

Excerpts from the Damascus Document for Reading

(Geniza A + B, 4Q266 – 272)

Second Draft

Italicized words from Manuscript B. Words within curly brackets {} are added for clarity. Words in < > are lacunae supplied by the authors. **Words in bold have been emphasized by the editor.** This is a modified version of the texts as found in *The Dead Sea Scrolls - A New Translation*, by Wise, Abegg & Cook (1996).

Introduction to the Exhortation

Shema (shofar), all you who recognize righteousness, and consider the deeds of Elohim. *Remember that* when he has a dispute with any mortals, he will pass judgment on those who spurn him. When Israel abandoned Elohim by being faithless, he turned away from them and from His sanctuary and gave them up to the sword. But when He called to mind the covenant He made with their forefathers, He left a remnant for Israel and did not allow it to be exterminated. In that era of wrath – three hundred and ninety years from the time He handed *Israel* over to the power of Nebuchadnezzar potentate of Babylon (597 BC) – He took care of them and caused to grow from Israel and from Aaron a **root of planting** to inherit his land and to grow fat on the good produce of His soil. They considered their iniquity and they knew that they were guilty people like the blind and like those **groping twenty years for the Way in the desert**. And Elohim considered their acts - that they sought Him with a whole heart. So He raised up for them a **Teacher of Righteousness** to guide them in the way of His heart. (597-390-20 = 187 BC) Elohim taught what He did to the generation deserving wrath, that company of traitors, to later generations. (They were the ones who departed from the proper way. *In that earlier time* it was written by *Hoshiyahu the Navi*, “Like a rebellious cow,” and so like Israel’s rebellion.

The Man of Mockery

When the Man of Mockery appeared and spit lying waters upon Israel, he led *Israel* to wander in the pathless wasteland. *This man tore* down the lofty heights of old, turned *Israel* away from paths of righteousness, and shifted the boundary markers that the forefathers had set up to mark their inheritance (*by hedging in the Torah?*), so that the curses of Elohim’s covenant took hold upon Israel. Because of this **they all** were handed over to the sword that avenges the violation of Elohim’s Covenant.

For they had sought flattery, choosing travesties of true religion; they looked for ways to break the rules; they favored the fine neck. They called the guilty innocent and the innocent guilty. They overstepped the Covenant, violated Torah; and they conspired together to kill the Innocent, for they loathed all those who lived pure lives from the bottom of their heart. So they persecuted them violently, and were content to see the people dispute. Because of all this Elohim became very angry with their company. **He annihilated the lot of the people of Mockery**, because all their deeds were uncleanness to Him.

The Immensity of Elohim's Resources

So now ~Shema!~ (Blow the shofar!) You all listen - all members of the covenant - so I can make plain to you the ways of the despicable *so you can leave the paths of sin!* The Elohim of Armies, who loves true knowledge, has stationed Wisdom and Intelligence in His front row; Ingenuity and True Knowledge following on behind. He is very patient and forgiving, covering up the sin of those who repent of wrongdoing. But Strength, Might, and great Wrath in the flames of fire - along with all the Malachim of Perdition - will come against *those* who rebel against the established Way and those who despise the rules, until they are without remnant or survivor, for Elohim had not chosen **them** from ancient eternity. Before they even came to be, He knew what they would do. So He rejected the generations of old and turned *His face* away from the *qadosh* land until - they - were - solid - gone!

Elohim knows the exact times of all that is coming-to-be and the number and exact dates of **everything that has ever existed**. He knows all that will happen and all that ever will exist before they manifest in their appointed times, from age to age and all ages. And in all of these times, He arranged that there should be a people for Himself called by Name, so there would always be survivors in the land, replenishing the surface of the earth with their descendants. He taught them through those anointed by ruachim qadoshim and all true naviim. Yes, Elohim explicitly called them by name. But whoever He rejected He also caused to stray.

The Fall of the Malachim

So now children - Shema! that I may unmask your eyes to see and to understand the Way of Elohim, choosing what pleases Him and hating what He rejects, living perfectly in all His ways, not turning away through thoughts brought on by the sinful urges and the lecherous eyes. (Many have gone astray by such thoughts, even the strong and fearless of old faltered through them, and they still do.) When *such folks* went hither-and-thither in their willful heart, the Guardian Sky-Malachim fell *from the sky* and were ensnared by *sin and lechery*, for they did not observe the commandments of Elohim. Their sons, who were as tall as cedars, and whose bodies were as big as mountains, fell by the same things. Everything mortal on dry land expired and became as if it had never existed, because they did their own will, and did not keep the commandments of their Maker, until finally His anger was aroused against them. By it Noah's yeladim and their families went astray, and by it they were exterminated.

The Historical Results of Straying

Though Avraham did not live by it, he was yet considered Elohim's friend, because he did not **choose** to follow his own spirit's will, the commandments of Elohim's *voice*. He passed on what he heard to Yitzhak and to Ya'aqov and they too observed them. They too were recorded as friends of Elohim and eternal partners in the Covenant. But Ya'aqov's yeladim

went astray from them and were punished for their errors.

In Mitzraim their descendants lived by their willful hearts, too obstinate to consult the commandments of Elohim, each one doing what was right in his own eyes. They even ate blood. So the people were exterminated in the wilderness. <Yet at Kadesh, Elohim commanded> them to “Go up and possess <the land>”; but they still chose to follow the will of> their own spirits; and they neither listened to their Maker’s voice or their Teacher’s commandments. Instead they grumbled in their tents. So Elohim became angry with their company.

Their yeladim perished because of it. Their potentates were exterminated because of it. Their heroes *vanished* because of it. Their land was devastated because of it, and because of it the members of their fore-parents’ Covenant committed sin. So they were handed over to the sword! Why? Because they abandoned the Covenant of Elohim.

But when those left behind held firm to the commandments, Elohim instituted His Covenant with Israel from age to age, revealing to them the mysteries by which all Israel had gone wrong: like His sacred Shabbatot, His famous festivals, His righteous ordinances, His reliable ways, the desires of His will that the *remnant* should continue in so to have life in them. He opened up to them.

So they “dug a well,” yielding much water. Those who reject this *water He will not allow to live*. And although they had wallowed in the *natural* sin of humankind and in its impure ways and replied, “This is **none of your business**,” Elohim still, in His mysterious ways, atoned for their iniquity and forgave their transgression. So He built for them a faithful house in Israel, like none that had ever before appeared. Even at **this day**, those who hold firm to *His will* shall receive life from age to age, and all the honor of humanity is rightly theirs, as Elohim promised them by Ezekiel the navi, saying, “The priests and the Levites and the yeladim of Zadok **who have kept the courses of My sanctuary** when the children of Israel strayed from Me, they will bring Me fat and blood.” (*This is reason enough to follow the Zadokite Calendar.*)

Who are “these priests”? They are the captives of Israel, who left out of the land of Yahudah with the Levites accompanying them. *Who are the “the yeladim of Zadok”* – they are the Bacharim (Chosen) of Israel, the ones called by name, who are to appear in the Latter Days. (*This is all explained in Ezekiel 44.*)

The House of Judah Vanquished in the Time to Come

Elohim has set these apart and atoned for *them*, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty as well as all accompanied them, who act according to the interpretation of the Torah; *the same Torah* by which the progenitors *learned* and taught, until the end of the age, *that*

is, right up to **the present time**. When the total years of this present age are complete, there will be no further need to be connected to the house of Judah, but instead each will *guard* his own tower; “the wall is built and the boundary is removed” (Mic.7:11). But in **this present age** Belial (the Swallower) is unrestrained in Israel, just as Elohim said by Yeshayahu the prophet, the son of Amoz, saying to them all: “Fear and pit and snare are upon you, you resident in the land” (Isaiah 24.)

Those Caught Up in the Nets of Belial

The true meaning of this verse concerns the three nets of Belial about which Levi son of Ya'aqov said that Belial would catch Israel in, so he directed these nets toward three types of *unrighteousness*: The first is fornication; the second is wealth; the third is defiling the sanctuary. Who escapes from one is caught in the next; and whoever escapes from that is caught in the other.

Now, {regarding} the **Shoddy-Wall-Builders** who went after *what they call* a “Precept,” they are caught in two traps: fornication because of taking two women in their lifetimes. The True Precept of creation is “He created them male and female” and those who went into the ark “went into the ark two by two.” (*Understand that “Precept” is a Raver of whom it says, “they will surely rave.”*) (*Probably not unlike the current definition of “rave” - a party of Heathens practicing lawlessness, lewdness, fornication and drug abuse.*)

(Concerning the King it is written, “he will not multiply wives to himself”; yet Dawid had not read the sealed book of the Torah inside the Ark; it was not opened in Israel from the day of the death of Eleazar and Yehoshua and the elders who served the goddess Ashtoroth. It lay buried *and was not* revealed until the appearance of Zadok. Nevertheless the deeds of Dawid were all excellent, except the murder of Uriyah, and Elohim forgave him for that.)

They also defile the sanctuary, for they do not separate clean from unclean according to the Torah, and lie with a woman during her menstrual period. Furthermore they marry each man the daughter of his brothers and the daughter of his sister, although Moshe said, “Unto the sister of your mother you will not draw near; she is the flesh of your mother.” (*This was a practice of the Herodians and Jerusalem priests.*) But the rule of consanguinity is written for males and females alike, so if the brother’s daughter uncovers the nakedness of the brother of her father, she is uncovering the same flesh *as of her father*.

Also they have corrupted their qadosh spirit, and with blasphemous language they have reviled the statutes of Elohim’s Covenant, saying, “They are not well-thought-out.” *Such kings* continually speak abhorrent things against them. “All of them are kindlers and brand-lighters”; “the webs of a spider are their webs and the eggs of vipers are their eggs.” Whoever touches them will not be clean. The more he does so, the more he is guilty, unless he is forced *to do it*. [GO HERE IS THE RIGHT ONE](#)

Against the Boundary-Shifters and For the Teacher in the Last Days

// For in times past, Elohim punished their deeds and His wrath burned against their misdeeds, for “they are a people without insight”; “they are a people wandering in counsel, for there is no insight in them.” For in times past Moshe and Aharon stood in the power of the Prince of Lights and Belial raised up Yannes and his brother in his cunning when seeking to do evil to Israel the first time. In the time of destruction of the land the Boundary-Shifters appeared and led Israel astray and the land was devastated, for they had spoken rebellion against the commandments of Elohim through Moshe and also through the anointed of the spirit; and they prophesied falsehood to turn Israel from following Elohim. But Elohim called to mind the covenant of the progenitors; and He raised up from Aharon insightful men and from Israel wise men and He taught them and they dug the well of knowledge: “the well the princes dug, the nobility of the people dug it with a rod.”¹⁹

{Regarding this verses,} the Well is the Torah, and its “diggers” are the captives of Israel who went out of the land of Judah and dwelt in the land of Damas-cus; because Elohim had called them all princes, for they sought Him and their honor was not denied by a single mouth. And the “rod” is the Maskil (Interpreter) of the Torah of whom Yeshayahu said, “he brings out a tool for his work.” The nobility of the people are those who come to “dig the well” by following rules that the Rod made to live by during the whole era of despicableness, and without these rules they will obtain nothing until the appearance of One who teaches righteousness in the Last Days. (Maybe our movement!)

The Plan of Return and Teshuvah Unto Long Life

None who have been brought into the covenant will enter into the sanctuary to light up His altar in vain; they will lock the door, for Elohim said, “Would that one of you would lock My door so that you should not light up My altar in vain.” They must be careful to act according to the specifications of the Torah for the era of despicableness, separating from corrupt people, avoiding filthy despicable lucre taken from what is vowed or consecrated to Elohim or found in the Temple funds. They must not rob “the poor of Elohim’s people, making widows’ wealth their booty and killing orphans.” They must distinguish between defiled and pure, teaching the difference between sacred and profane. They must keep the Shabbat day according to specification, and the sacred days and the fast day according to the commandments of the members of the new covenant in the land of Damas-Cus, offering the sacred things according to their specifications. Each one must love his brother and sister as himself, and support the poor, needy, and alien. They must seek each the welfare of his fellow, never betraying a family member according to the ordinance. Each must reprove his fellow according to the command, but must not bear a grudge day after day. They must separate from all kinds of ritual impurity according to their ordinance, not befouling each his qadosh ruach, just as Elohim has told them so to do. Those who conduct their lives by these ordinances, in perfect holiness, according to all the instructions, Elohim’s covenant stands firm “to give them life for thousands of generations as it is written, “*He keeps the covenant and loyalty to those who love Him and keep my <sic>commandments for a thousand generations.*”

As For Those Who Reject

But those who reject the commandments and the rules, they <will perish>. When Elohim judged the land, bringing the just deserts of the despicable to them, that is when the oracle of the prophet Yeshayahu son of Amoz came true, which says, “Days are coming upon you and upon your people and upon your father’s house that have never come before, since the departure of Ephraim from Yahudah.” that is, when the two houses of Israel separated, Ephraim departing from Judah. All who backslid were handed over to the sword, but all who held fast escaped to the land of the north, as it says, “I will exile the tents of your king and the foundation of your images **beyond the tents of Damas-Cus.**”

The books of Torah are the tents of the King, as it says, “I will re-erect the fallen tent of Dawid.” The “King” is <leader of> the nation and the “foundation of your images” is the books of the prophets whose words Israel despised. The star is the Maskil of the Torah who comes to Damas-Cus, as it is written, “A star has left Ya’aqov, a staff has risen from Israel.” The Maskil is to be Ruler of the whole nation; when he appears, “he will shatter all the sons of Set, *the malach of Mitzraim.*” These Sons of Set escaped in the first period of Elohim’s judgment, but those who held back were handed over to the sword.

Alternate Explanation from Manuscript B

When the oracle of the prophet Zechariah comes true, “O sword, be lively and smite my shepherd and the man loyal to Me – so says Elohim. If you strike down the shepherd, the flock will scatter. Then I will turn my power against the little ones.” But those who give heed to Elohim are “the poor of the flock” – they will escape in the time of punishment, but all the rest will be handed over to the sword when the Messiah of Aaron and of Israel comes, just as it happened during the time of the first punishment, as Ezekiel said, “Make a mark on the foreheads of those who moan and lament,” but the rest were given to the sword that makes retaliation for covenant violations.

Peshierim on Various Prophetic Texts

And such is the verdict on all members of the covenant who do not hold firm to these ordinances: they are condemned to destruction by Belial. That is the day on which Elohim will judge as He has said, “The sarim (princes) of Yahudah were those like Boundary-Shifters on whom I will pour out wrath like water.” Truly they were too sick to be healed; every kind of galling wound adhered to them because they did not turn away from traitorous practices; they relished the customs of fornication and filthy lucre. Each of them vengefully bore a grudge against his brother and sister, each hating his fellow; each of them kept away from nearest kin but grew close to indecency; they vaunted themselves in riches and in ill-gotten gains; each of them did just what he pleased; each chose to follow his own willful heart. They did not separate from the people and their sin, but arrogantly threw off all restraint, living by despicable customs, of which Elohim had said, “Their wine is the venom of vipers, the cruel poison of serpents.” “The serpents” are the rulers of the Gentiles, and “their wine” is their customs, and “the poison of vipers” is the chief of the kings of Greece, who come to wreak vengeance on them. But the “Shoddy-Wall- Builders” and “Whitewashers” understood none of these things, for one who deals in mere wind, a spitter of lies, had spit on them, on whose entire company Elohim’s anger had burned hot. But as Moshe said to Israel, “It is not for your righteousness or the integrity of your heart that you are going to dispossess these nations, but because He loved your ancestors and because He has kept his promise.” Such is the verdict on the captivity of Israel, those who turn away from the usages of the common people. Because Elohim loved the ancients who bore witness to the people following Him, so too He loves those who follow them, for to such truly belongs the covenant of the fathers. But against His enemies, the Shoddy-Wall-Builders, His anger burns.

The Return of the Teacher at the Eschaton

So it is with all the men who entered the new covenant in the land of Damas-Cus, but then turned back and traitorously turned away from the fountain of living water. They will not be reckoned among the council of the people, and their names will not be written in their book from the day the Beloved Teacher dies until the Messiah from Aaron and from Israel appears. Such is the fate for all who join the company of sacred perfection and then become sick of obeying virtuous rules. This is the type of person who “melts in the crucible.” When his actions become evident he will be sent away from the company as if his lot had never fallen among the disciples of Elohim. In keeping with one’s wrongdoing the most knowledgeable will correct him until he returns to take his place among the men of sacred perfection. When his actions become evident, according to the interpretation of the Torah that the men of sacred perfection live by, no one is allowed to share either wealth or work with such a one, for all the qadoshim of the Almighty have cursed him.

The Mighty Ending

***Such is the fate** for all who reject the commandments, whether old or new, who have turned their thoughts to false gods and who have lived by their willful hearts: they have no part in the household of Torah. They will be condemned along with their companions who have gone back to the People of Mockery, because they have uttered lies against the correct ordinances and rejected the sure **covenant that they made in the land of Damas-Cus, that is, the New Covenant.** Neither they nor their families will have any part in the Household of Torah.*

When the Judgment?

*Now from the day the Beloved Teacher passed away to the destruction of all the warriors who went back to the Man of the Lie **will be about forty years.** At that time Elohim’s anger will burn against Israel, as He said, “Neither king nor prince” nor judge nor one who exhorts to do what is right will be left.*

But those who repent of the sin of Ya'akov have kept Elohim's Covenant. Then each will speak to his neighbor, vindicating his sibling, helping him walk in Elohim's Way, and Elohim will listen to them and "write a journal about those who fear Elohim and honor His Name" until salvation and righteousness are revealed for those who fear Elohim. "And you will again know the innocent from the guilty, those who serve Elohim and those who do not." "He keeps faith to those who love Him "and to those who keep Him for a thousand generations."

As for those separatists who left the city of the sanctuary and relied on Elohim in the time of Israel's unfaithfulness, when the nation defiled the Temple, but returned once more to the way of the people in a few matters – each of them will be judged in the qadosh council according to his spirit. But all of the members of the Covenant who skirted around the restrictions of the Torah will be excluded from the midst of the camp, and with them all who did evil in Yahudah when it was undergoing trial. When? When the Shekinah of Elohim appears to Israel.

The Teshuvah and Promise

*So Shema! (Shofar.) All who hold fast to these rules, are going out and coming in according to the Torah, always obeying the Teacher and confessing to Elohim, "We have cruelly sinned, we and our ancestors by living contrary to the Covenant rules for just and true are Your judgments against us." All who do not act arrogantly against His sacred orders and His righteous ordinances and His reliable declarations; and who discipline themselves **by the old rules** by which the members of the Yahad were governed; All who listen attentively to the Teacher of Righteousness, not ignoring the correct ordinances when they learn them – they will rejoice and be happy and exultant. They will rule over all the inhabitants of the earth. Then Elohim will make atonement for them and they will experience His deliverance because they have trusted in His sacred Name. {Amein}*