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Mothers, Sisters, and Elders: Titles for Women in Second Temple Jewish and Early Christian Comunities*

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In this paper I will investigate two fragmentary texts from the Qumran scrolls, each of which gives us a tantalizing glimpse of women, first as part of the community presupposed by each text, and second as having a particular role or status within that community. That role or status is indicated by the use of particular titles, which, according to their grammatical forms, are applied only to women. I will then trace the use of these same titles in later Jewish inscriptions and texts, in order to suggest a wider context in which the Qumran titles might be understood. Finally, I will look at the use of these titles in the early Christian community as illustrated by certain passages in the New Testament. I hope to show thereby a certain continuity of usage among Jewish communities in the second temple period, from the late second century B.C.E. to the early second century C.E.

For the purposes of this paper I will assume, but not argue, that the Qumran scrolls are the product of the Essene movement described by Josephus, Philo and Pliny. However, unlike Philo and Pliny, I believe from the evidence of the Qumran scrolls that the Essene movement as a whole included women, as Josephus indicates in his discussion of the "marrying Essenes" (*J.W.* 2.164).

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The Qumran Texts

The first text comes from the Cave 4 fragments of the Damascus Document, which have revealed that the Damascus Document contained a much more extensive legal code than was evident from the Cairo Genizah manuscripts.[1] While there is much new legislation in the 4QD fragments concerning women, the lines discussed below do not legislate for women *per se,* but rather reveal the presence in the community for which the Damascus Document is legislating of a group of women singled out for special honor, the "Mothers." The lines in question occur in 4QD[e] 7 I, 13–15.[2]

> ואשר ילו]ן על האבות
> [ישלח] מן העדה[3] ולא ישוב [ואם] על האמות ונענש עשר[ת] ימים כי אין לאמ[ו]ת
> רוקמה בתוך [העדה]
>
> Whoever murmu]rs against the Fathers [shall be expelled] from the congregation and shall not return; [but if] against the Mothers, then he shall be punished te[n] days, because the Mo[th]ers do not have "authority" in the midst of [the congregation].

From the parallelism of the terms "Fathers" and "Mothers" it is evident that the term "Mothers" does not simply refer to biological mothers (as is common in biblical Hebrew), but is a special group within the congregation. The command to honor fathers and mothers is found, of course, in the Fifth Commandment (Exod 20:12, Deut 5:16), and is constantly emphasized in Wisdom literature, including Wisdom literature from Qumran (e.g., Prov 23:22; 4Q416 2 III, 15–16). Already in biblical Hebrew the word "father," אב, is not used only for the biological father or even for the head of an extended family household (the בית אב), but as a term of respect and honor for a master (2 Kgs 5:13), a priest (Judg 17:10; 18:19), a prophet (2 Kgs 2:12; 6:21; 13:14) and a counselor (Gen 45:8). That extended meaning is applied here to a specific group of (older?) men in the congregation. The term "Fathers" occurs elsewhere in Qumran literature indicating a venerable group, for example in the War Scroll, col. II, 1, 3, 7, in which the אבות העדה as a group are serving in the sanctuary (note the recurrence of the term העדה). If the "Fathers" are an organized group, then it is methodologically sound to assume the "Mothers" are as well. The term "mother," אם, is used once in the Hebrew Bible as a term of honor, when Deborah is called "a mother in Israel" in Judg 5:7.[4] In 4QD[e] the meaning is obviously parallel to the honorific "Fathers" and refers to a specific group of (older?) women in the congregation.

What the functions of the Mothers were within the congregation cannot be determined with certainty. The word דוקמה seems to refer to some kind of function or honor that the Mothers do *not* have. Translations of דוקמה vary; Baumgarten suggests "authoritative status"; other translations include "distinction," "mingling," and "esteem."[5] The root דקה means "variegated, multi-colored," and the noun form usually means "embroidery" or "multicolored fabric." It occurs elsewhere in the Qumran literature with that meaning (e.g., 4QShirShabb, 1QM, 4QpIsa[a]). That meaning does not appear to fit the context here; hence the variety of translations. George Brooke, in his contribution to the present volume, takes the primary meaning of the noun seriously, so that דוקמה would denote a tangible thing, possibly "a piece of embroidered cloth associated with priestly status."[6] Thus the דוקמה would be a mark of authority not worn by women. J. F. Elwolde, on the other hand, has

[1] J. Baumgarten, *Qumran Cave 4 XIII; The Damascus Document (4Q266–73)* (DJD 18; Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

[2] Baumgarten, *Qumran Cave 4 XIII,* 162–66. Baumgarten dates the manuscript to the first half of the first century C.E. on paleographic grounds.

[3] C. Hempel notes that עדה is a frequent self-designation in the communal legislation of the Damascus Document, which sets it apart from the Community Rule. This particular piece of legislation does not appear in the penal code in the Community Rule, which is not accidental. Hempel argues that the Damascus Document contains legislation for the parent community of the Qumran community, while the Community Rule applies only to the ascetic community at Qumran. I would identify this parent community with the Essenes, and the Qumran settlement as an ascetic study center or retreat primarily for Essene men. See C. Hempel, "The Penal Code Reconsidered," *Legal Texts and Legal Issues. Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Cambridge, 1995* (ed. M. Bernstein, F. García Martínez, and J. Kampen; STDJ 23; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 343, 346.

[4] Cities are often referred to as "mothers," evidently to denote their important status, e.g., Abel-beth-Maacah in 2 Sam 20:19.

[5] Baumgarten, *Qumran Cave 4 XIII,* 164; G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin, 1998), 152; F. García Martínez and E. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 2:617; E. Cook, "The Damascus Document," *The Dead Sea Scrolls. A New Translation* (ed. M. Wise, M. Abegg and E. Cook; New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 73.

[6] G. Brooke, "Between Qumran and Corinth: Embroidered Allusions to Women's Authority," above p. 168.

focused on the Septuagint rendering of two words from the root דקה in Ezek 17:3 and Ps 139:5, where the Greek words ἡγημα ("leadership") and ὑπόστασις, ("essence") are used respectively. Thus he argues for a secondary meaning of דקה as "essential being," "authority," or "status," based on "the metonymy of expensive clothing/covering and the power represented by it."[7] Finally, in a recent article, Victor Hurowitz proposes that the word דוקמה found here has nothing to do with the דוקמה meaning "embroidery," but instead comes from the Akkadian word *rugummû,* which means "legal claim." This would involve a *qof/gimel* interdialectical interchange.[8] Elwolde's argument appears most convincing to the present author, hence the translation given above.

This lack of authority would explain why the punishment for murmuring against the Mothers was lighter than that for murmuring against the Fathers. Fathers were highly respected members of the community, while Mothers had a less exalted station, as exemplified in the difference between permanent expulsion and ten-day punishment. But the very presence of a penalty for "murmuring" against the Mothers indicates some kind of status and authority.[9]

The second text that contains titles or epithets for groups of women is 4Q502, originally published by M. Baillet under the rubric "Rituel de mariage."[10] This papyrus document clearly belongs to the same group that produced the Community Rule, since it contains a quotation from the Doctrine of the Two Spirits (frag. 16; 1QS IV, 4–6). Baillet noted that the manuscript contained praise addressed to the deity, and suggested that the themes of at least the first group of fragments fit best the context of a marriage ceremony.[11] Baillet's characterization of the text as a marriage ritual has not received universal acceptance, although Da-

[7] J. F. Elwolde, *"rwqmh* in the *Damascus Document* and Ps 139:15," in *Diggers at the Well. Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira* (ed. T. Muraoka and J. F. Elwolde; STDJ 36; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 72.

[8] V. Hurowitz, "דוקמה in Damascus Document 4QD^{e} (4Q270) 7 I 14," *DSD* 9 (2002): 34–37.

[9] Hempel, "The Penal Code Reconsidered," 347 n. 54.

[10] M. Baillet, *Qumrân Grotte 4 III (4Q482–4Q520)* (DJD 7; Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 81–104, pls. XXIX–XXXIV. 4Q502's paleographic date is the beginning of the first century B.C.E.

[11] Baillet, *Qumrân Grotte 4 III,* 81, compared these fragments to the marriage rituals found in the book of Tobit (Tob 8:1–8)

vila has recently tentatively supported it.[12] Baumgarten has suggested it was a "Golden Age Ritual,"[13] while Satlow has argued that it may represent a Spring New Year Festival,[14] and Cook has stated that 4Q502 was "intended to accompany the entrance of youths into the Yahad when they came of age."[15] None of these identifications have yet completely resolved the question, but nevertheless we can say that 4Q502 is a liturgical work for a joyous occasion of thanksgiving and praise, in which different groups within the community participate. For the purposes of this paper it is important that the participants are male and female, grouped together in worship by age and gender; in some cases the titles appear in male and female pairs (e.g., בנים וב[נות, frag. 14, 6 or ונע[רות נערים, frag. 19, 3). I would argue that the names affixed to these groupings (אשישים, נערים, בתולות etc.) are not simply age designations but titles for recognized groupings within the community, like the title "Fathers" and "Mothers" in 4QD^{e}.[16] That titles are being used is evident from the use of בת אמת, "daughter of truth," in frag. 2, 3; this epithet must be the female equivalent to the term בני אמת, "Sons of Truth," found in, e.g., 1QS IV, 6.[17] Thus women are being given official epithets or titles in this document, not simply being referred to by age.

The first group with a title I would like to investigate is the זקנות, "female elders," mentioned in frag. 19, 2: זקנים וזק[נות (restored); frag. 24, 4: ועמרה בסור זקני[ם] זקנו[ת, in which the letters of זקנות are very broken, but the *qof* seems certain; and possibly frag. 107, 1:]זקנ, where the ending, either a masculine or a feminine plural, is missing.

The meaning of זקן in biblical Hebrew is twofold; its primary meaning is "old in years." When the root זקן is applied to females in biblical

[12] J. Davila, *Liturgical Works* (Eerdmans Commentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls 6; Grand Rapids, Mich., 2000), 184.

[13] J. Baumgarten, "4Q502, Marriage or Golden Age Ritual?" *JJS* 34 (1983): 125–35.

[14] M. Satlow, "4Q502 A New Year Festival?" *DSD 5* (1998): 57–68.

[15] E. Cook, "A Liturgy of Thanksgiving," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls. A New Translation,* (ed. M. Wise, M. Abegg and E. Cook; New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 407–408.

[16] I thus disagree with Baumgarten's emphasis on the elderly age of the participants in the ritual (Baumgarten, "Golden Age," 129ff). Groups of all ages are present, and it is difficult to pinpoint precisely the age difference between, for example, אשישים and זקנים. They could be men of the same age, but with different statuses and roles to play in the ritual. See also L. B. Elder, "The Woman Question and Female Ascetics Among the Essenes," *BA* 57 (1994): 230–32.

[17] Baumgarten, "Golden Age," 128.

Hebrew it carries this primary meaning, e.g., Gen 18:3 concerning Sarah and Ruth 1:12 concerning Naomi. However, its secondary meaning in the masculine plural is a technical term referring to a leadership group in ancient Israel. This technical usage continues in the Qumran literature, where the elders are a leadership group (see, e.g., 1QS VI, 8; CD IX, 4; 1QM XIII, 1).[18] I would argue that in 4Q502 זקנים appears in its secondary meaning of a leadership group, given that frag. 24 places the זקנים in a council (סוד), in front of which a female worshipper (!) stands. Frag. 19, 1 also contains the word סוד; Baillet suggests that the text should be restored as בסוד ק[ודשים, i.e., a heavenly council, but Davila argues, and I agree, that an earthly council fits the overall context better.[19] In that case it is possible to connect the זקנים in line 2 with the סוד in line 1. Since the זקנים and the זקנות (restored) in line 2 are connected by the conjunction, we can assume that they form one group (as in the other examples given above). Given that frag. 24 mentions a סוד זקנים, "council of male elders," it can be tentatively argued, on the basis of frag. 19, that this council included female elders as well. This strengthens the argument for Baillet's restoration of the last word on frag. 24, 4 as זקנו[ת. If the arguments above are accepted, then we may conclude that since the זקנים form a leadership group in the community performing this liturgy, then this must be true as well for the זקנוה, with whom they are paired.[20] Thus we find a recognized group of women who played some kind of role in the community, at least as organized participants in its worship life.

The second possible title for women that occurs in 4Q502, albeit in a very fragmentary context, is אחיות, "sisters," found on frag. 96, 1. The word אחיות, "brothers," also occurs in 4Q502, frag. 9, 11, although unfortunately the two terms are not found together. The term אחות/אח in biblical Hebrew can refer to a literal brother or sister (e.g., Gen 4:2, 30:8), any kind of relative (e.g., Gen 13:8, 24:60), or a member of the same tribe or nation (e.g., Exod 2:11, Num 25:18). The use of the term "brother" to refer to fellow Israelites or simply people affiliated with the speaker in some way is widespread in the Hebrew Bible. A specialized use of the term אחות as "beloved" occurs in Cant 4:9ff., and in Tobit the term is used to indicate

[18] Although the term can also refer to old men; see CD XIV, 14 and 1QpHab VI, 11.

[19] Baillet, *Qumrân Grotte 4 III,* 86–87; Davila, *Liturgical Works,* 196.

[20] Davila, *Liturgical Works,* 197.

a wife who is also a fellow Israelite (Tob 5:21, 7:15, 8:4, 7). In Qumran literature "brother" is used to indicate fellow community members (e.g., CD VI, 20; VII, 1–2; 1QS V, 25; VI, 10).[21] If this is the usage meant for אחים here in 4Q502, the same may be true for אחיות as well; that is, the "sisters" are fellow female members of the community. Unfortunately the contexts are too broken to be certain. The word אחיות occurs in the first line of frag. 96, followed by words for "blessing" and "joy," but whether the text is referring to blood sisters, fellow Israelites or even brides or wives is completely unclear. Baumgarten speculates that the "Mothers" and "Fathers" of 4QD^{e} may be related in some way to the "Sisters" and "Brothers" of 4Q502;[22] this is entirely possible (see the discussion concerning the early Christian evidence below) but difficult to prove.

In conclusion, we have two texts from the Qumran collection that contain two, and possibly three, terms that were used as titles or epithets for recognized groups of women in the communities reflected by the documents. Although these texts are not directly related to each other, they are indirectly related through their mutual relationship to the Community Rule. Therefore, I would argue that the communities reflected in the two texts are one and the same, and that that community group is the Essenes, who certainly contained women in their "marrying" manifestation (Josephus, *J. W.* 2.160) and in their ascetic, chiefly male manifestation may have included a small number of women. These texts make clear that these female Essenes, although not in any way equal to the male Essenes, were active, honored and organized participants in their community life.

Jewish Sources Outside Qumran

The two texts we have just discussed, 4QD^{e}" and 4Q502, are not just important pieces of evidence for reconstructing the place of women in the organizational and communal life of the Essene/Qumran commu-

[21] Davila notes the use of the term "brothers" to refer to the followers of Bar Kokhba in 5/6Ḥev 12, 4. This secular document dates to the second century C.E. Davila, *Liturgical Works,* 193.

[22] J. Baumgarten, "The Laws of the Damascus Document in Current Research," in *The Damascus Document Reconsidered* (ed. M. Broshi; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, Shrine of the Book, 1992), 54–55.

nity. The use of the epithets "Mothers," "Sisters," and "Female Elders" in these documents may be the earliest attestation for the use of these titles for women in a second temple period Jewish community, making 4QD[e] and 4Q502 extremely valuable for reconstructing the social history of women in second temple Judaism. I will now survey the evidence for the use of these titles in Jewish sources outside the Qumran literature in order to demonstrate that their appearance in the Qumran scrolls is not an anomaly, but part of a more widespread practice in which women attained both honored stations and leadership roles in various Jewish communities of the late second temple and post-70 C.E. periods.

The most compelling evidence comes from Jewish inscriptions from the Hellenistic and Roman diaspora communities. These inscriptions, collected by Brooten and Kraemer,[23] appear both in Greek and Latin and date from the first century B.C.E. to the sixth century C.E. Their provenances reach from Italy to Asia Minor, Palestine and Egypt.[24] These inscriptions give the titles "Mother of the Synagogue" (μήτηρσυναγωγῆς, *mater synagogae)* and "elder" (πρεσβύτερα) to women. As Brooten has argued, there is no reason to assume that these titles do not reflect a leadership role for the women so designated.[25]

Brooten lists seven Greek inscriptions that contain the epithet πρεσβύτερα, and Kraemer adds one more.[26] The women called πρεσβύτερα appear to have been members of a synagogue council of elders.[27] Recall that the זקנות in 4Q502, frag. 19 are paired with the זקנים in relation to a סוד, and may appear with them in a סוד in frag. 24. Although caution is in order when drawing any connection between these two disparate bodies of evidence, the linguistic parallels are intriguing. Does 4Q502 reflect a mixed-gender council of elders, a practice which became more common in the diaspora?

There are three Greek and two Latin inscriptions in which the title "Mother" appears.[28] There is also one intriguing inscription with the

[23] B. Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue. Inscriptional Evidence and Background Issues* (BJS 36; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982); R. Kraemer, *Maenads, Martyrs, Matrons, Monastics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

[24] Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue,* 1.

[25] Ibid., 7–10.

[26] Ibid., 57; Kraemer, *Maenads, Martyrs, Matrons, Monastics, #89.*

[27] Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue,* 54–55.

[28] Ibid., 57.

title *pateressa,* "fatheress," indicating without doubt that the woman named in the inscription, Alexsandra, was a female *pater.*[29] It is difficult to determine whether or not the title "Mother of the synagogue" (or indeed "Father of the synagogue") was only an honorific bestowed upon prominent synagogue members, or denoted an actual function. Brooten argues for a use of the term as an honorific title of respect in the first centuries C.E. based on rabbinic use of the titles "Father" and "Mother" for esteemed persons, although later the title may have indicated a civic function.[30] To her argument we may add the earlier evidence from 4QD[e], according to which the "Mothers" are held in esteem but lack "authority."

There is some literary evidence in Greco-Roman Jewish literature for the inclusion of women in the term πρεσβύτεροι, but it is less clear-cut than the inscriptional evidence given above. Philo and Josephus both use the term when discussing the Essenes, but there are two problems. One is that both Philo and Josephus describe the Essene community as exclusively male. If we assume that in fact the Essene community contained women (as is made clear from the Qumran evidence), then it is possible to understand πρεσβύτεροι as including women as well as men. The second is that the ambiguity of the meaning of πρεσβύτεροι makes it difficult to be certain whether they mean "elders" in the technical sense, or (as is more likely) simply "old people." Philo makes it clear that the πρεσβύτεροι were held in honor by the Essenes:[31]

> The aged (πρεσβυτέρων), for their part, are surrounded with respect and care; they are like parents (γονέον) whose children lend them a helping hand in their old age with perfect generosity and surround them with a thousand attentions. *Prob.* 87

> As for the aged (οἱ πρεσβύτεροι), even if they have no children, they are as father not only of many children but of very good ones. They usually quit life in extremely happy and splendid old age, honored by privileges and by the regard of so many sons who care for them spontaneously rather than as a result of natural necessity. *Hypoth.* 13

[29] Ibid., 61.

[30] Ibid. 62–68.

[31] All translations of Philo and Josephus are taken from G. Vermes and M. Goodman, *The Essenes According to the Classical Sources* (Oxford Centre Textbooks 1; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989).

Note that in these passages Philo observes that the πρεσβύτεροι are treated like fathers. Josephus states (*J.W.* 2.146) that the Essenes make it their duty to obey τοῖς πρεσβύτεροις; he could mean "old people," but Hippolytus (*Refutation of All Heresies* 9.25), who is adapting Josephus, says that the Essenes are taught to obey τοῖς ἄρχονσι καὶ πρεσβύτεροις ("rulers and elders"), which may imply the more technical sense of "elders."

Philo also uses the term πρεσβύτεροι in his description of the Therapeutae, a Jewish mixed-gender community of contemplatives near Alexandria.[32] He says regarding the hierarchy of the Therapeutric community:

> Elders (πρεσβύτεροι) are, in their regard, those who from their earliest age have passed their youth and maturity in the contemplative branch of philosophy . . . *Contempl.* 2.67

Thus the πρεσβύτεροι are not simply old, or may not be old at all; they have reached a certain stage in the contemplative life. This implies that πρεσβύτεροι here carries its more technical meaning, also found in the Qumran literature.

Philo also compares the older Therapeutae to "fathers" (πατράσι) and "mothers" (μητράσιν), claiming that the younger members of the group wait upon them like "true sons." It may be that the older Therapeutae held the honorifics "Father" and "Mother," but this is speculation.

Outside Philo and Josephus the literary evidence is very sparse. *4 Macc.* 16:14 refers to the woman who is martyred along with her seven sons as a πρεσβῦτι: "O mother, soldier of God in the cause of religion, elder and woman!" There is no reason to think the text is calling attention to the mother's age. She is being honored with the title "elder." The fact that the author adds "and woman" (γύναι) indicates that "elder" would normally refer to a man.

Brooten cites a fifth century C.E. Christian document, *De Altercatione Ecclesiae et Synagogae,* in which the title *matres synagogae,* referring to

[32] I do not identify the Therapeutae with the Essenes, even though Philo mentions the Essenes in the first line of *De Vita Contemplativa.* Philo is contrasting the life of action as practiced by the Essenes with the contemplative life of the Therapeutae. The two groups are therefore two sides of the same coin, comparable but not identical. Therefore it is methodologically permissible to use the description of the Therapeutae as a comparison. See also J. Taylor and P. Davies, "The So-Called Therapeutae of *De Vita Contemplativa:* Identity and Character," *HTR* 91 (1998): 3–24.

a Jewish office holder, occurs.[33] Thus the title is known (at least among Christians) beyond its immediate Jewish context. There are to my knowledge no uses of the term "sister" as a title for a female member of a Jewish community outside of Qumran. The term is used in some second temple literature to denote wives or sweethearts; for example, Joseph uses the term for Aseneth in *Jos. Asen.* 7:11. If 4Q502 is a marriage liturgy, then this connotation may be appropriate for the אחיות mentioned in frag. 96.

Evidence from the Early Christian Communities

Finally, the early Christian communities produce evidence for the use of the epithets πρεσβύτερα, ἀδεφή and possibly μήτηρ as titles for women in positions of leadership and authority in the early Christian community.[34]

Ἀδελφός and ἀδελφή were common terms for fellow Christians (i.e., as members of the same community, a use inherited from the Jewish community) and as such are ubiquitous in the various books of the New Testament. The plural term ἀδελφοί, "brethren," may be understood to include both men and women (as, for example, in the translation of the *New Revised Standard Version).* This understanding is certain, since ἀδελφή is used on its own to signify female members of the early Christian communities) (e.g., 1 Cor 7:15; Rom 16:1; Jas 2:15). It is also used in the more technical phrase "sister wife" (ἀδελφὴν γυναῖκα; 1 Cor 9:5). Paul may use this phrase simply to mean "believing wife," since he claims that the other apostles, including James the Younger and Cephas, were accompanied by their wives. These wives may have participated in various leadership roles in the communities they visited, but Paul does not say this.[35] In fact, Paul does not use the term "sister wife" to describe the

[33] Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue,* 63–4.

[34] There have been many discussions of women's roles in the early church, which have established that, contrary to traditional views, women did play active roles in missions and the founding and leadership of early Christian communities. See, e.g., E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983) and, most recently, U. Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000).

[35] A. Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1990), 102.

female member of the two missionary couples mentioned by name in his letters: Prisca and Aquila (Rom 16:4–5; 1 Cor 16:19) and Junta and Andronicus (Rom 16:7). Neither of these women are called "sister wives," although Prisca is identified as the wife (γυναῖκα) of Aquila in Acts 18:2. Both women are active as missionaries and leaders in the early Christian movement; Paul credits Junta with being "prominent among the apostles," while Prisca travels with Paul and has a house church (1 Cor 16:19). A certain Nereus and his "sister" (τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτοῦ) are mentioned in Rom 16:15; it is possible that they are a missionary couple.[36]

It seems reasonable to assume that the term אחיות in 4Q502 is parallel to the general use of the term "sister" in the New Testament, that is as a fellow (female) member of their respective communities. If 4Q502 is a marriage ritual, then it is possible that אחיות has a similar meaning to "sister wife," that is, a wife who is also a member of the particular community behind the text (as the term "sister" is also used in Tobit; see above).

The use of the term "sister" as "fellow Christian" also fits in with the creation in early Christianity of "fictive kin groups," in which the believer's relationship with the newly formed Christian community supersedes that with his or her actual blood relatives.[37] It is in this context that the term "mothers" is used in the New Testament when it does not simply mean "biological mother." Jesus in the Gospel of Mark (3:31–35 // Matt 12:46–50; Luke 8:19–21) rejects his biological family in favor of a new family of fellow-believers: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother (ἀδελφός) and sister (ἀδελφή) and mother (μήτηρ)."[38] This notion continues in the early Christian movement: Thecla, in *The Acts of Paul and Thecla,* rejects both her biological family and her fiance in favor of a new ascetic life after being converted by Paul. She finds a new mother in her protectress Tryphena, whom she converts to Christianity. In I Timothy, in which the structure of the Christian community is being subsumed into the Roman patriarchal family structure, the readers are urged, "Do not speak harshly to an older man (πρεσβυτέρῳ), but speak to him as

[36] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her,* 180.

[37] A.-J. Levine, "Women in the Q Communit(ies) and Traditions," *Women and Christian Origins* (ed. R. Kraemer and M. R. D'Angelo; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 159.

[38] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her,* 147.

to a father (πατέρα), to younger men as brothers (ἀδελφούς), to older women (πρεσβυτέρας) as mothers (μητέρας), to younger women as sisters (ἀδελφάς) — with absolute purity" (5:1–2). In other words, these women are to be considered the same as biological mothers and sisters; thus a fictive kin group is formed. It is possible that in this new kin group "Father" and "Mother" were honorifics used for revered older members of the church. Certainly a parallel can be drawn with Philo's description of the Therapeutae, who "like true sons" wait upon "their fathers and mothers" (*Contempl.* 2.72); in other words, they create a fictive kin group. According to Philo, the aged Essenes are also treated like fathers by the younger members (*Hypoth.* 11.13). Philo asserts that this occurs even if they have no biological children; that is, the Essenes too formed a fictive kin group. I would argue that this notion of a "new family" in the community is at least part of what is behind the terms אמות and אבות in the Damascus Document; as biological parents are to be honored, so are the new parents found in the community.

The term πρεσβύτερα, "elder," appears in the New Testament and other early Christian sources, but with the ambiguity in meaning we have already discovered between "old person" and "senior leader." In passages such as 1 Tim 5:1–2, discussed above, the terms πρεσβυτέρῳ and πρεσβυτέρας mean "old men" and "old women." This is likewise the case in 1 Pet 5:5 (but cf. 5:1) and Titus 2:2–3 (in which older people are role models). However, the word πρεσβύτερος also indicates one having a leadership role in the early Christian community as it formed hierarchies of leadership. This is clear from such passages as Acts 14:23, where the πρεσβυτέρους are appointed; 1 Tim 5:17, where the πρεσβύτεροι who "labor in preaching and teaching" are to receive double compensation; andjas 5:14, where the πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας pray over and anoint the sick. These passages originate in three very different groups within the early Christian movement, so the title was widespread. In passages such as these, we must not allow the masculine form of the noun to be misleading; it is probable that these groups of elders also included women.[39] Women are called πρεσβύτερα in several early Christian inscriptions, in which the epithet signifies the holder of an office rather than an old woman. F. Cardman cites two Latin inscriptions: "Leta the

[39] *Eisen,* Women Officeholders in Early Christianity, 4–6.

presbyter" (Italy, 4th/5th centuries) and "the presbyter Flavia Vitalia (Yugoslavia, 425)."[40] Kraemer (## 93, 94) mentions two inscriptions, one from third century C.E. Asia Minor, the other from Sicily in the 4th/5th century:[41] "Diogas the bishop to Ammion (fem.) the elder (πρεσβύτερα) in memory," and "Here lies Kale, the elder (πρε[σ]β[ῦτις]), Eisen adds two more, one for "Epikto the Presbytis (πρεσβῦτιδας)" from Thera, 2nd–4th centuries C.E., and a label for the mummy of the "Presb(ytera) (πρεσβ[ύτερας]) Artemidora," from 2nd/3rd century C.E. Egypt.[42] Some early Christian movements later condemned as heretical had women elders among their leaders (e.g., the Quintillians).[43] Further, the Synod of Laodicea, which took place in the 4th century C.E., legislated against the participation of women elders in ecclesiastical functions.[44] That women held other offices and bore other titles in the early church such as "deacon" (e.g., Phoebe, Rom 16:1) and "widow" (e.g., 1 Tim 5:3–16) is beyond dispute. The title "elder," however, would seem to be a specific inheritance from the parent Jewish community in Christianity, as is the use of this title (for both men and women) in its technical sense. Thus we see a continuous use of this title for women from its appearance in 4Q502 (probably a product of the Essene community), through Diaspora Jewish communities and into the early Christian movement.[45]

The appearance of the epithets אמות, זקנות and איות in the Damascus Document and 4Q502 is important new evidence for the attempt to reconstruct women's roles and status in various groups within second temple Judaism and early Christianity. They constitute the earliest appearance of these titles in second temple Judaism. 4QD^{e} was copied no later than 50 C.E., and the composition of the Damascus Document is even earlier, since its earliest manuscript (4Q266) dates to the first half of the first century B.C.E. Thus some form of the Damascus Document

[40] F. Cardman, "Women, Ministry, and Church Order in Early Christianity," *Women and Christian Origins,* ed. Kraemer and D'Angelo, 321, and Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity,* 129–32.

[41] Kraemer, *Maenads, Martyrs, Matrons, Monastics,* 221.

[42] Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity,* 123–28.

[43] Kraemer, *Maenads, Martyrs, Matrons, Monastics,* #103.

[44] Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity,* 121.

[45] Another fruitful avenue of investigation, unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper, is the use of these titles in the Greco-Roman world generally.

was in existence in the second century B.C.E., and that form may well have included the passage in question. 4Q502's paleographic date is the beginning of the first century B.C.E., which means, unless it is an autograph, that it was composed even earlier. Thus by the first century B.C.E. these epithets, indicating a particular role and status for women within the Essene/Qumran community, were in use. These titles are not, however, unique to the Essenes, since they also appear in Hellenistic Jewish inscriptions and early Christian works. Thus, although the particular functions attached to these titles may vary from community to community, they are indications that women were leaders and participants in community organization and worship in second temple Judaism, roles that continued in the early Christian movement.