11Q19 Temple Scroll

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11Q19 Temple Scroll was found in Cave 11 in 1956. At twenty-eight feet, it is the longest scroll among the Qumran finds. Much of this scroll’s sixty-six columns examines various physical aspects of the temple at Jerusalem that would be built in a future day—its construction and measurements, the Holy of Holies, the chambers and colonnades, the mercy seat, cherubim, veil, table, golden lampstand, altar, and courtyards.

The Temple Scroll also describes the ideal temple society with a discussion of a covenant between God and Israel, purity regulations, judges and officers, vows and oaths, detailed statutes of the Jewish king, crimes punishable by hanging, and laws relating to idolatry, sacrificial animals, apostasy, priests, Levites, priestly dues, witnesses, the conduct of war, and rebellious sons. The scroll does not simply repeat the laws on temple worship and social conduct as they appear in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, but blends them into a new, harmonious whole, sometimes adding new materials, such as festivals of new oil and wine that are not mentioned in the law of Moses. In short, the temple, according to the scroll itself, is “the temple on which I [the Lord] will settle my glory until the day of blessing on which I will create my temple and establish it for myself for all times” (29:7–10).

Many third-person statements in the books of Moses are given in first person in the Temple Scroll. Because this shift eliminates Moses as an intermediary, the scroll is presented as a revelation given directly from God to Israel. Thus the Temple Scroll “purports to be the community's Second Torah,” and as such it is an important additional source on theology in the Second Temple period.

The photograph that was on display of the Temple Scroll was a portion of column 24, which discusses sacrificial offerings to be made by the tribes of Israel. A translation of lines 10–15 follows. The bracketed words are this author’s clarification, subscript numbers indicate lines, and the word Blank indicates a space left blank in the original.

In continuation of this holocaust [burnt offerings] he will offer the holocaust of the only tribe of Judah. In the same way that 11 he offered the holocaust of the levites, so will he do with the holocaust of the sons of Judah after the levites. 12 Blank On the second day he will offer first the holocaust of Benjamin, and after it 13 he will offer the holocaust of the sons of Joseph together with Ephraim and Manasseh. On the third day he will offer 14 the holocaust of Reuben, only, and the holocaust of Simeon, only. On the fourth day 15 he will offer the holocaust of Issachar only, and the holocaust of Zebulon, only.

The Temple Scroll provides us with the Qumran view of what their eschatological temple, or temple at the end of times, would be like. It details the ceremonies that would be performed within that temple and presents much information about sacred festivals and what it meant to the Qumran community to be a temple people.

This article is adapted from Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., Questions and Answers on the Dead Sea Scrolls for Latter-day Saints (forthcoming).
Notes

