

Episode 177 The Divine Name of God in the Dead Sea Scrolls with Emanuel Tov

This transcript has been edited for clarity and space.

David Capes

Hi, everybody. Welcome back to The Stone Chapel Podcasts. I'm David Capes. Now last week we had part one of my discussion with Emanuel Tov, on the Divine Names in the Dead Sea Scrolls. We focused particularly on the Hebrew scrolls. Now, if you missed that, please go back and listen to that podcast. Now most of the 800 or so scrolls found at Qumran were written in Hebrew, or Aramaic in a particular script. It's called sometimes Aramaic script or square script. But there were some scrolls written in Greek. It's a minority for sure, but an important minority because it tells us something about the development of the LXX, the Septuagint. That became, in a way the standard Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. But of course, the Divine Names are found in those scrolls. So how did Greek text from the century before the century of Jesus, render the Divine Names? And what does that tell us about Greek-speaking Jews, and ultimately, the Jewish followers of Jesus, in the first century of the Christian era? Well, there's a lot to talk about. So today, Emanuel Tov on The Stone Chapel Podcasts.

Emanuel Tov

Maybe we'll say something about the Greek manuscripts as well. Because the Greek manuscripts are equally interesting.

David Capes

Now, most of the manuscripts from Qumran have been in Hebrew, but there are some in Greek and Aramaic.

Emanuel Tov

What is interesting, maybe I forgot to say and this is of a major, major interest. We find these special writings of the dots and of the writings in the ancient Hebrew script, almost exclusively, in writings of the Qumran sect. So, this was a habit of the Qumran sect. This is how we round off this topic. This was a custom of the Qumran sect. So, they are the ones who were so super religious. And this was not a custom imported from outside from Jerusalem. This was their feeling. They were very religious people. They were thinking the whole day about God. They were praying the whole day to God. They were studying Hebrew Scripture one third of the day. So, this is their life.

Now some Greek scriptures were also found at Qumran, and in other places in the Judean Desert, we find something very parallel there. Because Greek is a language different from Hebrew. And so, we find, interestingly enough, among the religious Jews, who copied Greek scriptures, mind you, we are talking about the period before Christianity.

David Capes

One hundred, maybe two hundred years.

Emanuel Tov

Yes, before Christianity, and also after Christianity, but as a continuation of the period before Christianity. These are Jewish, Greek writings, so that's the Septuagint, or old Greek translation, or Greek scriptures, maybe is the best term. Greek scriptures, we find in them something comparable to what we find at Qumran. Namely, the use of the name of God in Hebrew characters.

David Capes

So you're writing along in Greek, and then you see what?

Emanuel Tov

In the middle of the Greek, you have in Hebrew characters, the name of God in Hebrew. Now in one or two scripts, either in the square Aramaic script or in the ancient Hebrew script, the Paleo Hebrew. So, this we have from the first century before the common era onwards. I think most of these are in the so-called revisions, the Jewish revisions of the Septuagint. But some of them are unclear what their form is.

Now, there's an interesting aside here, if you write Yod, Heh, Waw, Heh. And if you don't know Hebrew, if you know only Greek capitals, that comes to be "pi", that's what it looks like, if you look from the other side, right? Not from right to left, but from left to right, because pi, iota, pi, iota. So, Origen already wrote about Pipi. So, this is how we scholars call this. This is a very interesting, parallel. And so you'll see that it's basically it's the same Jewish people who are very careful about the writing and pronouncing of the Divine Name, that even in Greek, and you see a beautiful example, in the Minor Prophets scroll from Nahal Hever, however, even in Greek, you see the way in which they limited themselves. Regarding the writing of the Divine Names,

David Capes

Is the name *Kyrios* ever used for the Divine Name in these sectarian scrolls or biblical scrolls?

Emanuel Tov

Yes. We have to complete the picture. If you open your present edition of the Septuagint. We call this the rouse edition. You don't find any of what I'm saying now, it's only "Kyrios." So, "Kyrios", the Lord. And that's how you find Kyrios also in the New Testament. What went on here? So, this is one addition to what I said.

The second addition to what I said is that we have a one scroll from Qumran. A fragment, it's a fragment of Leviticus. And in that fragment, you have the divine name. Neither *Kyrios*, nor the Hebrew writing, but you have in a transliteration of Hebrew, in Greek characters. So there you have the name Yahweh, in a Greek characters, but it's written in a shortened form, iota, alpha, omega. So this is a revolutionary find. Because now you have scholars, like Emanuel Tov, who say, this is probably the original way that the first translators wrote the translation. This is a very difficult suggestion. It's a normal way of thinking that, why would it be different from anything else, so that at first they wrote Yao.

And only later, under the influence of the Jewish limitations. They didn't want to write the name of God, and it became "my Lord." Which is *Adonai* in Hebrew, and *Kyrios* in Greek. But if this view is correct, it's not easy, because almost all our evidence is *Kyrios*. So it must have been a sweeping revolution. A sweeping change. Other people don't accept this. Most scholars don't accept this. Most scholars say that the first translation, the first representation of the Divine Name in Greek was *Kyrios*. That is also difficult. So, you have two different schools.

David Capes

So, in one, it sounds like there's a transliteration. Either represented in Hebrew script, or it's transliterated or it's translated into *Kyrios*.

Emanuel Tov

There are three different ways you have, and basically books have been written on this problem.

David Capes

Well, it's an important thing because it represents the piety of this particular group, which as you said, was very religious. And yet they did share some ideas with early Christianity, it seems likely and they also shared ideas with some of the Pharisees.

Emanuel Tov

Yes, but we talking about the translators, right. We are talking about the translators. And this is all we have. We have no other evidence. And it remains an hypothesis. We don't know. And we have to be modest and say that we don't know.

David Capes

And sometimes that's the best answer, isn't it?

Emanuel Tov, thank you for being with us today on The Stone Chapel Podcasts. We look forward to other times with you. And we're so grateful that you're here.

A Nugget of Wisdom from Emanuel Tov

I think one of the most important things in my approach to the Hebrew and Greek scriptures is that you have to study these very important works in their original languages. Only in this way, you can try to understand what the original authors said at the time. 2000 years and more ago.