

MMT AS A JAMESIAN LETTER TO "THE GREAT KING OF THE PEOPLES BEYOND THE EUPHRATES"

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The historical provenance of the letter or letters known as "MMT" has continued to puzzle most scholars. Few doubt the Mishnaic nature of its Hebrew and therefore its probable rather late provenance as compared to other documents. The fact that it is apparently the single letter or letters extant at Qumran, not to mention the fact of multiple copies, also attests to its importance.

Its Jamesian elements include the ban on "things sacrificed to idols," "fornication," gifts from Gentiles in the Temple and even "carrion." What can perhaps be called its "Abrahamic" provenance should also be clear. This last emerges from the general thrust of the letter, but in particular the two references both at the beginning and in the last several allusions to "justification by works." Not only do such references mark it as arising within a Pauline intellectual framework (i.e., the opposite position to that adopted by Paul) but for the writer, they point to a Northern Syrian cultural destination.

I first stated these propositions at a conference in Cracow, Poland, in 1989. With the publication of my *James the Brother of Jesus* in 1997, I have gone further in elucidating these things. My thesis is that the letter or letters scholars refer to as "MMT" is Jamesian. But this I have been insisting on since I first discovered its contents in 1987 and identified the reference to Paul's

"justification" theology in its closing admonition, which in turn directly relates to and evokes the salvatory state of Abraham. More recently, other scholars are beginning to discover this, as if for the first time.

But since the publication of *James*, I now see it as a letter to "the Great King of the Peoples beyond the Euphrates"—known in other textual contexts as the "Agbarus Correspondence." Its connection, too, to the conversion of the Royal House of Adiabene and, in turn, the connection to and support by these probable "Sabaeans" (not to be confused with Southern Arabians or "Ethiopians") of the bathing installations at Qumran will also be developed. I will explain this allusion to "Sabaeans" in due course and connect it to a basic Syriac root having to do with "bathing."

This letter, in turn, connects the "Epistle" from James with one someone called "Judas Barsabbas" is said to have "brought down to Antioch" in Acts 15—the third in our series of parallel and overlapping letters but from slightly differing perspectives—including this one in Acts, the one in the Agbarus correspondence, and that called "MMT" by Qumran cognoscenti—which will also be delineated. The new position I am enunciating here is that in this letter—even its Qumran appellation "Some Works of the Torah" ("we consider as justifying you") points to its "faith versus works" *Sitz-im-Leben*—we have the

actual "Letter to Abgarus" (also spelled "Acbarus," "Augurus," "Agbarus" depending on the source—more likely, as we shall see, the letter was to Queen Helen's son Izates) in a Northern Syrian cultural framework.

Obviously, this is an explosive thesis and, if it can be proved, unlocks the whole secret and the basic orientation or history of the Qumran corpus. Of course, in this context the focus on Abraham's salvatory state, already mentioned above, and a basic aspect of the whole Helen/Izates/Monobazus conversion puzzle even according to Josephus and Rabbinic literature as we have it, at its beginning and end, will be particularly relevant. The insightful reader should immediately perceive that this state is a basic dialectical feature of both Paul's letters and not coincidentally the letter ascribed to James, even as we have it in the present New Testament.

Let us take these points in turn. In the first place, it should be asked, to whom are the admonitions of "MMT" addressed? Why is it being written? Is it being written from Qumran to Jerusalem, or from Jerusalem to a city, the equivalent, say, to present-day Tel Aviv-Caesarea, for instance? It has never been suggested, to my knowledge, that it is written overseas and yet that would be a perfectly logical thing to consider. Why would one bother writing a letter to a "king" in a not-too-distant locale and bother to make multiple copies of it?

That the "letter" or "letters" is written to a "king" is not normally contested, and this certainly seems to be the implication of Part II, lines 7-27. This is particularly the implication of lines 28-29 and the reference to David

and his "pious works" and the use of this example not only as a means of encouraging like-minded "works," but also to compare the present king with those of the past—particularly one so important in Messianic ideology as David. This allusion to David is pregnant with meaning in view of the emphasis on being "a son of David" one finds in New Testament variations of this theme and similar, even parallel, materials in the Damascus Document at Qumran.

That this "king" might be overseas has never, I believe, been contemplated. That the community is overseas, yes, i.e., across Jordan somewhere in the "Desert of the Peoples" or the "Diaspora of Benjamin"—as the War Scroll so colorfully puts it—or "the Land of Damascus" or "the Land of the North," as the Damascus Document puts it, too (attesting to the same general provenance of all these documents), but not the king, even though it is said in the latter, "I will move the Tabernacle of the King (this King being David) beyond Damascus." Yet this makes perfect sense, even without the odd vocabulary being used to encourage or admonish him, for instance, "it is written in the Book of Moses and the words of the Prophets." This is an odd way to address a Jewish king, as if he has never really heard of these things—but not one recently come into Judaism, via conversion.

In fact, it would make far more sense to think that it is addressed to an overseas "king" of some kind, especially when looking at line 30 of the Second Letter or "the Second Part," as most prefer to see it: "And, finally, we wrote you previously about some of the works of the Law we reckoned for your own good and that of your

People." This is, in fact, the reason one speaks of a "second" letter, because the letter itself, as extant at this point, speaks in terms of having written the respondent previously.

In addition, it has a distant sound. If the addressee were in Jerusalem or a city equivalent to Caesarea, where Agrippas I and II were known to have a palace, then it would be just as easy for the writer—say, the Righteous Teacher himself, or more likely, if there is a difference, the "Mebakker" or "Overseer" (equivalent to "the Bishop" in more contemporary Christian jargon, James' position)—to go there himself and deliver the message.

This is just what "a certain Simon," the head of an "assembly" of his own in Jerusalem (which Josephus calls an "ekklesia" or "church"), does when he has a complaint against the Herodian family, in this instance, Agrippa I, wanting to bar him from the Temple as a foreigner—goes to Caesarea personally to confront him and "see what was done there contrary to Law." In other work, I have identified this episode as the contrapositive to Peter in the New Testament visiting the house of the Roman Centurion Cornelius in Caesarea, there learning the anti-Qumran position that he should not make distinctions against foreigners, nor call anyone or anything unclean or profane (Acts 10:14 and 28). This is the mirror image of the Qumran position and one can't get much more opposed to it than this.

Writing would, therefore, be the preferable means of communication at long-distance. Everything about this "Letter" makes it look, 1) as if it is addressed to a foreigner, apparently newly admitted to Judaism and, therefore, extremely enthusiastic for it, an attitude

exemplary of most new converts, and 2) someone who really didn't know very much about Judaism but is anxious to learn and debate. Again, this is the implication of citing David's many "pious works" and "sufferings," as well as complimenting him on being "a man of discernment, possessing knowledge of the Torah" (2.31—it will be recalled Cornelius in Acts 10:2 is referred to in much the same manner, at least where the first characterization is concerned). The note of "suffering" is once again replicative of King Izates' experience overseas, as retold by Josephus—not to mention his "pious works" and "discernment," his "knowledge of the Torah."

Again, in Part I, the explanation of what Jerusalem is and the Temple, as well as the different "camps of Israel" is peculiar. Not only is this expression, "camps of Israel," curious and archaic, perhaps indicative of a Diaspora-like situation, as it is in the introduction to the War Scroll; it is not, seemingly, written for someone with a very in-depth knowledge of Judaism. On the other hand, it would be just the thing in explaining such matters to a newly converted King, enthusiastic for the things of Israel, telling him what the Temple was and how this should be seen in relationship to the other "camps of Israel" including those further afield (therefore, the arcane language), for instance, those party to "the New Covenant in the Land of Damascus" or "further north," as we hear about them in the Damascus Document.

It should also be observed that it is just at this point, when evoking "Jerusalem as the holy camp," "the foremost of the camps of Israel," that the issue of "carrion," important for our

purposes, is raised, when it is averred that "one is not to bring dogs into the holy camp, because they may eat some of the bones from the Temple with the flesh still on them" (1,66-68; this is extended in 80-82, leading up to material about "fornication," another "Jamesian" theme).

The fact, too, of multiple copies of this seemingly single extant letter in the Qumran corpus adds to this impression of a distant destination, which would have been just the thing if we were dealing with an important archive of some kind, kept for reference by members of the community—much the same as Paul's letters to overseas communities seem to have been preserved by some one somewhere.

What first led me to the possibility of this letter being exactly this were a number of factors, including the existence of a series of letters and/or conversions in this period with parallel interlocking themes and similar implications. There are, as noted, at least three others and a fourth (1 Corinthians) connected with these. The first is the alleged "letter" Judas Barsabbas and another individual—supposedly "Silas"—delivers down to "Antioch" with James' directives to overseas communities at the end of the so-called "Jerusalem Council" in Acts 15. That the terms of these are being referred to in a polemical manner by Paul in 1 Corinthians 8-11, ending up with his own proclamation of "the New Testament in the blood of Christ," should, I think, be clear. This last, anyhow, is counterindicated in at least one of these prohibitions, that on "blood"—a prohibition of intense concern to Columns II-III of concern in the Damascus Document.

Setting aside for the moment the

correct identification of this "Antioch" in Acts and Paul's Galatians in terms of Northern Syrian history; the second is "MMT" itself, which has to be seen as "Jamesian"—a determination I made ever since the "Letter(s)" became widely known in 1989, but because of all the controversy surrounding these, I abjured pursuing it further. The reason for this identification was simple. However you approach James, the prohibition on "things sacrificed to idols" is central to his name. Not only is it an aspect of the directives to overseas communities, tied to his name in Acts; but see also Paul's characterizations in 1 Corinthians 8-11, where he actually uses Qumran language, calling his opponents within the leadership of the early Church, "puffed up" (1QpHab vii-viii, on the key Habakkuk 2:4), and associating "things sacrificed to idols" with "the table of demons" imagery and those abstaining from such things as being "weak" or having "weak consciences"—a euphemism, as he uses it, for those keeping the Law. In the *Pseudoclementine Homilies*, these directives in their most complete form are put into Peter's mouth, speaking on behalf of James, from whence they go into the Koran. Whereas for Peter "the table of demons" are "things sacrificed to idols"; for Paul there is no such thing as an "idol" and, if there is a "table of demons," it is rather to be associated with the Temple cult (1 Corinthians 10:20-21).

It should be appreciated that in Hippolytus' version of Josephus' account of the Essenes (more precisely here, what he calls "Sicarii" or "Zealot Essenes"—a term we shall presently elucidate), it is to avoid consuming these very "things sacrificed to idols," that the

Sicarii Essene martyrs undergo the most extreme torture and go to their deaths; for the received text of Josephus, this is only expressed in terms of refusing to consume "forbidden things." Here, the document attributed to Hippolytus shows keener insight.

The third description of such "letters" is the well-known "Agbarus" correspondence of early Christian history, a "letter" or "letters" supposedly delivered by one "Ananias" (also appearing in Acts) and involving conversion activities of two additional individuals—"Thaddaeus" who in Matthew and elsewhere in Syriac tradition (including the *Pseudoclementines*) is called "Lebbaeus," and "Thomas" or, again in Syriac-Aramaic tradition and now at Nag Hammadi, "Judas Thomas."

Certainly the "Didymus" in "Didymus Judas Thomas" at Nag Hammadi or "Didymus Thomas" in John is redundant, producing the tautology "Twin Twin," "Didymus" being equivalent in Greek to the Aramaic "Thoma"—"Twin." That "Judas Thomas" and "Thaddaeus" are basically the same individual—probably also to be identified with "Theuda the brother of the Just One" in the Second Apocalypse of James at Nag Hammadi, himself probably also to be identified with the mysterious "Addai" in the First Apocalypse and Syro-Aramaic sources, again bringing us back to "Thaddaeus" and/or "Theudas"—I have treated at length in *James the Brother of Jesus* (Viking Penguin, 1997). As it turns out, there are allusions in the Koran to "Arabian" prophets or holy men ("warners" in Muhammad's vocabulary) and "Arabian" locales. These names reflect these Northern Syrian events centering around the city of Edessa ("Antioch by Callirhoe" or "Antioch

Orrhoes," as opposed to "Antioch on the Orontes") and for Muhammad there are two pairs: "Ad and Thamud" (Thomas and Thaddaeus)/"Hud and Salih" (in our view, Judas Thomas or Judas Barsabbas—in some Syriac texts as well "Judas the Zealot" or, in effect, "Judas the Sicarii"—and James, "Salih" being "the Righteous One" in Arabic).

There is little doubt that "Judas Barsabbas," whatever this cognomen might mean—for some it is related to Barabbas; for others perhaps relating to Saba or Sabaeon or bather; this is how I would prefer to see it—is to be identified with the "Hud" in these other stories or the "Judas the brother of James," i.e., "Thaddaeus" or "Judas Thomas" in these other reckonings.

The Ananias in these various stories can be collated as follows: he is either the individual who greets Paul in some unknown locale called "Damascus," the individual who runs back and forth to Jerusalem from "the Great King of the Peoples beyond the Euphrates" or "the Land of the Edessenes" in Northern Syria or he is the individual who follows Queen Helen's son Izates around on his journeys from Northern to Southern Iraq (also to a city known among other names as "Antioch"—Antiochia Charax or Charax Spasini/Messene) and back again. He finally gets in among the women of Helen's husband's harem and teaches a form of Judaism, the conversion to which does not require circumcision. All of these motifs are, I submit, important for our subject.

Therefore, we have references to one "Ananias" in three different contexts and, on the other hand, we have three references to "letters" or "letter," going down to such geographical contexts, two of these addressed to "kings" (Izates,

too, being a "king" and this of one of the "Peoples beyond the Euphrates," a phrase actually used in Josephus in referring to him).

As far as "Antioch" or "Antiochia" is concerned, there are at least four of these, including the one called Antioch in Pisidia in Acts 13:14. It is our view that the primary one is "Antioch by Callirhoe" or Edessa, the seat of the so-called "Agbarus" or "Abgarus," the "King of the Edessenes" or "Osrhoens" (Assyrians) and that little, if anything, was going on at this time in "Antioch by the Orontes"—not that Acts or Paul really seems to think it is. The idea that there was represents an ancient or modern misunderstanding of the nomenclature and retrospective historical absorption of tradition. The hotbed of early Christian agitation in Northern Syria was always Antioch-by-Callirhoe or Edessa (as it is for present-day "Holy Shroud" controversies) and for this area the figure of Abraham was of particular importance.

In the Koran, too, echoing these traditions in its own inchoate way, "Ad and Thamud"/"Hud and Salih" are always evoked in conjunction either with reference to "the People of Abraham" or "the Folk of Noah," or both. But this, too, is easy to unravel, as Edessa was always considered—and is still today—the city of Abraham's origins, the classical Haran of Carrhae being only a few kilometers distant. This will have particular relevance in the evocation of Abraham in all our sources to appeal to these kings—in particular, by implication, in "MMT," but also in the arguments in James, Paul, and, of course, derivatively, the Koran itself. Whereas for Paul, Abraham came before the Law and, therefore, as he puts it,

drawing on Genesis 15:6 and definitively for Western civilization, "Abraham was justified by faith."

Genesis 15:6 is the very passage being drawn upon in these evocative lines at the beginning and end of "MMT;" for James (and Hebrews) Abraham was tested in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac—an allusion also of importance to the Koran in all references to Hud and Salih in the Koran—and was "the friend of God" (Paul, of course, being "the enemy," at least for Judeo-Christianity). For the Dead Sea Scrolls, too—particularly in the Damascus Document, which will also cite the matter of Abraham having circumcised himself and his whole household (Genesis 17:16) as paradigmatic for the entire community. (Paul, of course, in Galatians, neatly sidesteps this passage in his attack on circumcision.) Abraham is the "friend" or "beloved of God" par excellence, as, of course, are Isaac and Jacob, "because they kept the Covenant," "heirs of the Covenant forever" (3:2-4). The last, too, is echoed by Paul in Romans, who calls the new Christian heirs of Abraham, the true sons of Sarah, "the sons" or "heirs of the promise" (Romans 8:17, "heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ;" 9:8, evoking Isaac, "children of the promise"), because they are not enslaved, that is, enslaved to the Law.

The author of the Koran, to be sure, is debating within the same framework, knowing these passages, and slightly transforming them. Instead of "the faith of Abraham," as in Romans, or the "faith" that Abraham displayed in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac—a name that would have had particular resonance for Izates in Northern Syria—turning him into "the friend of God" in James 2:23; it is now "the religion of

Abraham" and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the tribes, are now not just "friends"; they are the first "Muslims"—"Muslim" and "friend" being interchangeable in this context.

Where "the folk of Noah" or "the Land of Noah" and the matter of the ark are concerned, it should be appreciated that in all sources, early Christian, Josephus, and Talmudic, the ark is always associated with the land from which Helen and her sons came, modern-day Kurdistan, and every commentator from Hippolytus to Josephus, when talking about Helen, and modern-day Adiabene, always identifies the ark with her domains. It is also clear from later travelers like Benjamin of Tudela that this locale was considered to be near present-day Mosul, not further north. Whether this or the more modern locale in Turkish Armenia was the actual location (if stories about arks can be said ever to have actual locations) is not the point—this is where people thought it was.

It is the contention of this paper that all these arguments, allusions, and evocations of Scripture (including those of the Koran via osmosis further south, as the idea of "Arab" became more generalized) are directed towards these new converts in a Northern Syrian homeland holding the memory of Abraham in particular reverence—converts which would particularly include, both the legendary "King Abgarus" or "Agbarus" and King Izates, Helen's son, further East, if the two can really be separated.

Most Syriac texts tell us—whether true or not—that Queen Helen was Abgar's wife. The Northern Syrian or Armenian chronicler, Moses of Chorene, has already told us that Westerners often confused such names, having difficulty with their pronunciation. This

will have particular relevance to the garbled version of these events one finds in Acts, centering around one "prophet called Agabus," who came down from Jerusalem to "Antioch" in this case and predicted the famine in the time of Claudius (45-48 CE) that would then grip the whole earth.

This direction will be particularly evident in the letter(s) known as "MMT." Clearly important, as the multiple copies attest, and addressed to a "king," it requires the text critic and historian (if not the philologist and translator) to determine which "king" this could be—which "king," old or new, who bore comparison with David, would require tuition of this kind.

There are only a few choices, most of which we have already reviewed above. As for Herodians, in line with the "Mishnaic" nature of the Hebrew, few among the extreme purists would have thought to address any of them in the terms used in MMT, not even Agrippa I, for all his pretenses at Judaistic observances—rabbinical groups perhaps, but not Qumran extremists. As noted above, it is not very likely that this letter or letters would have been addressed to one or another of the Herodians, perceived as foreigners in Palestine anyhow and hardly very zealous, certainly not where the kind of "zeal" being evoked in this letter is concerned.

Therefore, we are left with, what to my knowledge, has never been suggested before, one of these new "zealous" converts in Northern Syria or Mesopotamia. As just suggested here and in *James the Brother of Jesus* and "The Sociology of MMT and the Conversions of King Agbarus and Queen Helen of Adiabene," it is not clear that the two known conversion episodes—both more

or less contemporary, that in Eusebius and that in Josephus and the Talmud—can really be distinguished from each other in any way. Syriac and Armenian sources—even Eusebius himself—make this clear in suggesting that Helen was, in fact, Abgarus' wife.

Furthermore, it is not clear just what kind of term "Agbar" or "Abgar" is. At the very least, it is being used generically in Northern Syria, much as "Caesar" or "Herod" is further West. Nor is it clear how it might differ from names like "Bazeus" or "Monobazus," clearly functioning in a different linguistic nexus, both associated with Helen and her family. One Syriac text even calls Agbar, "Augarus" or "Albarus," which via reduction easily moves into Josephus' "Bazeus," or vice versa, and, once, Josephus even calls Izates, Izas.

The Agbar in question in the Eusebius version of a story he claims to have personally copied and translated from the royal archives of Edessa, "Agbar Uchama" or "Agbar the Black," seems to have been Agbar V (ca. 4 BC to 50 CE, the "time of the famine"—I prefer "Agbar," as it has come down in Roman sources, "Acbar King of the Arabs"—Tacitus—to "Abgar," even though the latter is clearly more correct, because of its affinity with the garbled designation "Agabus" in Acts above, another overlapping episode).

But it is also true that Abgar VII (109-116), his descendant and known in Syriac sources as Abgar bar Ezad, was not unlikely Abgar the son of Izates. In our view, since Josephus makes it very clear that Helen's husband was also her half-brother, one can imagine that she was one of the numerous wives these oriental kings had, and possibly given a part of his domains further east, now

known to us as "Adiabene."

In the Josephus story, Izates' father, in fact, gives him a domain around Carrhae (Josephus calls it "Carron") or present-day Haran again. All these notices are significant, but the modern researcher should be chary about making any final claims about this seemingly arcane material—except that it is not without the realm of possibility that Helen was married to one of these "Agbars," as Armenian and Syriac sources imply. In any event, however we approach these relationships, all these individuals are associated with the famine—if one is to believe Acts' note about "Agabus." The same can be said for Paul's nascent community in "Antioch," where Christians "were first called Christians" (Acts 11:26).

What makes one associate it with Northern Syria is its resemblance to James' directives to overseas communities, as delineated in Acts, reiterated in the *Pseudoclementine Homilies*, and labored over so defensively by Paul in 1 Corinthians (and the evocation of Abraham—as well as its concentration on gifts from foreigners in the Temple, which it calls "things sacrificed to idols"). It is the contention of this paper that this letter represents the original of the letter James is alleged to have dictated in the Book of Acts—following the so-called "Jerusalem Council" and sent down via the hand of Judas Barsabbas and some one Acts calls "Silas" to a place called "Antioch."

We have already covered the elements of this "letter" to some extent above. They are well-known to most people and three different versions of them are found in Acts 15:18-42 and 21:24, but the main lines are clear. These are the ban on "things sacrificed to idols" (one

version, "the pollutions of the idols," which has clear overtones with the "Three Nets of Belial" charges in the Damascus Document), "fornication," "blood," and "strangled things." This last certainly is a reference to "carrion" and these are, in fact, the delineations of it that appear in the Koran, where they form the basis of Islamic dietary law of modern Islam: "swineflesh, a thing immolated to an idol, and carrion."

This last basically follows the delineation of these, put in Peter's mouth in the *Pseudoclementines*. There, he follows the teaching of James on these matters, to the extent of even being a vegetarian himself, not to mention being a daily bather and wearing the Essene "threadbare clothes." This "bathing" theme will also be important in establishing James' and Peter's relation to those Josephus is calling "Essenes" and by extension to Qumran—not to mention, as we shall see, the conversion of Queen Helen and her sons, mimicked in Acts by the conversion of the Ethiopian queen's eunuch, who immediately baptizes himself.

If these are the bases on which Acts develops its version of James' instructions to overseas communities, then this would explain the multiple copies of it and its importance at Qumran. But one can go further. If this is the very letter, Acts has compressed in its epitome—and Paul certainly is laboring, albeit in a highly disingenuous manner, over the terms of these directives—then, of course, one has one additional proof, perhaps one of the most significant of all and perhaps the definitive or determining one, of the relationship of these materials to the Jerusalem Community of James the Just.

The themes addressed by "MMT"

follow a fairly discernible pattern. The first part—aside from the telltale allusion to "works being reckoned as justifying you," harking back to the key Genesis 15:6 passage on Abraham's faith and the manner in which the Letter of James treats this (1.1-2)—really does treat the matter of Gentile gifts or sacrifices in the Temple (1.3-38). In fact, it deals with the matter of "mixing" with them generally (1.47-62), the allusions to "carrion" in 1.66-67 and 1.80-82, ending with the very ban on "fornication" we have just noted above (1.82-9). These are, of course, all matters important in an overseas context and where directives to overseas communities are concerned.

It should be appreciated that the ban on "gifts and sacrifices on behalf" of Gentiles in the Temple is the very matter that precipitates the war against Rome. This brings all our themes full circle and further consolidates the point that I have made in all my work about both "Essene" and "Zealot" tendencies in the Scrolls and the combination of revolutionary zeal with the insistence on extreme purity and Nazirite "Holiness," where all these wilderness-dwelling or "New Covenant"-style groups in "the Land of Damascus" are concerned. Of course, all these matters have a very clearly definable first-century ambiance, despite the attempts by paleographers and others insisting otherwise. This is not to say such tendencies did not exist previously, but not to the extent of combining all these multiple themes in a single whole.

As alluded to above, this idea, which is part and parcel of the formulation found in the Damascus Document of "pollution of the Temple"—"the pollution of the idols" in Acts 15:

20's version of James' "rulings" (the kind of "rulings" also referred to in the Damascus Document, as being the provenance of the "Mebakker" or "Bishop" as it were)—is finally put here in the first part of or the First "Letter on works reckoned as Righteousness" as "things sacrificed to an idol" (1.8-9). In fact, the identity is consciously drawn in Lines 8-9: "concerning the sacrifices of the Gentiles, they are sacrifices to an idol." This is the key identity and it is straightforwardly drawn here. It is, also, as now should be clear, the point about which all our sources come together: James' directives to overseas communities in both Acts and the *Pseudoclementine Homilies*, Hippolytus' version of the kind of "forbidden things" that Josephus says "the Essenes" martyred themselves for in the recent war against Rome, and Paul's intense interest in the subject in 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:29, ending with his proclamation of "the New Covenant in (Jesus') blood," totally contravening the Dead Sea Scrolls and James' directives to opposite effect.

In fact, Paul's passages in 1 Corinthians 8:7-13, ending with his disingenuous protestations that he "will never eat flesh again forever," read almost as a parody of these several lines in "MMT," as they do of James' directives generally—to wit, "some [his usual allusion to those coming down from James to Antioch, as for instance, "Judas Barsabbas," or "those of the circumcision"] with conscience of the idol [his usual allusion to those observing the Law], eat as if of a thing sacrificed to an idol until now, and their conscience, being weak, is polluted."

He goes on, using the language of "stumbling" the letter of James employs, basically insisting that those with such

"consciences" are "weak" and declaring "all things are Lawful," while at the same time announcing "Communion with the blood of Christ." Nothing could be more alien to the spirit of "MMT," and one might add that of James' directives to overseas communities, than this, which in these passages from Corinthians, Paul has cynically undermined.

These several allusions to "things sacrificed to idols" and the polemics they imply, therefore, are the key to understanding "MMT," as they are the directives of James, to say nothing of the total subject of "pollution of the Temple." This last not only occupies the Damascus Document and the Temple Scroll, but also more disingenuous materials from Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1 about "Christ and Beliar" (thus), "separating," and "touching no unclean thing," "perfecting holiness in fear of God," language once again permeating the Damascus Document and even evoking the language of the Qumran Hymns of God "being a father to" the sons and daughters.

In addition to these parallels, there is the whole subject of the several allusions to Genesis 15:6, both at the beginning and end of "MMT," already mentioned above. In the reference to having written to him earlier, the allusion is both to "David's works" and "some of the works of the Law (the basis of the academic title of this work), which we reckoned for your own good and for that of your people" (2.28-30).

The "Knowledge of the Torah" the "King" is said to possess, along with "discernment," as we saw, can even be seen as subject to Pauline parody in his "puffed up" allusions at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 8. As for the allusion to being "saved from many sufferings

and forgiven" like David (2.29); not only does this "suffering" language replicate some of the trials of Izates and his mother (which even resulted in her having, according to Talmudic sources, agreed to undertake three successive seven-year Nazirite oath procedures), but Acts 15:1 uses this same language ("saved") in developing its position about how "the some" (again from Jerusalem) came down and taught the brothers that unless you are circumcised you cannot be saved—we shall see the relevance of this to Izates' circumcision presently—as does the Habakkuk Pesher's key eschatological exegesis of Habakkuk 2:4 (8.2).

Interesting, too, is the clear reference to an Izates-like "People" as if they were distinct from those writing the letter or Israel generally. Additionally, there is this constant allusion to the words "reckoned to" or "for you," ending with the hope that these things "will be reckoned to you as righteousness," exactly in the manner of the Letter of James, also evoking Abraham, and this will constitute salvation at "the End of Time." Here, yet again and for the last time, is the Jamesian emphasis on "doing"—an emphasis fairly permeating the Qumran corpus, in particular the Damascus Document—"your having done what is upright and good before Him, for your own good and for that of Israel" (2.33). Again, the reference here to Belial is not unrelated to Paul's parody of the same matters in 2 Corinthians 6 above. Finally, the evocation of all these things in an "Abrahamic" context (i.e., the area of Haran, the putative kingdom given Izates by his father) completes the sense that someone is writing to a people that would have been impressed by the evocation of his name.

The theme of "works justifying you," found in the denouement of "MMT," in particular, its admonitions to the "King," as everyone knows, even in the slim sources we have, is a position traditionally associated with James (which is why—inter alia—I have called the "Letter" "Jamesian"); in addition, it fairly infuses the Letter associated with his name in the New Testament. This is also true of the evocation of the figure of "Abraham." It should be clear that the whole debate in the Letter attributed to James in the New Testament, mirrored to opposite effect in the corpus attributed to Paul, centers around this legendary figure of "Abraham." This is also true of Muhammad's ultimate and final refraction of these positions.

As we have suggested, all these things have a Northern Syrian provenance, because Abraham's name was traditionally associated with this region—in particular, Haran. We have also queried whether the "Antioch" of New Testament discussion was really "Antioch by Orontes," where it is doubtful any real, early Christian activity took place; or whether, in the light of these "Abrahamic" connections, it is more realistically to be associated with "Edessa," the "Antioch of the Assyrians," to which a long tradition of early Christian evangelical activity attached.

In fact, as signaled above, there are materials in the Damascus Document rarely remarked by most commentators, also Messianic relating to David, the Star Prophecy, and "the New Covenant in the Land of Damascus"—even "beyond Damascus." These occur in Column 7, where the actual term used is "the Land of the North" (7.14 Mss. A). That anyone would imagine that a phrase

like "resurrecting the Tabernacle of the King which is fallen" (Amos 9:11) would have been applied by person or persons at Qumran to an Herodian King is, in the present writer's view, odd. But how much more sense can be made out of such passages, particularly that applying this "Star Prophecy" to a "land beyond Damascus" and a recent Northern Syrian conversion to Judaism (or nascent "Christianity"), such as either that of Agbarus in Syro-Aramaic tradition or Izates and his brother Monobazus in Jewish.

A second biblical passage, also relating to Abraham, this time his circumcision and that of his whole household in Genesis 17, directly following this important one of Genesis 15, is also, as it turns out, evoked in this Damascus Document. This issue of circumcision is, of course, intrinsic to all the episodes we have been delineating, especially the conversion of Izates and his brother; as it is the whole vocabulary of early Christianity as it evolves here in the letters of Paul and James.

As for the Damascus Document, it is replete with parallel themes to MMT (thereby, as I noted, almost insuring a parallel chronological date of composition). There is, of course, first of all the several condemnations of the consumption of "blood" in its early columns II-III, where Abraham's being "the friend" or "beloved of God" is evoked ("beloved one" vocabulary also used by Paul in these passages from 2 Corinthians evoking "Beliar," not to mention, elsewhere). Then there are the "Beliar" passages banning "fornication" and "pollution of the Temple" (associated in these passages from MMT with Gentile gifts therein), culminating in the insistence on "separating the Holy Things ac-

ording to Torah" (and the evocation of James' "Royal Law according to the Scripture, thou shall love thy neighbor as oneself") IV-VI, and finally in the commands to the *Mebakker* at the end of the document there is the evocation of "Abraham's circumcision" as being the thing one does in "returning to the Law and keeping its precise specifications" (16.3-6, clearly evoking Genesis 17 above). There is also once again the telltale evocation of Abraham acquiring this knowledge, already parodied, as noted above, by Paul in 1 Corinthians and Galatians.

This brings us to the story of Izates' circumcision, both in Josephus and rabbinic sources. In reading it, one should keep in mind the whole "Abrahamic" ambiance, as well as the fact that Paul identifies the "some" or "those of the circumcision" with the "some from James" who "came down" to Antioch. One should also keep in mind Hippolytus' testimony, also noted above, about the Sicarii Essenes, who when they hear someone discussing the Law, threaten to kill him unless he is circumcised. I have already expressed the opinion elsewhere (*James the Brother of Jesus*) that in line with the first-second-century Roman *Lex Cornelia de Sicariis*, banning bodily mutilation, such as circumcision, for Roman citizens, that "Sicarii" here does not refer to the assassin's knife, but rather the circumcizer's. Such conclusions also shine through a clear reading of Paul's Galatians.

In this episode, Izates and his brother Monobazus are reading the Torah. The Talmud knows the exact passage, Genesis 17:6 about Abraham, also echoed in these commandments of the *Mebakker* here in Column XVI of the Damascus Document. Here, another

teacher, not Ananias or his colleague (Paul?), asks the question, "do you know the significance of what you are reading?" Izates immediately gets the point and, in spite of his mother's horror of the practice (she thinks it will "put him in bad odor among his citizens"), has himself circumcised. His brother Monobazus does likewise.

This brings us to the last episode of concern to us in this configuration of sources, that of the conversion of "the Ethiopian queen's eunuch" in Acts 8: 26-40, an episode preceding, but not by much, the Agabus episode and Paul and Barnabas' famine relief mission from Antioch, unmentioned in Galatians. The perspicacious reader will immediately recognize this episode as incorporating the same language as that of Izates' conversion episode in both Josephus and the Talmud, only instead of Genesis 17:6 being evoked, it is Isaiah 53:11, the suffering servant—which for some odd reason ends in "baptism."

Here, once again, all our themes make a final full circle. The famine relief is that of Helen and her son Izates, renowned in both Josephus and the Talmud, and echoed in Eusebius. The Ethiopian queen's eunuch/treasurer is, of course, Helen's agents who go to Egypt and Cyprus to buy grain to provide to Jerusalem—there being, of course, no "Ethiopian queen," who sends her representatives (particularly not "eunuchs") to Jerusalem at this time. The theme of "eunuch" is a parody of Izates' conversion and the Abrahamic command to circumcise—the same commandment insisted upon by "the some from James" who come from Jerusalem to Antioch, the "some of the circumcision" who teach, as Acts 15:1, in anticipation of "the Jerusalem Conference," puts it so

eloquently: "unless you are circumcised you cannot be saved."

The "saved," as we saw above, is the same "saved" being used in these final passages of "MMT," directed towards this foreign king. The same word "saved," as we also saw, is being used in the Habakkuk Peshar to describe in the proper interpretation of Habakkuk 2:4, how those who "believe and do good works"—as Muhammad so often expresses it in the Koran—will "be saved from the House of Judgment," i.e., "the Day of Judgment" or "Last Judgment."

Finally, there is the play here on "Sabaean" in Syriac and Arabic meaning "baptist" or "bather"—common among Ebionite/Elchasaite groups in Northern and/or Southern Iraq (the locales of Izates' and his mother's conversions)—and "Saba" or "Sheba" meaning Southern Arabia or Ethiopia, and this may be something of what is meant by the "Barsabbas" epithet as well.

There is, also, the implied play on Abgar Uchama's "blackness," that is, these "Arab" kings or queens—as Tacitus and other Roman historians would have it—were in the eyes of Romans or Greeks, "black." The derogation here is also probably intentional, since it accompanies the derogation of Izates' "circumcision," expressed by the usage "eunuch." So, therefore, just as the famine relief was that of Helen, her sons, and their agents (perhaps including Paul and Ananias)—making it clear that Acts is not leaving any of these episodes out, only deforming them—so probably was the support of the bathing installations at settlements, such as at Qumran. These, too, were probably "Sabaean" or "Masbuthaean"; in the parlance of Palestine, "Essenes"

or "Ebionites."

All of these points are, perhaps, the best arguments I know for placing MMT in the first century and for identifying the Qumran Community (at least in its later stages "those of the circumcision") with that of James. In alternate, but perhaps parallel language, that of Hippolytus' "Sicarii Essenes," "Sicarii" is also a play on "Christian"—in the manner, for instance, of "Iscaiot"—or vice versa, those who would kill anyone they heard discussing the Law who is not circumcised. "Sicarii," here, alludes to both the assassin's and circumcizer's knife.

Just as "the King" in the "Land of the North" beyond Damascus would raise up the fallen tabernacle of David (CD 7, alluding also to the Star Prophecy), so probably too did this New Covenant in the Land of Damascus apply to him. So probably too was MMT (evoking the paradigmatic Abraham to conciliate and flatter him) addressed to him. In fact, the very allusion to "returning to the Covenant" or "keeping the Covenant" in terms of Abraham's circumcision in these later passage of the Damascus Document implies there were some coming into "the New Covenant in the Land of Damascus," who had not previously been circumcised, i.e., a community also comprising non-native-born Jews.