Rule of the Community* or in the copies of *Serekh ha-yahad* that were found in cave 4, which explicitly refers to ‘the deeds of the Torah, in accordance with the opinion of the sons of Aaron who have freely pledged themselves to establish His covenant and to observe His precepts which He has commanded’. Finally, he might have considered differently, had he seen it, the reference to ‘A most holy dwelling place for Aaron, with eternal knowledge, for a covenant of judgment, and to offer up pleasing fragrance’.

The Essenes were first mentioned by Philo († around 50 CE), a first-century Jewish scholar who lived in Alexandria in Egypt. Philo was interested in the ideas of the Stoics and related to his readers that there were more than 4,000 Essenes (Essaioi) widely dispersed throughout Palestine and Syria (*Quod omnis probus liber sit* 75-91; *Apologia pro Judaeis* 1-18). He maintained that these people had no monetary concerns, lived a very simple, modest life, did not have any earthly possessions, devoted much of their time to study, and observed the Sabbath according to all the strictest instructions. He further noted their love of God, their concerns with piety, honesty, morality, philanthropy, holiness, equality, freedom, and the importance of communal life. He added that the holy Essenes did not marry and lived a completely celibate life, and practiced a

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20 On the historical sources describing the Essenes in their original language and in translation, see: Geza Vermes & Martin Goodman (Eds.), *The Essenes according to the classical sources*, Sheffield 1989.
21 Philip Alexander et al. (Eds.), *Rule of the Congregation* (*Serekh ha-Edah; DJD XXXVI*), Oxford 2000, 536-538.
23 Licht, *Megilat ha-serakhim*, 123, 131, 195, 252, 260, 264, 284. For English translations of these scrolls, see next note.
24 Philip Alexander & Geza Vermes (Eds.), *Serekh ha-yahad* (*DJD XXVI*), Oxford 1998, 100.
25 Ibid., 108.
communal existence of shared residence, money, property, food and clothing. He further wrote that these Essenes convened in synagogues every Sabbath and studied the law according to philosophical and allegorical interpretations. He maintained that these people cherished freedom, possessed no slaves, and resented the use of weapons or participation in commerce. Philo did not mention any name, place, date, or historical circumstances, or any background to the consolidation of this extraordinary group of thousands of people who lived according to these exalted ideals. No quotation or any written reference originated by this previously unknown group was offered to the readers of Philo.

However intriguing these accounts may be, we cannot substantiate them with any historical or philological evidence: no pre-Common Era or first-century CE Hebrew or Aramaic text says anything of this perfect group that lived according to the highest ideals of freedom, equality, communality, modesty, chastity and liberty. No Hebrew or Aramaic text mentions such a faultless group numbering thousands of people spread all over the country that did not leave a single line written under the name Essenes. No Jewish source written in Hebrew or Aramaic ever mentions the celibacy of thousands of people who lived in defiance of the biblical commandment which expected marriage and procreation from all members of Jewish society. No Hebrew or Aramaic source mentions a group that rejected slavery, denounced weapons, and resented normal commercial life. No Hebrew or Aramaic source is familiar with the word Essenes or Essaioi in any way.

The second account of the Essenes is that of Pliny the Elder († 79 CE), who relates in some few lines the history of the *Esseni* who lived ‘on the west side of the Dead Sea’ (*Natural History* 5.73). He wrote that the Essenes did not marry, possessed no money (like Philo), and existed for thousands of generations (overlooking the relevant question how a group that resents natural propagation will survive for generations). Unlike Philo, who did not mention any particular geographical location of the Essenes other than the whole ‘Palestinian Syria’, Pliny mentioned Ein Gedi, next to the Dead Sea, as their residence. However, according to the Israeli historian Menachem Stern (1925-1989), who studied all the accounts in Greek and Latin sources from antiquity pertaining to Jews in their various places of residence, Pliny never visited the Land of Israel and his testimony is based on secondhand sources rather than actual observation. There is no room in the Ein Gedi area for thousands of people, celibate or otherwise, and no echo of any of the foregoing in the Hebrew language. No noun, no verb, no adjective is associated with the term Essenes, and no chronicle or recollection of the legendary Essaioi or Essenes is to be found in the language of the land where they allegedly resided for thousands of generations.

Flavius Josephus, writing in Rome during the last third of the first century CE, is the third witness mentioning the Essenes (*War* 2.119-161; 2.567; 3.11; 5.145; *Antiquities* 13.171-173; 15.371-379; 18.18-22). Josephus was describing
Jewish ascetics, apparently relying on the same information as that mentioned above concerning the piety, celibacy, communal property and the denouncing of money (‘They neither buy nor sell anything among themselves, each man gives what he has to whoever needs it, and receives in return whatever he himself requires’ (War 2.127). He described the strict belief in communality and their commitment to a strict observance of the Sabbath. Josephus further added that the Essenes ritually immersed in water every morning, before every meal and after they attended to their bodily needs, and wore only white garments. He asserted that they obey their elders as well as the majority; they expressed reverence to the sun before they ate together after prayer, devoted themselves to charity and benevolence, and forbade the expression of anger (‘They are righteous arbiters of their anger, masters of their wrath, paragons of loyalty and peacemakers’ (War 2.135), studied the books of the elders, preserved secrets, and were very mindful of the names of the angels kept in their sacred writings. He further wrote that their life expectancy achieved more than 100 years (War 2.151) and that they believed in the immortality of the souls ‘who rejoice and rise up to the heavenly world’ after they are ‘freed from the bonds of the flesh, liberated from long slavery’ (War 2.154-155). Josephus’s account of these virtuous and peaceful people, numbering in the thousands, (although they do not marry and have no children), spread all over the country, (‘they are not in one town only, but in every town several of them form a colony’, War 2.124) and devoted to asceticism, voluntary poverty, and abstinence from worldly pleasures, believing in the eternal existence of the souls is intriguing. I find it, however, unconnected to the belligerant world of the priestly oriented writers of the scrolls and to their biblical-priestly world as delineated above.

There exists no known Hebrew or Aramaic text before or after the Common Era which supports any of these exceptional traits or the ideal Essene society numbered by many thousands that presumably had existed for many generations and thousands of years in Judea or along the west shore of the Dead Sea. The New Testament, written in the time of Pliny and Josephus, knows nothing of such defined holy communities of ascetics in the first century CE Judaea, and the Apocrypha likewise contains no hint of such exemplary moral achievements in any Jewish community in the last centuries before the Common Era. The Greek and Latin

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26 Steve Mason, one of the leading scholars of Josephus writings, rejects the identification of the people who wrote the scrolls that were found in Qumran with Essenes. He stated in an article reviewing the history of the scholarship on the Essene-Qumran theory: ‘Significantly, many of those who have taken Josephus most seriously doubt or reject the Qumran-Essene hypothesis’. See Steve Mason, ‘What Josephus says about the Essenes in his Judean War’ http://orion.huji.ac.il/orion/programs/Mason00-1.shtml; Mason, 'Essenes and lurking Spartans in Josephus Judean War: From story to history', in: Zuleika Rodgers (Ed.), Making history: Josephus and historical method, Leiden 2007, 219-261.
authors mentioned thousands of people who belonged to the Essene communities living in the land of Israel, but no rabbinic source from the first few centuries of the Common Era, ever mentions such a celibate group, nor does any source confront their resentful perceptions regarding family life (‘They are on their guard against the licentiousnes of women and are convinced that none of them is faithful to one man’ [War 2.121]). No such negative opinion on women is to be founds in the scrolls or in any Sadducees or rabbinic text. No reference to their mysogeny or social segregation and non monitarical communal economy is known in any of the sources written in Hebrew or Aramaic. Josephus claimed that since the Essenes had no biological children they adopted children for the sake of the continuity of the community (War 2.120), however no one explained where from thousands of children will be found for adoption. The Essenes are described by Josephus as people who believe in the eternity of the soul after death (similar in this respect to the teachings of the Pharisees on the resurrection), while the Sadducees or the priestly circles from the house of Zadok and their allies, did not believe in the eternity of the souls or in the resurrection as Josephus asserted in War 2.165; the same position of the Sadducees is described in Luke 20:27-40, Acts 23:8, and Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1.

The Essenes theory, that had suggested identifying the writers of the scrolls with the Essenes, may pertain at best to very few lines in the Dead Sea Scrolls that could be summarized in the following four points: gradual acceptance to the community; communal property of a closed circle; prohibition of spitting in public; belief in predestination. These four issues are attested in the Rule of the Community as well as in the descriptions of the Essenes, however, right next to these descriptions, which the first two may relate to the priestly circle that authored the scroll as well as to any other group that wish to segregate under great stress or as a result of choice, we find recurrent references to the priestly leadership of the community, to the divine covenant and the biblical law.

The priestly theory based on the biblical tradition, referring to holy time, holy place, holy ritual and holy memory as the major concern of all the scrolls, in time of strife when the ancient priestly leadership had been dethroned and illegitimate priesthood took its place by power, explains the absolute majority of all the 1000 scrolls that were found in Qumran, while the Essene theory may be connected at best to a few lines from the Rule of the Community and offers no context to the polemic priestly literature that was found in the caves. This very scroll that mentions a punishment for those who spit in public, The Community Rule, includes priestly blessing, priestly leadership and Levitical service, divine covenant, divine law, Bnei Zadok hakohanim shomrei habrit (the zadokite priests, the keepers of the covenant), issues of purity and atonement that relate to beit kodesh leisrael vesod kodesh kodashim leaharon (house of holiness of Israel and a council of holy of holies of Aaron).

It seems to me that the description of the thousands of Essenes living an ideal celibate life in ‘Palestine in Syria’, negating all commercial interests, deny-
ing all family obligations as well as any form of ownership of earthly property or any military weapons, depicts a perfect society, a utopia, that Philo had envisioned or created in his imagination, and not a real society flourishing in the land of Israel in the first century CE or in the two preceding centuries. I will not preclude the possibility that there were small groups who lived ascetic life in the desert or elsewhere that their name is not known to us however I find it unreasonable to assume existence of huge numbers of people for a great length of time, that left no written trace and left no mark in the language of its country. The unreasonable descriptions of thousands of celibates who lived for thousands of years and the questionable historicity of the peaceful Essenes in a period and a place that were marked by numerous conflicts, battles and struggles, is attested by the following example: The Late Roman Rabbinic Period (The Cambridge History of Judaism. Vol. 4), a 1000-page volume which includes forty scholarly essays relating to the period commencing in the mid first century, a time when thousands of Essenes allegedly lived in the Land of Israel or around the Dead Sea, never mentions the word Essenes, not even once! In contrast, the Qumran Community and Dead Sea Scrolls, Temple, Sadducees, Pharisees, Zadokite Priests, Priests and Priesthood are mentioned in numerous places, as any survey of the detailed index will immediately demonstrate. Recent books on the Hasmonaean period, when the Essenes allegedly lived in the Land of Israel, do not mention the word Essenes even once. This could be easily demonstrated in the recent book of Hanan Eshel, The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hasmonaean State,28 that does not mention the Essenes at all, not even once. The same absence of the thousands of Essenes could be attested in the recent Hebrew edition of The Second Book of Maccabees by Daniel Schwartz,29 which mentions the Dead Sea Scrolls often and elaborates on numerous priestly issues, as well as on the Pharisees and Sadducees, however he does not relate to the Essenes, the alleged contemporary group of the Maccabees, even once.

Philo, Pliny and Josephus, each for his own reasons, were fascinated with this ideal of a perfect celibate community that left no written memory, or at least one which was accessible to these three historians. Further, this unusual group left no historical context, oral or written, that explained its segregation from the general Jewish community.30

29 Jerusalem 2004.
30 Steve Mason wrote in this regard in his above mentioned article: ‘Josephus agrees with Philo in describing them [the Essenes] as widely dispersed throughout Judea. Since Philo and Josephus both choose to make them the shining embodiment of Judean virtue’ (Mason, ‘What Josephus says about the Essenes in his Judean War’).
These three Greek and Latin descriptions of the Essenes – unsupported by any contemporaneous Hebrew or Aramaic text, by the New Testament, by the Apocryphal literature or the Pseudepigraphic literature, or by the Dead Sea Scrolls – make no reference at all to any disagreement, agitation, strife or struggle that characterize quite a few of the scrolls, especially those that characterized earlier as the polemic literature. No separatist context is offered for the peaceful Essenes while the writers of the scrolls are fighting against evil priests and impure temple of their time: ‘and when these are a community in (...) they shall be separated from the settlement of the men of injustice, in order to go to the wilderness to prepare there the way of the truth’ (DJD XXVI, 147). The struggle between ‘the Priest, the Teacher of Righteousness’ (Commentary on Psalms, Ps. Xxvii, 4Q171, 173), who showed his followers ‘the way of truth’, and the ‘Wicked Priest’ who embodied the ways of evil and lawlessness in Pesher habaqq (the Commentary on Habakkuk) and Pesher tehillim (Commentary on Psalms) and in other commentaries, points again to the priestly context and priestly struggle in the wake of the biblical era. In contrast to this priestly struggle so evident in the scrolls, no explicit priestly identity is mentioned by Philo, Pliny and Josephus, no covenant is mentioned, no holy place is described, no calendrical matters are discussed, no priestly laws concerning the Temple and the rites of the sacrifices are discussed, no priestly watches and no angelic-priestly liturgy are mentioned, and Jerusalem – the chosen city of God, a central theme in many of the scrolls – is not associated with the Essenes at all. In other words none of the subjects attested so richly in the Dead Sea Scrolls in various literary genres appear to have been any important concern of the Essenes.

The scrolls, as we have seen, are very closely connected to the biblical world by language and style, basic axioms, world view and vocabulary, history and basic concepts (God, Sabbath, covenants, seven appointed times of the Lord, divine law, Temple, holy of holies, priestly watches, tribe of Levi, Sons of Zadok the Priests, priestly blessing, altar, sacrifices, Jerusalem, Zion, Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons, Levi, Aaron, his seed defined as holy of holies, his brother Moses, Joshua, Ezekiel, prophets, angels, chariot of the cherubim, tabernacle, garden of Eden etc.). The accounts of the Essenes, meanwhile, do not connect them explicitly to the biblical world and certainly not to any particular priestly concern. I therefore see no sound reason to study the scrolls in relation to the Essenes – especially since the latter’s alleged existence over thousands of years, dispersed throughout Judea, is not attested by any Hebrew or Aramaic source.

In short, the priestly content of the scrolls – which show obvious concern about holy time, holy place, and holy ritual – simply precludes ascription of the scrolls to the Essenes. The latter are not known to fight for divine covenant, priestly leadership, for a solar calendar, or for holy place, and they do not debate over Temple rituals and priestly history.
In light of the forgoing, let me raise seven questions:

1. Why should we rely on the questionable testimony of Philo, Pliny and Josephus, written in Greek and Latin outside of the Land of Israel during the first century CE, concerning a group of peaceful celibates who lived ideal ascetic lives in a utopia, where the expression of anger, lust, greed or desire, as well as luxury or comfort, were utterly forbidden? Why thereby entirely disregard the most valuable testimony of one thousand scrolls written in Hebrew and Aramaic by a struggling, desperate Zadokite priestly circle and their supporters, those who lost their sacred sovereignty over the Temple and divine worship (as promised them by divine decree in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronmy)? The testimony of these struggling priests, saturated with rage generated by sense of injustice and perfidious actions, expressing polemic position, in clear sacred prose and holy poetry, was written during the Hasmonaean period, in the face of the disappearing biblical world, at a time when they were deposed and had lost all earthly power and were forced to rely upon the angelic world and an apocalyptic future.

2. Why should we connect a library of one thousand holy scriptures written in Hebrew and Aramaic to a group unknown in the Hebrew language, known as Essenes (Essaioi) in Greek, a group that is not associated with the central concerns of the the scrolls – sacred writing, biblical laws, priestly worship, a solar calendar and Temple ritual? Why not connect the scrolls to the explicitly asserted identity of the writers – the priests, ‘the sons of Aaron holy of holies’, or the priests, the sons of Zadok and their allies?

3. Why should we accept Josephus’s evidence, based on Philo’s literary description of an ideal community of thousands of people, even though it was written in the last two decades of the first century CE, 250 years after the events of 175 BCE? It was then, during the Hasmonaean period, that the Zadokite priests were deposed from the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes and took the scrolls from the defiled Temple and continued to write and copy them in the desert and elsewhere?

4. Is it reasonable to assume that there would be no reference in any Hebrew or Aramaic text to the existence of thousands of people living as celibates – contrary to Jewish tradition and biblical law – in the Land of Israel over many generations, as the well-known Greek and Latin sources suggest? Is it reasonable to assume a similar absence of any references in the New Testament, pertaining to the contemporaneous testimonies of Josephus and Pliny? Is it possible that thousands of people had lived in communities of fraternal residence and communal finances with no families and no private property, with no mention of them in any Hebrew source?

5. Is it possible to identify the Essenes, who have nothing to do with priestly laws or priestly heritage according to the descriptions of Josephus, Philo or Pliny, with the authors of The Temple Scroll, The Scroll of Priestly Watches,
or *The Scroll of Blessings*, which contains blessings to the High Priest? With the *Testament of Levi* or the *Rule of the Community* and *Damascus Covenant*, both of which mention the divine covenants kept by priests the sons of Zadok? With the *Qumran Psalms scroll* that details the calendar of the priestly service? With *MMT*, which presents the priestly calendar and elaborates on Temple laws or the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, which contains the priestly liturgical calendar?

6. Is it possible to identify the belligerent authors of the scrolls, those who describe the struggles and war between righteous people headed by the Priest of Righteousness, the head of the sons of Zadok, and the evil people headed by a Wicked Priest (*War Scroll, Pesher Habakkuk, Pesher Tehilim, Joshua Apocryphon*), who are cursed for making the city a ‘stronghold of ungodliness’ and for committing ‘an abomination’ in the land, as the peaceful Essenes, ‘the shining embodiment of Judean virtue’?

7. Is it possible to identify the Essenes, who are not known to have any unique calendar, with the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls, who wrote time and again about the solar calendar of 364 days?

In summation, it should be perfectly clear that while the Essene theory may be very interesting for the history of research and for the history of ideas, this position offers little contextual support and no coherent explanation for the 1000 Dead Sea Scrolls. Equally, the overwhelmingly evident priestly context of their origin as attested on every page of these texts offers a comprehensive historical explanation and intellectual framework for all the scrolls and is the only tenable solution for their interpretation.