

WHO ARE JEREMIAH'S PROPHESIED "HUNTERS"? #2

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This treatise is on the subject of the "hunters" as found at Jeremiah 16:14-16, especially v. 16:

"¹⁴ Therefore, behold, the days come, saith Yahweh, that it shall no more be said, Yahweh liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; ¹⁵ But, Yahweh liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. ¹⁶ Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith Yahweh, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks."

Also essential to comprehend is the significance of, "... I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers ..." is not the old land of Palestine, but a different land promised at 2 Sam. 7:10:

"Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime" So, what is there about "... I will appoint a [new] place ..." and they will "... move no more ..." that we don't seem to understand? I would also state again the fact to the reader that Jeremiah's "hunters" carries just as much weight as his "fishers" (i.e., Christ's chosen disciples)! I will repeat again that the "hunters" are the archaeologists, and they were/are hunting for the same people the fishers were fishing for (i.e., all the lost tribes of Israel)!

There are different endeavors in which the prophesied "hunters" might be employed, other than the pick and spade. For instance, the "hunter" might be engaged in a search of ancient history (which would require an exhaustive study of the Greek and Roman Classics, along with a knowledge of Ancient Near-Eastern languages and texts) in order to find the origins and migrations of the long lost tribes of Israel. With this paper we'll investigate some of the ramifications resulting from finding the Dead Sea Scrolls. While not all of the citations I will use in this exposé will be perfect, some will be quite enlightening on the subject we are examining.

At this point, I will quote from *The Dead Sea Scriptures* by Theodor H. Gaster, pp. 27-31:

“INTRODUCTION

“X. Just as unfortunate as the attempts to ‘Christianize’ the Scrolls are the attempts unduly to ‘historicize’ them – that is, to detect in them precise and specific historical allusions.

“In order to emphasize that what was happening or about to happen both to Israel and to the world at large was but the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. The Scrolls make use of a kind of figurative geography, based on the Scriptures. Thus, they speak of the voluntary withdrawal of the elect from the normative forms of Jewish [sic Judae]an life as ‘exile in the desert of Damascus’, in allusion to the words of God in the Book of Amos (5.27): ‘I will cause you to go into exile beyond Damascus’. Conversely, the future regeneration of Israel is depicted as a return from ‘the wilderness of the peoples’ (cp. Ezek. 20.35) to the ‘Desert of Judah’. The prime enemy – the representative of Belial or the Evil One – is styled Gog, originally the name of a northern power whose doom had been foretold by the prophet Ezekiel (chaps. 38-39). Alternatively, and more often, the hostile forces are described as Kittians (or Kittaeans), a term which originally denoted the inhabitants of Kition, in Cyprus (cp. Gen. 10.4), but which came later to be used in an extended sense – rather like ‘Huns’ or ‘Tartars’ – of ‘barbarians’ in general and was applied in the Hellenistic age to the ‘Macedonians’ of the Alexandrian Empire, and in the Roman age to the Romans themselves. *The War of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness*, a text which describes the final apocalyptic conflict, refers to ‘Kittians of Assyria’ and ‘Kittians of Egypt’, where nothing more is meant than the heathen population of either land, the doom of which had long since been foretold (cp. Zech. 10.10-11, etc.). [*Gaster’s italics*]

“There is no need to take such references literally and consequently to set off on a wild-goose chase after historical identifications. The figurative use of names, always designed to evoke traditional associations, is commonplace in most cultures; we need think only of such terms as ‘Parnassus’, ‘Mecca’, ‘Babylon’, or ‘Waterloo’ in current English parlance.

“There is likewise a figurative use of *personal* names. Wicked priests who once opposed the ‘teacher of righteousness’ – himself a priest – are described as a ‘house of Absalom’, in reference to the Biblical Absalom’s treason against his own father, David. Schismatics are referred to fancifully as ‘the house of Peleg’ (cp. Gen. 10.25), simply because the Hebrew word *p-l-g* means ‘divide’. Such designations should deceive no one; it is quite futile to go casting around among the records of the Hellenistic or Roman periods of Jewish [*sic Israelite*] history for a particular villain called Absalom. The name must be treated simply like ‘Attila’, ‘Machiavelli’, ‘Benedict Arnold’, or ‘Quisling’ in modern speech.

“Unfortunately, however, the true understanding of the Scrolls has been compromised (or, at least, embarrassed) by the understandable eagerness of scholars to peg them to a definite date, and under this impulse there has arisen an almost frenetic tendency to read specific historical reference into these purely figurative names. Consequently, the literature on the subject is cluttered up with all kinds of ingenious, but usually very forced, attempts to give them specific setting in the Hellenistic or Roman periods. It has been assumed, for instance, that the ‘Kittians of

Assyria' and the 'Kittians of Egypt' are necessarily the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires; that the sect really migrated, allegedly in the face of the Roman troops, from the western shores of the Dead Sea to the region of Damascus; and that 'the house of Absalom' may have been that of an Absalom mentioned casually in the First Book of the Maccabees (11.70; 13.11) or of the son of John Hyrcanus I who bore that name (Josephus, *Ant.*, XIV, 4.4)!

"Nowhere has this 'historicizing' tendency (or aberration) played more havoc than in the attempts which have been made to weld the several references to 'the teacher of righteousness' into a single consistent biography, and to reconstruct from the collateral allusions to a 'wicked priest' and a 'man of lies' who persecuted him a specific historical situation. All sorts of characters (Onias, Menelaus, Antichus Epiphanes, Alexander Jannaeus, John Hyrcanus, Mattathias, the father of Judas Maccabaeus – even Jesus, John the Baptist, and Paul) have been proposed to fill these several roles. If, however, we look at the data without prejudice or preconception, it is pretty apparent that the 'teacher of righteousness' denotes a continuing office rather than a particular individual, and that the various allusions to him are not in fact to one and the same person.

"In the '*Zadokite*' Document, for example, we are told that God raised up a 'teacher of righteousness' some twenty years after the beginning of a 390-year period of His displeasure, calculated from the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. This evidently refers to Nehemiah or – perhaps more probably, seeing that he was a priest – to Ezra. On the other hand, we are told in the same document (ix. 29ff.) that 'about forty years will elapse from the death of the teacher of righteousness until all who have taken up arms and relapsed in the company of the Man of Falsehood are finally destroyed'. Here, obviously, the reference is to a *future* teacher, one who will arise to occupy the traditional office in advance of that forty-year period of 'Messianic woes' of which we indeed read in Talmudic and later rabbinic literature. This figure is, in fact, a prototype of the Arabic *Mahdi*. [Many Arabic and especially Islamic traditions are merely corrupted Hebrew traditions. - *ed.*]

"Similarly, if we go soberly through the several references to the 'teacher of righteousness' in the *Commentary on Habakkuk*, it soon becomes apparent that the author is simply citing a number of historical incidents which might illustrate the prophet's words. There is no compelling reason why they should be taken to constitute a connected biographical narrative. Thus, when he interprets the verse (1.13), 'Why do ye look on, ye traitors, and keep silent when the wicked confounds one more righteous than he?' as referring to the 'house of Absalom' and the men of their company who kept silent when charges were brought against the teacher of righteousness, and who did not come to his aid against the man of lies', he may be referring to an historical incident which involved one particular 'teacher of righteousness'; while when he speaks (in the comment on 2.15) of such a teacher's having once been vexed by a wicked priest who attempted (apparently) to usurp his office, he may be referring to quite a different person living at quite a different period. Indeed, it is significant in this respect that the fragmentary *Commentary on Micah* (1.5) actually speaks of 'teachers of righteousness', and that this is not simply a scribal error (as some scholars have all too rashly

supposed) is shown by the fact that the expression serves to explain a word in the Scriptural text which is itself *in the plural*.

“Similarly, too, the allusion (in *The Manual of Discipline for the Future Congregation of Israel*) to the presence of a ‘messiah’ at a communal banquet is no evidence, as has been somewhat sensationally supposed, that the Brotherhood believed in a single Christ-like Teacher of Righteousness who had suffered martyrdom but whose Second Coming was expected. For the plain fact is that the term ‘messiah’ there means simply ‘anointed king’. The text in question gives the protocol which is to be observed in the future dispensation, and its whole point is to emphasize that even an anointed king will then have to yield place to an anointed priest at public gatherings!

“This is not to say, of course, that specific and identifiable allusions are not of crucial importance in determining upward and downward limits for the dates to which our texts are to be assigned. It is simply to warn against the tendency to string such allusions together into a consistent narrative and then to draw from that synthetic narrative far-reaching historical and doctrinal conclusions. What we have to realize is that the commentators are merely fitting a stock set of masks (‘the righteous man’, ‘the wicked man’, ‘the foreign invader’) upon a stock set of characters (‘the teacher of righteousness’, ‘the wicked priest’, ‘the Kittians’), differently identified at different epochs. We should be alive also to the danger that the frenzied scramble for historical identification may trample the flowerbeds. An obsessive preoccupation with the historical context of a piece of literature can all too easily obscure its wider significance; for real understanding it is necessary not only to know ‘all about it’, but also to be sensitive to what it is all about”

The important lesson we should learn from this segment of Theodor H. Gaster’s book, *The Dead Sea Scriptures* is the significance of the fact that we, as students of the Dead Sea Scrolls, must separate and categorize the difference between the literal and figurative words or phrases they used! Therefore, when we study the Dead Sea Scrolls, we must learn to think in terms contemporary with the people who wrote them. It is quite clear, from the above quotation, that the people back then had an entirely different idiomatic vocabulary than what we are familiar with in our idiomatic languages of today!

The finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls were indeed a discovery of Jeremiah’s “hunters”, and I will continue by quoting the 5-volume *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2, pp. 53-56, under the title, “Dead Sea Scrolls”:

“... **1. Early discoveries.** The exact date when the material was found is uncertain, but is thought to have been early in 1947. A Bedouin goatherd searching for lost animals entered one of the caves high in the [*rugged*] cliffs of the Wadi Qumran, a mile or so west of the northwest corner of the Dead Sea and a little over eight miles south of Jericho. There he stumbled upon several jars somewhat over two feet in height and almost ten inches wide, containing leather scrolls wrapped in linen cloth. They were removed from the cave and subsequently smuggled to an antique dealer in Bethlehem, who bought some of them, while the rest came into the possession of the archbishop of the Syrian Orthodox monastery in Jerusalem.

“Several scholars examined the scrolls during 1947, some of whom discredited the manuscripts as forgeries. But the late E.L. Sukenik of the Hebrew University of

Jerusalem recognized the antiquity of the scrolls and was able to purchase three of them. Other manuscripts were taken to the American Schools of Oriental Research, where the acting Director, J.C. Trever, realized their value and promptly photographed them, sending some prints to W.F. Albright, the eminent Biblical archeologist. The opinion of the latter that the scrolls represented the most important discovery ever made in Old Testament manuscripts has been amply confirmed by subsequent researches.

[Comment by C.A. Emahiser: It is my opinion that Yahweh sent the goat into the cave, and additionally He directed events so that the manuscripts would fall into the hands of W.F. Albright, a true “hunter” for the Almighty. Now continuing the same article.]:

“By the time the value of the scrolls had become apparent, the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 made it impossible for the original cave (1Q) to be located and explored scientifically. However, this was accomplished in 1949 by G.L. Harding of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and R. deVaux of the *École Biblique* in Jerusalem who recovered several hundred fragments of Biblical, non-Biblical and apocryphal writings, some of which were unknown previously. The cave had formed the repository of a library comprising about 200 scrolls, and may have been discovered on an earlier occasion if a report of Eusebius is correct that Origen (A.D. 185-254) had employed a Greek translation of the Psalms, recovered from a cave near Jericho. This may also have been the same library as the ‘little house of books’ which a shepherd found near Jericho about A.D. 800, and which was subsequently reported to the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I.

[Comment by C.A. Emahiser: If Yahweh had wanted the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I to understand the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls, He’d have allowed the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I to uncover the mass of the stash, and distribute their content! But it is evident that it wasn’t yet time to do that. Now continuing the article.]:

“The Palestinian conflict made it desirable for the scrolls in possession of the Syrian archbishop to be brought to the U.S. in 1948, where they were published by M. Burrows, J.C. Trever and W.H. Brownlee. They included a complete scroll of the prophecy of Isaiah (1QIs^a), a commentary on the Book of Habakkuk (1QpHab), and a document which Burrows styled the ‘Manual of Discipline’ (1QS), because it contained the rules for community life at Qumran. One scroll, at first believed to be an apocalypse of Lamech, could not be opened at the time, and it was only in 1956 that the manuscript was unrolled and found to comprise an Aramaic paraphrase of early chapters of the Book of Genesis. It was published in 1956 under the title, *A Genesis Apocryphon*.

“The scrolls acquired by E.L. Sukenik included a fragmentary scroll of Isaiah (1QIs^b), a War Scroll (1QM) and four portions of a collection of Thanksgiving Hymns or *Hodayoth* (1QH). The entire group was published in 1954 after Sukenik’s death by his son, Y. Yadin, under the title *Osar Hammegilloth Haggenuzoth* or ‘treasury of the hidden scrolls.’ The fragments recovered from the first Qumran cave were published in 1955 by D. Barthélemy and J.T. Milik under the designation, *Qumran Cave I*.

“2. Further explorations. Toward the end of 1951 some new manuscript fragments were found by Bedouins in two caves of the Wadi Murabba’at, about eleven

miles south of 1Q and two miles west of the Dead Sea. Clandestine investigators anticipated the official excavation of the caves in 1952, but despite this, several Biblical manuscripts of the Masoretic textual variety were found, including a scroll of the minor prophets, potsherds inscribed in Greek and Hebrew, two Greek literary papyri in fragmentary condition, coins from the Second Jewish Revolt (A.D. 132-135) which dated the occupational level accurately in the Roman period, and other less significant artifacts. Important sources for a study of the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome were some papyrus letters in Hebrew, two of which were signed by Simon Bar-Kokhba and addressed to a certain Joshua ben Galgola, apparently the commander of the military outpost at the Wadi Murabba'at.

[Comment by C.A. Emahiser: This is interesting, for it appears that the period the Dead Sea Scrolls includes the second revolt of the Edomite-jews. However it is likely that the placing of the scrolls and the coins are two separate events, since the scrolls themselves mention Jerusalem often, while being ignorant of its destruction by the Romans. Back to article.]:

“Another manuscript discovery was made in 1952 in the ruins of a monastery about eight miles northeast of Bethlehem at a site known as Khirbet Mird. These documents were much later in date than those recovered from other sites, being assigned to a period between the 5th and 9th centuries A.D. The Biblical manuscripts were of Christian origin, written in both Greek and Palestinian Syriac. The literary material from the Wadi Murabba'at and Khirbet Mird, though interesting and important archeologically, is not directly related to the scrolls and fragments from Qumran.

“From 1952, serious attempts were made to locate and explore other caves in the rugged terrain near the Wadi Qumran, the result of which has been that eleven caves have been discovered in the vicinity and have yielded a varied assortment of manuscripts, fragments, pottery and the like. The second Qumran cave (2Q), discovered in 1952, had already been looted by Ta'amireh Bedouin tribesmen before the official party arrived, and only a few tiny fragments of manuscripts were found at the site. The third cave (3Q), located about one mile north of 1Q, contained 274 Hebrew and Aramaic fragments as well as two copper scrolls. The latter had become oxidized, and great technical difficulties confronted those attempting to unroll them. Early in 1956 the rolls were specially treated and cut into strips at the Manchester College of Technology. A textual loss of under five percent occurred in the process, and when translated the rolls were found to contain information relating to the locations of treasure hoards.

“Cave four (4Q), located just west of Khirbet Qumran was discovered in 1952 and contained a wealth of fragments of nearly all the Biblical books (except, apparently, Esther), many familiar and unknown apocryphal writings, commentaries, liturgical texts and other literary works. Caves five to ten, in the vicinity of Qumran yielded less significant material, but cave eleven (11Q), discovered in 1956, contained several relatively complete scrolls. All the fragments recovered from the various sites are at the time of writing (1975) being cleaned, classified and published by an international team of scholars, but it will be many years before the task is completed. In 1955 it was announced that the manuscripts originally in possession of the Syrian monastery had

been acquired by the State of Israel [*sic Israeli*], and the Dead Sea Scrolls are now housed with other ancient documents in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in an edifice known as the 'Shrine of the Book'”

[No portion of Esther was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. There are some fragments (4Q550) which apparently contain a description of certain events in the lives of certain obscure characters that had occurred in Persia and which are sometimes misidentified as “Proto-Esther”, however these have no resemblance whatsoever to that Esther which has made its way into most Bibles of today. - *ed.*] “Hunters” to be continued.