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# THE EVIL INCLINATION IN THE LETTERS OF PAUL

JOEL MARCUS

## INTRODUCTION

In a previous study,<sup>1</sup> I traced the reflections in the Epistle of James of what rabbinic traditions were to call yēser hara or the "Evil Inclination." The present study advances the hypothesis that Paul also makes use of the yēser concept. This concept has its roots in Gen 6:5; 8:21 and describes the disposition by which human beings are "impelled... to consciously unlawful acts."<sup>2</sup> By Paul's time, yēser had become a technical term, and that Paul knew of it is most clearly demonstrated by Gal 5:16.<sup>3</sup> In what follows I will describe the way in which Paul, in his undisputed letters, both employs Jewish traditions concerning the yēser and, in some cases, stands them on their head.

## 1 THESSALONIANS

Writing to a church composed of former Gentiles who are undergoing persecution from their Gentile compatriots,<sup>5</sup> Paul reminds them in 1 Thess 4:5 of the will of God. This is that they keep away from porneia, "unchastity," each one keeping his own "vessel" (= wife? body?) in holiness and honour, "not in the passion of desire (en pathei epithymia) like the Gentiles who do not know God." Although epithymia is not always a translation for yēser in Paul,<sup>6</sup> it is so in the present case.<sup>7</sup> The linkage of the yēser with illicit sexual activity, a linkage which<sup>8</sup> Paul utilizes here, goes all the way back to Genesis 6,<sup>8</sup> and forms a trajectory which continues in the Qumran literature and in the Testaments of<sup>9</sup> the Twelve Patriarchs,<sup>9</sup> as well as in rabbinic traditions.

Paul asserts that it is characteristic of Gentiles that they act "in the passion of desire" (cf. Eph. 4:17-18). Here he is following the lead of Jewish traditions such as IQS 5:5, which speaks of "circumcising the foreskin of the yēser" in order to lay a foundation of truth for Israel. This phrase seems to imply that the yēser in its natural state is uncircumcised, a suspicion borne out by Sukkah 52a, where one of its names is "uncircumcised."<sup>11</sup>

## GALATIANS

The association of the yēser with Gentiles leads naturally into a consideration of Galatians. If the Gentile world is characterized by abandonment to the yēser, a logical

inference might be that the person who desires to follow God rather than the Evil Inclination must separate himself from Gentiles. That inference was apparently drawn by Paul's Galatian opponents, a group of Jewish-Christian missionaries whom J. Louis Martyn designates "the Teachers."<sup>12</sup> A stance similar to that of the Teachers is reflected in CD 19:20-23:

Each man did what was good in his eyes, and each one chose the stubbornness of his heart, and they kept not themselves from the people and its sin but lived in license deliberately, walking in the ways of the wicked; of whom God said, "Their wine is the poison of serpents and the head of asps is cruel" (Deut 32.33) The serpents<sup>13</sup> are the kings of the peoples and their wine is their ways.

At Qumran, the "stubbornness of his heart" (sryrwt lbw)<sup>14</sup> is synonymous with "the thought of his yēser," as IQS 5:4-5 shows; hence it is the yeser which causes a person to associate with Gentiles.

The Teachers' yēser doctrine is probably behind Paul's polemic in Gal 5:16: "Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the desire of the flesh (epithymian sarkos)."  
Epithymia sarkos is a translation of the Hebrew term found in 10H 10:23, ysr bsr.<sup>16</sup> Like Paul, the Jewish-Christian Teachers may have asserted that "walking in the Spirit" was potent against the yēser.<sup>17</sup> They, however, would have connected "walking in the Spirit" and the consequent<sup>18</sup> defeat of the yēser with conversion to the law of Moses. The Torah, for them would be the antidote to the yēser, as already<sup>19</sup> in Sirach 21:11 and commonly in rabbinic traditions. Paul, however, discerns an antinomy between being "led by the spirit" and being "under the Law" (Gal 5:18); for him the Spirit alone<sup>20</sup> sundered from the Torah, is the antidote to the yēser.

In Gal 5:17, Paul goes on to describe the battle between the yēser and the Spirit,<sup>21</sup> and in 5:19-21 he lists some<sup>22</sup> of the evil works to which the yēser impells human beings. Then, in 5:24, he unveils his solution to the "yēser

problem"; those who are "of Christ" have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.<sup>23</sup> This verse alludes to the destruction of the yēser, an event contemplated<sup>24</sup> in rabbinic traditions such as that of Sukka 52b<sup>24</sup> and probably already in 1QH 6:32.<sup>25</sup> In contrast to his Jewish background, however, Paul believes that the destruction of the yēser is accomplished, not by study and observance of the Law,<sup>26</sup> but by participation in the crucified Messiah.

Gal 5:16ff. is the most explicit yēser passage in the letter, but the yēser lurks in the background in other passages, such as 4:21-31, which is probably based on a midrash by the Teachers concerning Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael.<sup>27</sup> For the Teachers, the statement in 4:23,29 that Ishmael was born kata sarka, "according to the flesh," would have implied that he, the ancestor of the Gentiles, was conceived at the instigation of the yēser.<sup>28</sup> Having his origin in the yēser, Ishmael, and his descendants after him, would live out their lives in slavery to the yēser.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, Isaac, the ancestor of the Jews, was born, not according to the yēser, but according to the Spirit; and his descendants live out their lives in that glorious freedom from the Evil Inclination which is one of the greatest gifts of God's Law.

Paul, as might be expected, turns the Teachers midrash on its head. For him the Sinai covenant leads, not to freedom from the yēser, but to enslavement to it; Paul establishes this point by demonstrating that Mount Sinai is in Hagar-Ishmael territory.<sup>30</sup>

Paul is probably also arguing against the Teachers in Gal 3:3, where the subject is perfection. CD 2:15-16 suggests that, at Qumran, "walking in perfection" and "not being drawn by the yēser" are synonymous expressions.<sup>31</sup> Thus Gal 3:3 is a warning to the Galatians that, although they had made a good start in their assault on the yēser, by means of the only weapon which is effective against it, the Spirit, they are now in danger of relying on the very realm from which it arises, the flesh, in their attempt to finish it off. The Teachers would have agreed that relying on the flesh in order to defeat the

yēser is a no-win strategy; but they would never have concurred with Paul in placing "works of the Law" in the realm of the flesh (3:2-3).

Finally, a concern with the yēser can be seen in Gal 5:13, which might be paraphrased, "Don't let the inclination of the flesh use your freedom to create to itself," and in 6:7-8, which associates the flesh with perishability. The latter is a characteristic of the yēser,<sup>32</sup> and 6:7-8a might therefore be rendered, "Do not be deceived by the yēser; for the person who follows its pull will reap the destruction which is its mark."

### 1 and 2 Corinthians

Yēser speculation provides the background for many of Paul's statements in the Corinthian correspondence. The first canonical letter in that correspondence, it should be recalled, is addressed to a church, some of whose members see themselves as already "risen in Christ," made participants in heavenly gnosis, and thus released from earthly constraints.<sup>33</sup> To counter this gnostic libertinism, Paul draws on Jewish paraenetic traditions which at times mention the yēser.

One example of a reference to the yēser is 1 Cor 7:37, where the person whose passions do not overwhelm him is referred to as one who has control over toi idiou thelēmatos, "his own will." At Qumran, one's "own will" is synonymous with "one's yēser,"<sup>34</sup> and rāṣon, the Hebrew word used there for "will," is often translated as thelema in the LXX.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, there is probably a reference to the yēser in John 1:13,<sup>36</sup> ek thelēmatos sarkos "from the will of the flesh."<sup>36</sup> The combined force of these arguments is to suggest that the person of 1 Cor 7:37 is one who has his yēser<sup>37</sup> (especially as it affects his sexuality) under control.

By its opposition to God's will, the yēser makes itself into a stronghold of opposition to the knowledge of God. Two passages from the Dead Sea Scrolls connect "stronghold" imagery with the yēser. In 1QH7:16-17, the hymnist thanks God that, although "you know the (evil) inclination of your servant," yet "there do not belong to me the strongholds of flesh (mhsy bsr)," and in 1QH 10:23 he thanks God that "you have not made the inclination of flesh (ysr bsr) to be my stronghold (mhsy

bsr)," and in 1QH 10:23 he thanks God that "you have not made the inclination of flesh(ysr bsr) to be my stronghold (m wz)."<sup>38</sup> "Stronghold" imagery, in conjunction with "flesh" words, recurs in 2 Cor 10:2-5. In this passage Paul is probably countering the arguments of the Corinthian "super-apostles." These "super-apostles," according to D. Georgi, were charismatic Jewish-Christian missionaries who claimed to unlock the mysteries of the scriptures by means of allegorical interpretation, and who turned the Corinthians against Paul by pointing to his inability to compete with them in exegesis.<sup>39</sup> Paul retorts that the "super-apostles'" arguments are actually strongholds of rebellion against God.

These "strongholds" (ochyrōmatōn, v 4), which Paul destroys by using God's non-fleshly weapons, are identified as logismous, "reasonings," and "every high thing which exalts itself against the knowledge of God." Here it should be recalled that, from the beginning,<sup>40</sup> the yēser is connected with the life of the mind. 2 Cor 10:2-5 thus implies that a person tries to shape for himself a secure world by means of his thought (that is, by the yēser), but only ends up battling against God by that which he shapes. God's counter attack, however, sweeps away the resistant inclination, and takes captive (aichmalōtizontes) every thought into the obedience of Christ. It should be noted that the same verb, aichmalōtizein,<sup>41</sup> is used in Rom 7:23 do describe the yēser's action. A person is thus confronted with one of two captivities: captivity to the yēser or captivity to Christ.

Other possible references to the yēser in the Corinthian correspondence can be dealt with more briefly. The "old leaven," the "leaven of evil and wickedness," in which the Corinthians should not feast (1 Cor 5:8), may well be the yēser, which in rabbinic traditions is termed "leaven."<sup>42</sup> The disobedience of the wilderness generation, to which Paul alludes in 1 Cor.<sup>43</sup> 10:5-13, is related in Jewish literature to the yēser. Furthermore, the words epithymētas and epethymēsan in 1 Cor 10:16 are part of a word-group which we have demonstrated to be associated with the yēser; and the first two sins enumerated in vv 7-10, idolatry and unchastity, are

those most commonly linked with the Evil Inclination.<sup>44</sup> Finally, the "spirit of the world" in 1 Cor 2:12 may be a paraphrase for the yēser.<sup>45</sup>

### ROMANS

Writing to a church situated at the heart of the Empire and made up of both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, Paul angles for support for his future missionary plans and musters arguments he expects to use on his anticipated trip to the mother church in Jerusalem.<sup>46</sup> The latter church, as well as the Jewish component in the Roman church, must have been particularly in his mind as he penned Romans 1:18ff., which utilizes Jewish polemic against the depravity of the pagan world.

This great apocalypse of God's wrath seems to be loosely based on Wis. 13-15; especially important is Wis 14:12, "For the idea of making idols was the beginning of fornication, and the invention of them was the corruption of life." Paul, however, introduces as a linkage point between idolatry and fornication (and other forms of sin) the "desires of their hearts" (1:24), "dishonorable passions" (1:26), "a worthless mind" (1:28) - in a word, the yēser. The dynamic of vv 21-30 may be summed up: human beings choose their own inclination rather than God's will; then God gives them up to that which they have chosen. This same story is told three times (vv21-24, 25-27, 28-30).

The first narrative, vv 21-24, reveals a complex interrelation between human autonomy, epistemology, and sexuality. The human refusal to honor God leads to a clouding of the perception ("their hearts were darkened") and to idolatry, both of which have strong links with Jewish yēser traditions. As noted earlier,<sup>47</sup> the yēser is associated with thought from<sup>48</sup> Gen 6:5 on, and "the heart" can be a synonym for it. Furthermore, many<sup>49</sup> Jewish traditions associate the yēser with idolatry. One such passage of particular importance is 1QH 4:13-15:

The source of the hypocrites' schemes can be identified as Belial; but it can also be traced to their double-heartedness (= being ruled by both the Good and Evil Inclinations),<sup>50</sup> to the "root of bitter fruits" (= the yēser),<sup>51</sup> to their "stubbornness of heart" (= the yēser again),<sup>51</sup> and to their idolatry, the fact that they set before their faces that which causes sin (= the idol of the yēser).<sup>52</sup>

Since the yēser is an idol, however, the concrete acts of idolatry to which Paul refers in Rom 1:21-24 are derivative of the primary idolatry of putting the yēser at the centre of one's being. As a result of a person's choosing this idol, illusion invades his life<sup>53</sup> and thence impels him into concrete actions of self-destruction, particularly of a sexual nature. The fantasy of the yēser does not remain merely a fantasy but becomes an enslaving actuality.<sup>54</sup> God gives people up en tais epithymiais tōn kardiōn autōn, "in the desires of their hearts" (v 24); here we encounter epithymia again.<sup>55</sup>

Basically the same story is repeated in Rom 1:25-27 and 1:28-30. People refuse to worship God, or to have knowledge of him (vv 25, 28a); therefore God gives them up eis pathē atimias, "to dishonorable passions" (v 26) or eis adokimōn noun, "to a worthless mind" (v 28), i.e. to the yēser.<sup>56</sup> The actions which result include not only sexual sins but the whole gamut of human evil (vv 29-31); the yēser twists creation out of shape, turning that which is natural (physikēn),<sup>57</sup> into that which is contrary to nature (para physin, v 26).

So far, as J. Louis Martyn notes,<sup>58</sup> Paul has been preaching a sermon which could be expected to warm the hearts of some of the Jewish Christians in Rome (= the "weak" of chaps. 14-15?). They have heard a scathing denunciation of the typical sins to which the yēser impels the Gentile world. Rom 2:1 continues, "Therefore you are without excuse, O man, whoever...." The expected conclusion to the sentence would be, "whoever does such things." Paul, however, turns the tables and instead denounces "whoever judges." The judge of 2:1ff. can be identified with the Jewish Christian in 2:17 who relies upon the Law, then Paul's message is clear: the Jewish Christian who judges his Gentile brother on the basis of the Torah is as much under the domination of the Evil Inclination as the person whom he



condemns. For the judge's sklērotēs, "hardness," and ametanoētōs kardia, "impenitent heart" (2:5), which are shown in his overlooking of God's kindness, are nothing other than the yēser, by which he is storing up wrath for himself on Judgement Day.<sup>59</sup>

The relationship between the yēser and the judge's standard of judgement, the Torah, is the subject of that most convoluted and controversial chapter, Rom 7. Here, as previously in Galatians, Paul decisively parts company with the Jewish and Jewish Christian view of the Torah as the antidote to the yēser. Rather, as 7:5 testifies, "the passions of sins (= the yēser), which are through the Law, worked in our members to produce death." Instead of leading to life by defeating the yēser, the Law leads to death by giving rise to and stirring up yēser.<sup>60</sup>

How this happens is revealed in Rom 7:7-25. The ultimate enemy of mankind is neither the Law nor even the yēser, but hamartia, "sin," which is personified and viewed as a cosmic power.<sup>61</sup> Sin by itself, however, has no base of operations (aphormē) from which to launch an attack against human beings; that base, according to Paul is provided by he entolē, "the commandment" (7:8). The commandment of the Law, which by intention is directed against the yēser,<sup>62</sup> instead finds itself exploited by sin to produce and aggravate the yēser. Thus sin finds entry into the human being in the form of the commandment-generated inclination; the yēser is hē oikousa en emoi hamartia, "the sin which dwells in me" (7:17,20), which causes a person to do that which he hates (7:19-20).<sup>64</sup> It is also "the law of sin which dwells in my members" and which opposes the Law of God (7:22-23).

By referring to the yēser as a nomos tēs hamartias, a "law of sin," and by opposing this "law of sin" to the "law of God" and the "law of my mind," Paul is again reacting to the Jewish notion of the Torah as the antidote to the yēser. Yes, Paul admits, the Torah is "holy, just and good" in God's intention (7:12), and thus it is God's Law; furthermore, its goodness can still be grasped by the mind. When the Torah encounters the flesh, however, it is "weakened" (cf.8:3) and becomes sin's Law (7:23), and far from overcoming the yēser, it unwittingly participates in the yēser's creation. This

analysis continues in Rom 8. Since the Torah, weakened by the flesh, is unable to cope with the yēser problem, God must send his Son in the likeness of the Evil Inclination, so that in the Son's death the yēser may be destroyed (8:3). Yet Paul does not entirely distance himself from the Jewish understanding of the Torah as the antidote to the yēser, for in 8:2 he speaks of "the law of the life-giving Spirit in Christ Jesus" which sets one free from "the law of sin and death" (= the yēser). Choosing his words very carefully, he can thus retain the idea of the Law as potent against the yēser, because he believes that with the coming<sub>65</sub> of Christ an antinomy has arisen in the Torah itself.

The yēser puts in several other appearances in Romans. In Rom 6:12, the end result (and purpose?) of sin's dwelling in human bodies is that people obey tais epithymiais, "the desires," of the body; that is, that they obey the yēser. The yēser is explicitly mentioned in 8:5-7, where Paul speaks of to phronēma tēs sarkos, "the mind of the flesh," which is hostile to God and does not submit to his Law, indeed cannot.<sup>66</sup> It may also be in view in 8:12-13, where the Roman Christians are exhorted to put to death the deeds of the body (= the deeds to which the yēser impels them?) by the Spirit.

Finally, Rom 13:14 should be considered: "But put on (endysasthe) the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires (kai tēs sarkos pronoian mē poieisthe eis epithymias). The tēs sarkos pronoia . . . eis epithymias is equivalent to the yēser, whose association with sarx, epithymia, and thought has often been noted in this study; the answer to its prodding is "putting on Christ". Hermas, Mandate 12.2.4, which probably reflects Jewish paraenetic traditions, contains a similar exhortation with a striking difference: in order to resist evil desires, endysai tēn epithymian tēs dikaiosynēs, "put on the righteous desire," that is, the Good Inclination.

Paul, however, never mentions a good yēser, even though that concept apparently existed in his time; and Man.12:2:4 suggests that in Rom 13:14 he may have deliberately altered a Jewish tradition, which spoke of putting<sub>67</sub> on the good yēser in order to defeat the evil yēser. In Paul's view, however, the solution to the

problem of evil cannot be an intrinsic, internalized "Good Inclination," but only something which comes to the human being from outside - namely, the Spirit.

CONCLUSION - THE EVIL INCLINATION AND THE GOD OF THIS

For Paul, the solution to the problem WORLD. of evil cannot be a Good Inclination, because evil itself is not to such an extent internalized that the concept of the yēser can grasp it in its profundity. For this reason, Paul speaks not only about the yēser but also about Satan.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the yēser about which Paul writes is the yēser bāsār, the "inclination of the flesh," as Gal 5:16 establishes; and a glance at a concordance confirms that Paul speaks explicitly of the "flesh" much more frequently than he does of the yēser.<sup>69</sup> This frequency of "flesh" language is evidence for the pervasiveness of the apocalyptic framework in Paul's thinking, since "flesh" means the sphere over which the power of Satan holds sway.<sup>70</sup> For Paul, "flesh" is a more fundamental category than yēser is. It is a personified entity with a mind of its own (Rom 8:6); its thought is the yēser (see Rom 13:14), and a person who lives under its domination is a person possessed. In Paul's thinking, the concept of yēser has undergone an apocalyptic transformation. Somewhere along the line, he has made a discovery similar to that of the Qumran hymnist:

My heart was terrified because of the evil thought, for it is Belial (that is seen) when the inclination of their being is revealed.

When the reality of the apocalyptic warfare becomes plain, it is revealed that Satan stands behind and exploits the Evil Inclination.

How has Paul reached the conclusion that the problem is bigger than the yēser, that the true adversary is a personified, cosmic power of evil? Would Paul as a Pharisee have already held this belief? While we do not wish to deny that Paul, before his conversion to faith in Jesus, knew of Satan's existence, it seems probably that, as a Pharisee, he would have felt humanity's main struggle to be against the Evil Inclination. The extent of Satan's responsibility for evil is a secret which became manifest to Paul only with the revelation of the

meaning of the Cross and the Christian community.<sup>73</sup> The Gospel reveals who the enemy is, along with God's triumph over him; which is another way of saying that, for Paul, Jesus' death and resurrection are the apocalyptic event.<sup>74</sup>

### Notes

1. The Evil Inclination in the Epistle of James, CBQ 44, 1982
2. G.F. Moore, Judaism (1927; rpt. New York, 1971), I, 480
3. See below, p.2.... On yēser as a fixed concept by the first century AD see F.C. Porter ("The Yēser Harā", Biblical and Semitic Studies, NYork 1901, p109) who emphasizes that already in the CT the word had "gained a certain independence as meaning the nature or disposition of man". This process had been completed by the time the Damascus Document was written, as can be seen from the way in which CD 2.16 reverses the phrase of Gen 6.5 and 1 Chron 28.9 ie "the inclination of the thoughts" to read "the thoughts of the Inclination".
4. The undisputed letters are Romans, 1,2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thess. and Philemon. The letters containing the term yēser will be given in the chronological order suggested by R. Jewett, Dating Paul's Life, London 1979 pp 162-165 Paul translates the Hebrew term yēser like the LXX and The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (cf Porter op.cit. and R.H. Charles, The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, London 1908, p162)
5. Or the sitz im leben of 1 Thess, see G. Bornkamm, Paul, NYork 1969, pp62-65
6. Contrast the "good" usage in 1 Thess 2.17; Phil 1.23
7. On epithumia as a translation for yēser, see my comments on James 1.14, op.cit. Further support for this identification comes from the second century Shepherd of Hermas which incorporates much Jewish paraenetic material and which in Mandate 12(1.1,2,3; 2.4;3.1 passim) speaks of a good and evil epithumia, as in rabbinic writings. See L.W. Barnard, Studies in the Apostolic Fathers and their Background, Oxford 1966, 160-161 and O. Seitz, "Two Spirits in Man", NIS 1959/60, 90-92
8. The first mention of yēser in Gen 6.5 follows immediately on the report of the illicit intercourse between the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men"
9. CD 2.16 places in synonymous parallelism "the inclination (yēser) of guilt" and "eyes of fornication". In the Testament of Judah, Judah describes how, blinded by the diabolism of youth (=impulse), he had intercourse with Tamar [diabolism is the closest rendering for yēser in the Testaments (cf Charles op.cit 1962)] The link between yēser and illicit sexuality is more pronounced in intertestamental and later literature than it is in the Hebrew Bible; this increased emphasis may be due to Hellenistic influence.
10. See Porter, op.cit, 111
11. The IQS text is cited by Jewett(R) in Paul's Anthropological Terms, Leiden 1971,84; the Sukka text by S. Schechter, Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, NYork 1909 (rpt 1961) 243-244. Hebrew quotations are from E. Lohse, Die Texte aus Qumran, Munich 1964. NB the association of yēser with idolatry, the sin par excellence of the Gentile world.
12. In his forthcoming Anchor Bible Commentary on Galatians. Throughout this study, I am heavily indebted to Martyn's insights.
13. English translations of Qumran documents are from A. Dupont-Sommer, The Essene Writings from Qumran, Gloucester, Mass 1973. That the reference in CD 19.20-23 is to association with Gentiles is established by (a) the plural "peoples" (mm) in 19.23, to which the singular m in 19.20 is apparently parallel and (b) the continuation of the passage which identifies "head of the asps" as the "chief of the kings of Yawan"(Greece) (19.23-24)
14. On this expression, see the illuminating note by A.B. Spencer, "Srywt as Self-Reliance", JEL 100, 1981, 247-248
15. Martyn (op.cit) demonstrates, I believe, how much of Galatians is polemical against the Teacher's doctrines, but of already J.C. Beker, Paul the Apostle, Philadelphia 1980, 42-44
16. D. Flusser, "The Dead Sea Sect and Pre-Pauline Christianity" in Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls, (ed. C.Rabin & Y. Yadin) Jerusalem 1958, 255
17. IQH 4:30-33 and IQS 3.6-9 emphasize that "perfection" comes only from the Spirit; but as

- CD 2.15-16 establishes, "perfection" is equivalent to "not being drawn by the yēser." Furthermore, 1QH 4.31 may be a pur. cr. the yēser concept; man has no perfection of way "unless it be by the Spirit which God has created (ysr)" for him.
18. Cf. CD16.4-6 - on the day on which a person is converted to the Law of Moses, the Angel of Hostility departs from him. The passage goes on to say that this is why Abraham circumcised himself. It is probable that the Teacher, like the Dead Sea Covenanters, regarded Abraham as the spiritual forefather of all those who overcome the yēser, as Martyn (op.cit) maintains, citing, among other texts, those just given from the Damascus Document.
  19. Porter, op.cit. 140f; 127-129
  20. Cf. 1 Thess 4.8 where, after the reference to yēser in 4.5, God is pointedly designated as the giver of the Spirit.
  21. Here the yēser is described in verbal rather than in nominal terms ie instead of speaking of epithumia sarkos, "the desire of the flesh", Paul says, he sarx epithumēi, "the flesh desires". In 1 Peter 2.11 and Polycarp Phil 5.3, passages reminiscent of Gal 5.17, the Spirit's antagonists are sarkikoi epithumiai "fleshly desires" and pasa epithumia, "every desire" respectively (cf. Ger. 6.5) For Paul, then, sarx can stand for epithumia sarkos etc. See ref. to Barnabas 10.9 (N.28) and comments on "flesh" below.
  22. The "works of the flesh" are the sort of sins commonly attributed to yēser
  23. The plurality of "passions and desires" (pathēnata kai epithumiai) probably refers to yēser in the singular. (Cf "every inclination of the thoughts" of man's heart: Gen 6.5 implying a plurality of evil yesarim; also the singular of Ger. 8.21)
  24. Anonymous tradition from the school of R. Ishrael (cf Porter op.cit 128)
  25. "There shall be no deliverance for the inclination of guilt; he (God) will trample it unto destruction and there shall be no remnant." (Duport-Sommer, rv)
  26. In Gal 6.14 is the world which has been crucified rather than the desires, but the two are probably connected in Paul's mind; cf Titus 2.12; 2 Clem 17.2 speaks of kosmikai epithumiai "worldly desires". (cf Jas 3.6 for another possible link)
  27. See C.K. Barrett, "The Allegory of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar in the Argument of Galatians", Kösemann Festschrift, Rechtfertigung (ed J. Friedrich et alii) Tübingen 1976, 1-16
  28. On Hagar's descendants as Gentiles see Jubilees 16.17-18 cited by Barrett (op.cit), 9. kata sarka is probably Paul's shorthand for kata epithumias tes sarkos, "according to the desire of the flesh" (cf Barn 10.9) On being born "according to the flesh" see John 3.6; 9.34; and, more importantly, John 1.13, oude ek thelētatos sarkos... egenēthēsan ie from the yēser (or thelēnā as trans for yēser see below) In addition the Jewish-Christian Kerygma Petrou (c AD 200) mentions ten ek epithumias protēr sou . . . genesin, "Your first birth which came from desire" (Hom XI, 26.1) With thelēnā and epithumia both authors probably reach back to Jewish yēser traditions. Such a tradition may be embodied in the fragments of 1Q: 9.15-16: "Can human born of human (m nws) be righteous, and can man [born of man] have understanding? And can flesh born of the inclination [of flesh] be glorious?" (my trans.)
  29. On the yēser as enslaver, see Tit 3.3, doyleuantes epithumiais kai hēdcais poikilais, "serving various desires and pleasures" and 2 Pet 2.18-19 (or which see below N.32) The theme continues in Rabb. literature [cf R. Akiba (fl. 110-135) and R. Abin (fourth cent) in Gen.rab. 22.6]
  30. See geog. notice in Gal 4.25, and wide spread notion of Arabs as descendants of Ishmael: Jub. 20.13
  31. See also 1QS 8.1-3
  32. The yēser is specifically linked with corruption in rabb. traditions; its destiny is "to become worms and maggots" (Ned. 9b) and others refs attributed to Simon the Just cited in Schechter (op.cit 249) Cf also 2Pet 1.4; 2.18-19)
  33. See D. Georgi, First Corinthians, IDBS, 182f
  34. In CD 2.21; 3.2-3, 11-12 "their own will" (rswn) or "the will of his own spirit" (rswn rwhw) clearly designate the human will as divorced from and opposed to God, ie the yēser. CD 3. 11-12 parallels this "owr. will" to "the stubbornness of their heart", (cf above as synonym of yēser)
  35. See Esther 1.8; Ps 29(30); 6, 8 ; 39(40).9; 102(103).21; 142(143).10; 144(145).19; Dan 11.16, 36
  36. See above N.28

37. The Stoic ideal of autarkeia is recalled in 1 Cor 7.37 and had already merged with the yēser concept in Paul's time (See my "Evil Inclination in James" on Philo); cf also the latter or yēser as "fire" and 1Cor 7.9. Later rabb. tradition also presents yēser as fire (cf C.G. Montefiore & H. Loewe, A Rabbinic Anthology, NYork 1974(rpt) p98)
38. Cf Gal 5.13 and Paul's use of aphormē, originally denoting a base of operations for a military expedition, for "opportunity".
39. D. Georgi, op.cit.p184f; also his Die Gegner des Paulus im K Corinthbrief (Neukirchener 1964) 301-305
40. Cf again Gen 6.5; thus yēser is equivalent to the "strongholds" and "reasings" (2 Cor 10.4) and "high things" (10.5); cf the trans of Gen 8.21 "The imagery of man's heart is evil from his youth" (M. Butler, Good and Evil, NYork 1952, 90)
41. See below.
42. See tradition attributed to Abba Jose the Potter, a Tanna of the sixth generation, in Gen. rab. 34.10; cf also other traditions in Montefiore, Loewe, op.cit,300, Schechter op.cit.262, 265f
43. CD 3.4-9 narrates that "the sons of Jacob strayed because of this" ie "inclination of guilt" (2.16); cf the destruction mentioned 1 Cor.10.5-13)
44. On unchastity, vide supra; on idolatry see below.
45. On yēser as spirit, see N.21; on link with "the world" see N.26
46. On the sitz im leben of Romans, see Bornkamm, Paul 88-96; P.S. Minear, The Obedience of Faith Naperville, 1971, 1-35; The Romans Debate, ed. K.P. Donfried, Minneapolis 1977.
47. See N.40
48. On the "darkened heart" of Rom 1.21 as yēser cf 4 Ezra's expression "the evil heart" (cor malignum cited by Porter op.cit 146-149); also 1QS 5.45 where "his heart" is synonymous with the thought of his yēser.
49. See CD 20.9f where those who have "put idols on their heart" are identified with those who have gone "in the stubbornness of the heart". The latter, as noted, is synonymous with "in the yēser". Rabb traditions continue the association of the yēser with idolatry; see the remarks attributed to Johanan b. Nuri (120-140) and R. Yammai (200-220), respectively in b. Sabb.105b and y.Ned 9.41b (cited by W.D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, NYork 1967 29-30) See also G. Strecker "On the Problem of Jewish Christianity" in W. Bauer, Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity, ET by Fortress Press 1971,262 where he says of the Jewish-Christian document Kerymata Petrou: "It alludes to the polytheistic cult of idols(Hom.11.21.4, 11.31.1, etc) which is also characterized by "lust" (epithumia - Hom. 11.26.1; cf 11.11.5, 11.15.1 and 4ff., etc.)"
50. See my "Evil Inclination in James" n.37
51. On the "root of bitter fruits" cf Heb.12.15. The phrase is paralleled with "stubbornness of heart" and may be equivalent to yēser; vide supra
52. The ensuing passage ie 1QH 4.17-19 is significant for the interpretation of Rom 1.21-23. Here the hypocrites are charged with having rejected the "vision of knowledge" (cf. Rom 1.21a; also 1.25a, 28a); therefore God will judge them according to their idols, and they will be taken in their thoughts (cf. Rom.1.21 en tois dialogismois auton).
53. Cf CD 1.18 where "those who choose illusion" seem to be linked with those in CD 2 led astray by the yēser.
54. Cf Mt 5.28; Mk 7.21-23 and pars.
55. On the plurality of desires here see N.23
56. The phrase eis adokimonon noun reminds us that one of the functions of the yēser is dokimazein, "to test" a human being; see Porter (Op.cit. 142) on Sir.27.5-6. An adokimos nous is a mind which has been exposed to the testing action and failed.
57. Paul is using Stoic categories here to describe the yēser's effect. Rom 1.32 may be an echo of T.Ash 6.2 who declares that two-faced people (ie ruled by both inclinations) both do evil and approve those who do it. M. de Jonge unlike Charles (op cit.168), omits these words from his Greek text (Testamenta XII Patriarcharum, Leiden 1970) as not necessary.

58. Seminar on Romans, Union Theol. Seminary, NYork, Spring 1980.
59. See again 1QS 5. which parallels "the thought of his yēser" with "the stubbornness of his heart"
60. Paul uses the same word for "passions" (pathēmata) as Gal 5.24, identified earlier as a yēser passage. For a discussion on the meaning of dia tou nomou of commentaries by Sanday and Headlam (ICC, 1922, pp174f: it "refers to the effect of the law in calling forth and aggravating sin."), Barrett (Nyork 1957: "engendered through the law") and A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Romans (ed B.M. Newman & E.A. Nida; Stuttgart 1973, 131); also on dia plus the genitive of BDF 223(2), BAG 179d.
61. Notice that in Rom 7.11 hamartia is used with the verb exapataō ("deceive"), recalling the story in Genesis 3 (see Barrett, op.cit. p144) and associated hamartia with the serpent in that story. The personification of sin in Paul is well-known, causing people to obey the yēser; Cf also Justin, First Apology 10 and John 8.44.
62. In Rom.7.7 Paul sums up the law's demand as ouk epithumēseis, "You shall not covet" and may here direct the demand against the yēser
63. In Rom.7.8 Paul uses the phrase "every lust" (pasan epithumian) recalling Gen 6.5; cf N.23 According to Romans 1, the yēser appears to exist in humanity from the beginning; in Rom.7 it appears only to come with the commandment.; similarly Rom 1 appears to make it a matter of man's choice while Rom 7 suggests it is something that happens to man. Cf also the contrast in emphasis between Gen 6.5 and 8.21. Paul's insistence on the involvement of God's "holy, just and good law" in the creation of the yēser may be compared with Jewish trad. which saw God as the author of the yēser (Porter, op.cit. 109,117)
64. Cf. 11QPs<sup>a</sup> 19.15f (cited by M. Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, Philadelphia 1974 177): "Let neither grief nor evil inclination (yēser ra) possess my bones." (earliest instance of yēser ra?) A rabb. statement speaks of the yēser as a "king over the 248 members of man" (Abot R.Nat.32a, cited by Schechter, op.cit. 260 and Davies (op.cit 27), a passage linked with Paul's thought.
65. "Antinomy within the Torah"- phrase borrowed from J.L. Martyn, Seminar on Problems in Pauline Theology, Union Theol Seminary, NYork, Fall 1981 The language of Rom 8.3 recalls 6.6 where however it is ho palaios hēmon anthropos, "our old man" who was crucified with Christ that the yēser (= the "body of sin") might be destroyed. Cf Jewett (op.cit.. 290-292) asserts that Paul speaks of the "body of sin" rather than of "flesh of sin" as in 8.3 because in the former passage he is correcting a Gnostic interpretation of baptism. Käsemann (Romans 169) suggests that the phrase "the old man" comes from Adam-Christ typology and refers to "Adam individualized and represented in us." If so, has Paul conflated explanations of evil's origin found in Gen 3 and 6.5;8.21 in Rom 8.6 and 6.6?
66. This verse provides almost a text-book definition of the yēser (cf G.F. Moore, op.cit)
67. Rom. 13.14 is more likely a reworking of Mar.12.2,4 than the opposite. NB the semitic adjectival use of genitive (cf BDF 165) in the phrase ten epithumian tes dikalosunēs.
68. The nine unambiguous refs to "Satan", "the tempter" or "the god of this age" are 1Th 2.18;3.5; 1 C 5.5;7.5; 1 C 2.11;4.4;11.14;12.7;R 16.20); cf also 1 C 2.8 ("the rulers of this age" ) and 1 C 15.24-26; R 8.38 ("principalities and powers")
69. Over sixty-five uses of the word sarx alone
70. See K.G.Kuhn, "New Light on Temptation, Sin and Flesh in the NT" (103-104) and W.D. Davies, "Paul and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Flesh and Spirit" (161-162) both in The Scrolls and the NT, (Ed. K. Stendhal, NYork, 1957)
71. See eg Gal.5.17 and hamartia in N.61
72. Dupont-Sommer, Trans.(rv); see also 1QH 4.13-15 and 1QS 1.23-24.
73. I assume that the apocalyptic framework was not so central to Paul the Pharisee as it was to Paul, the Christian apostle. Cf Paul's use of apocalupsis in Gal.1.12 to describe his encounter with Jesus Christ. The modified determinism of the Phars. left room only for a modified dualism [J. Kallas, Jesus and the Power of Satan (Philadelphia, 1968 55-57)] On their suspicion of popular angelology and demonology see J. Bloch , On the Apocalyptic in Judaism (JQRMA II 1952) 128f
73. Cf Martyn's comments in "From Paul to Flannery o'Connor with the Power of Grace", katallagete (Winter 1981) 13.