

Exhortation from the Damascus Document

(Geniza A + B, 4Q266 – 272)

First 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).

The audio presentation of this text may be downloaded from this link:
<http://radio-yahweh.com/dam-doc/dam-doc-all+15%.mp3>

Technical Terms / Characters / Places

- | | |
|--|--|
| [] The Sword | [] The Prince of Lights |
| [] The Remnant | [] The Anointed of the Spirit |
| [] Rebellious Israel, a Company of Traitors | [] The Well and the Rod |
| [] 390 years / 20 years | [] Damashek (Damascus) |
| [] The Root | [] The (Beloved) Teacher of Righteousness |
| [] The Man / Men of Mockery / Spitter of Lies | [] The Man of the Lie |
| [] The Boundary-Shifters | [] The Household of Torah |
| [] True Religion | [] The Diggers |
| [] The Fine Neck | [] The Whitewashers |
| [] The Annihilation | [] The City of Sanctuary |
| [] The Malachim of Destruction | [] One's Set-apart Spirit |
| [] The Rule / Rules | [] The Two Houses of Israel |
| [] Set-apart Spirit | [] The Star, The Interpreter of the Torah |
| [] The Fallen Sky Malachim | [] Sons of Sheth (Shat) |
| [] The Friends of Elohim | [] The Day of Judgment |
| [] The Commandments of Elohim | [] The Snakes, their Eggs & Wine |
| [] The Covenant of Elohim | [] The Whitewashers |
| [] A Faithful House | [] The Moshiach |
| [] Zadok, Sons of Zadok | [] The Men of Sacred Perfection |
| [] The Last Days | [] The Household of Torah |
| [] The House of Yahuda v. The House of Zadok | [] The New Covenant (in the Land of Damashek) |
| [] Belial | [] The Man of the Lie |
| [] The Three Nets of Belial | [] The Separatists |
| [] The Shoddy Wall-builders | [] The Members of Yahad |

Introduction to the Exhortation

Listen, all you who recognize righteousness, and consider the deeds of Elohim. When he has a dispute with any mortal, he passes judgment on those who spurn him. For when Israel abandoned him 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 them to be exterminated. In the era of wrath – three hundred and ninety years at the time He handed them over to the power of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon – 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 men, and had been like the blind and like those **groping for the way twenty years**. But Elohim considered their deeds, that they had 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. He taught to later generations what Elohim did to

the generation deserving wrath, a company of traitors. They are the ones who depart from the proper way. That is the time of which it was written, "Like a rebellious cow," so rebelled Israel.¹

The Man of Mockery

When the Man of Mockery appeared, who spit lying waters upon Israel, he led them to wander in the trackless wasteland. He brought down the lofty heights of old, turned aside from paths of righteousness, and shifted the boundary marks that the forefathers had set up to mark their inheritance, so that the curses of His covenant took hold on them. Because of this they were handed over to the sword that avenges the breach of His 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 covenant, violated Torah; and they conspired together to kill the innocent, for all those who lived pure lives they loathed from the bottom of their heart. So they persecuted them violently, and were happy to see the people quarrel. Because of all this Elohim became very angry with their company. He annihilated the lot of them, because all their deeds were uncleanness to Him.

The Immensity of Elohim's Resources

So now listen to me, 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*. Elohim, who loves true knowledge, has positioned Wisdom and Intelligence² in front of Him; Ingenuity³ and True Knowledge wait on him. He is very patient and forgiving, covering the sin of those who repent of wrongdoing. But Strength, Might, and great Wrath in the flames of fire with all the malachim of destruction will come against all who rebel against the proper way and who despise the rules, until they are without remnant of survivor, for Elohim had not chosen them from ancient eternity. Before they were created, He knew what they would do.⁴ So He rejected the generations of old and turned away from the land until they were gone.

He knows the times of appearance and the number and exact times of everything that has ever existed and ever will exist before it happens in the proper time, for all eternity. And in all of these times, He has arranged that there should be for Himself people called by name, so that there would always be survivors on the earth, replenishing the surface of the earth with their descendants. He taught them through those anointed by set-apart spirit, the seers of truth. He explicitly called them by name. But whoever He had rejected He caused to stray.

The Fall of the Malachim

So now my children, listen to me that I may uncover your eyes to see and to understand the conduct⁵ 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 urge and lecherous eyes. For many have gone

¹ Hos. 4:16

² "Cleverness," Wise, *et al.*

³ "Cunning," *ibid.*

⁴ Predestination as foreknowledge.

⁵ "Deeds," Wise, *et al.*

astray by such thoughts, even strong and fearless men of old faltered through them, and still do. When they went about in their willful heart, the Guardian Sky-Malachim fell and were ensnared by it, 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 it. Everything mortal on dry land expired and became as if they 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.

The Historical Results of Straying

By it the sons of Noah and their families went astray, and by it they were exterminated. {Though} Abraham did not live by it, he was {still} considered Elohim's friend, because he observed the commandments of Elohim and he did not choose to follow the will of his own spirit; and he passed them on to Isaac and to Jacob and they too observed them. They too were recorded as friends of Elohim and eternal partners in the covenant. But the sons of Jacob went astray by them and were punished for their errors. In Egypt their descendants lived by their willful heart, too obstinate to consult the commandments of Elohim, each one doing what was right in his own eyes. They even ate blood; and the men were exterminated in the wilderness. <Elohim commanded> them at Kadesh, "Go up and possess <the land>; but they chose to follow the will of< their spirit; and they did not listen to their Maker's voice or the commandments of their teacher; instead they grumbled in their tents. So Elohim became angry with their company.

Their sons perished because of it. Their kings were exterminated because of it. Their heroes perished because of it. Their land was devastated because of it, and because of it the members of the forefathers' covenant committed sin, and so were handed over to the sword because they abandoned the covenant of Elohim, and chose their own will, and followed their own willful heart, each man doing his own will.

But when those of them who were left held firm to the commandments of Elohim, He instituted His covenant with Israel forever, revealing to them things hidden, in which all Israel had gone wrong: His sacred Sabbaths, His famous festivals, His righteous ordinances, His reliable ways. The desires of His will that man should carry out and so 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 sin of humanity and in impure ways and said, "Surely this is our business," Elohim 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 appeared before; and even at this day, those who hold firm to it will receive timeless life, and all human honor is rightly theirs, as Elohim promised them by Ezekiel the prophet, saying, "The priests and the Levites and the sons 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."⁶

{As for} "the priests" – they are the captives of Israel, who go out of the land of Judah and the Levites are those accompanying them; {and as for} "the sons of Zadok" – they are the chosen of Israel, the ones called by name, who are to appear in the Last Days.

The House of Judah Vanquished in the Time to Come

⁶ Ezek. 44:15

< . . . > holiness < . . . > whom Elohim atoned for, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty as well as all who came after them who act according to the interpretation of the Torah by which the forefathers were taught, until the age is over, that is, the present time. Like the covenant Elohim made with the forefathers to atone for their sin, so will Elohim atone for them. 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 his own tower; “the wall is built, the boundary removed” (Mic.7:11). But in the present age Belial is unrestrained in Israel, just as Elohim said by Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, saying, “Fear and pit and snare are upon you, resident in the land.”⁷

Those Caught Up in the Three Nets of Belial

The true meaning of this verse concerns the three nets of Belial about which Levi son of Jacob said that Belial would catch Israel in, so he directed {those nets} toward three kinds of righteousness: 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.

{Regarding} the Shoddy-Wall-Builders who went after “Precept” - Precept⁸ is a Raver⁹ of whom it says, “they will surely rave”¹⁰ – they are caught in two traps: fornication, by taking two wives in their lifetimes although the principle of creation is “male and female He created them”¹¹ and those who went into the ark “went into the ark two by two.”¹²

Concerning the Leader it is written, “he will not multiply wives to himself”¹³; but David had not read the sealed book of the Torah in the Ark; for it was not opened in Israel from the day of the death of Eleazar and Joshua and the elders who served the goddess Ashtoret. It lay buried <and was not> revealed until the appearance of Zadok. Nevertheless the deeds of David were all excellent, except the murder of Uriah, 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 Moses said, “Unto the sister of your mother you will not draw near; she is the flesh of your mother.”¹⁴ 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 the flesh <of her father>.

Also they have corrupted their set-apart spirit, and with blasphemous language they have reviled the statutes of Elohim’s covenant, saying, “They are not well-founded.” They continually speak abhorrent things against them. “All of them are kindlers and lighters of brands”¹⁵; “the webs of a spider are their webs and the eggs of vipers are their eggs.”¹⁶ Whoever touches them will not be clean. The more he does so, the more he is guilty, unless he is forced.

⁷ Isa. 24:17

⁸ Isaiah 28:10.

⁹ Someone who rants and raves; speaks in a violent or loud manner.

¹⁰ Mic. 2:6

¹¹ Gen. 1:27

¹² Gen. 7:9

¹³ Deut. 17:17

¹⁴ Lev. 18:13

¹⁵ Isa. 50:11

¹⁶ Isa. 59:5

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”¹⁷; “they are a people wandering in counsel, for there is no insight in them.”¹⁸ For in times past Moses and Aaron 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 Moses 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 forefathers; and He raised up from Aaron 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 these 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 Damascus; 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 Interpreter of the Torah of whom Isaiah said, “he brings out a tool for his work.”²⁰ 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.

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.”²¹ 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.”²² They must distinguish between defiled and pure, teaching the difference between sacred and profane. They must keep the Sabbath 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 Damascus, offering the sacred things according to their specifications. Each one must love his brother 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 holy spirit, just as Elohim has told them so to do.

¹⁷ Isa. 27:11

¹⁸ Deut. 32:28

¹⁹ Num. 21:18

²⁰ Isa. 54:16

²¹ Mal. 1:10

²² Isa. 10:2

In short, for all 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 commandments for a thousand generations.*"²³

As For Those Who Reject

But those who reject the commandments and the rules <will perish>. When Elohim judged the land, bringing the just deserts of the despicable to them, that is when the oracle of the prophet Isaiah 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 Judah,"²⁴ 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 Damascus.**"²⁵

The books of Torah are the tents of the king, as it says, "I will re-erect the fallen tent of David."²⁶ 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 Interpreter of the Torah who comes to Damascus, as it is written, "A star has left Jacob, a staff has risen from Israel."²⁷ The latter is the Leader of the whole nation; when he appears, "he will shatter all the sons of Sheth."²⁸ They 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."²⁹ But those who give heed to Elohim are "the poor of the flock"³⁰: "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,"³¹ but the rest were given to the sword that makes retaliation for covenant violations.

Peshirim 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

²³ Deut. 7:9

²⁴ Isa. 7:17

²⁵ Amos 5:27

²⁶ Amos 9:11

²⁷ Num. 24:17

²⁸ Num. 24:17

²⁹ Zech. 13:7

³⁰ Zech. 11:7; cf. Acts 6:7b

³¹ Ezek. 9:4

princes of Judah were those like Boundary-Shifters on whom I will pour out wrath like water.”³² 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, 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 snakes, the cruel poison of vipers.”³³

“The snakes” are the kings of the Gentiles, and “their wine” is their customs and “the poison of vipers” is the chief of the kings of Greece, who comes 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 Moses 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.”³⁴ 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 Damascus, 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 the men of sacred perfection and then become sick of obeying virtuous rules. This is the type of person who “melts in the crucible.”³⁵ 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 his wrongdoing the most knowledgeable men will punish 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.

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 Men of Mockery, because they have uttered lies against the correct laws and rejected the sure covenant that they made in the land of Damascus, that is, the New Covenant. Neither they nor their families will have any part in the Household of Torah.

³² Hos. 5:10

³³ Deut. 32:33

³⁴ Deut. 9:5, 7:8

³⁵ Ezek. 22:21

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**. Now at that time Elohim's anger will burn against Israel, as He said, "Neither king nor prince"³⁶ nor judge nor one who exhorts to do what is right will be left. But those who repent of the sin of Jacob have kept Elohim's covenant. Then each will speak to his fellow, vindicating his brother, helping him walk in Elohim's way, and Elohim will listen to what they say and "write a record-book of those who fear Elohim and honor His name"³⁷ 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."³⁸ "He keeps faith to those who love Him "and to those who keep Him for a thousand generations."³⁹*

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 set-apart council according to his spirit. But all of the members of the covenant who breached the restrictions of the Torah, when the Shekinah of Elohim appears to Israel they will be excluded from the midst of the camp, and with them all who did evil in Judah when it was undergoing trial.

The Prayer of Teshuvah

*But all who hold fast to these rules, going out and coming in according to the Torah, always obeying the Teacher and confessing to Elohim as follows: "We have cruelly sinned, we and our ancestors by living contrary to the covenant rules; just and true are Your judgments against us" and do not act arrogantly against His sacred rules 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 and listen attentively to the Teacher of Righteousness, not abandoning the correct ordinances when they hear 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}*

³⁶ Hos. 3:4

³⁷ Mal. 3:16

³⁸ Mal. 3:18

³⁹ Exod.20:6