

Article

An Eschatological Framework and Social Identity in 1QM 1:1–15 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

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Abstract: In the Qumran War Scroll (1QM) 1:1–15 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11, almost the same eschatological interpretative framework is created with words from the semantic domains of light and darkness, kinship, war, ethics, divinity and time. Although the constructed frameworks in these texts look alike, their impact on the self-understanding of the respective Qumran and Thessalonian communities is different. This article aims to reconstruct these frameworks from the texts by using semantic dictionaries and to reconstruct the probable impact of these frameworks on the self-understanding of the communities by utilizing some insights from sociolinguistics. It shows that although communities around the beginning of the era used almost the same frameworks, the effect on group identities could be significantly different.

Keywords: War Scroll; 1 Thessalonians; semantic domains; sociolinguistics; social identity complexity

1. Introduction

This article highlights striking similarities between 1QM 1:1–15 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 in terms of semantic domains and constructed interpretative frameworks.¹ However, it also underscores significant differences in the texts' purposes. In doing so, this article demonstrates the value of comparing a writing from the Dead Sea Scrolls with a Pauline epistle, while also acknowledging the potential for overlooking differences between the two texts.

The passages to be investigated describe an eschatological intervention of God in the context of battle. The pericope 1QM 1:1–15 serves as the introduction of the War Scroll. It speaks about the two parties at war, the course of the battle, and the final victory of the children of light over the children of darkness due to God's eschatological intervention (García Martínez 2010, pp. 305–6; Schultz 2009, 2019, pp. 74–76). The passage from 1 Thessalonians 5 urges the children of light to use their weapons and expect the sudden destruction of those 'who claim peace and security' (5:2) at the coming eschatological intervention of God (Barclay 1993; Fee 2009, pp. 182–200).

So, it is not arbitrary to compare 1QM 1:1–15 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11. Both passages refer to 'sons of light' (1QM 1:1, 9, 11, 13, 14(?); 1 Thess. 5:5), both were written by Jews around the beginning of the Common Era, and both their textual contexts articulate eschatology (Frey 1997, p. 276). However, 1QM is older than 1 Thessalonians, and written in Hebrew instead of Greek. The War Scroll was most likely written by multiple authors, whereas 1 Thessalonians was written by one person (García Martínez et al. 2007, p. 537). Lastly, 1 Thessalonians is an epistle written to a specific community, whereas 1QM is written



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(most likely) within a community. A comparative study must consider these differences and must search for value in the comparison (Stuckenbruck 2010, p. 170).

This comparative analysis fits in with the broader trend of interpreting the New Testament as an integral part of ancient Judaism (Nanos and Zetterholm 2015; Bird et al. 2023), and it also fits into the comparison of the Dead Sea Scrolls with the Pauline literature (Rey 2013). Additionally, the analysis in this article is related to research on the influence of language on identity formation, which expanded after Newsom's study on the relationship between words and reality and the impact of words on constructing and reconstructing identities in Qumran (Newsom 2004).

The impact of the language used and the created cognitive framework in 1QM 1:1–15 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 will be demonstrated by tools from sociolinguistics. I will illustrate how the framework directly or indirectly stereotypes both the ingroup and outgroups and its effect on the complexity of group identity.

In this article, I will first describe how I searched for the semantic domains in both texts and I will provide a brief description of stereotyping, followed by an overview of strategies for dealing with the complexity of group identity (Section 2). Then, I will further introduce the sources to be investigated and demonstrate, based on semantic dictionaries, that there are several common semantic domains present in both texts (Section 3). After that, I will reconstruct the social setting of the communities behind the texts (Section 4). Finally, I will describe the interpretation of the social context from the created framework (Section 5).

2. Methodology

For the examination of semantic domains in 1QM 1:1–15, semanticdictionary.org was used and for the analysis of 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11, the standard work of Louw and Nida (Louw and Nida 1996).² The created interpretive framework will be briefly described in Section 3.3.

Fisher and Kelman define stereotypes as 'a set of simplified and rigid beliefs about the attributes of another social group' (Fisher and Kelman 2011, p. 64). The term 'stereotyping' is a description of a socio-psychological phenomenon and is value-neutral, although in popular language today it carries a negative connotation.

Stereotypes arise from perceiving outgroup members as being homogeneous. These perceptions often carry negative connotations (Fisher and Kelman 2011, p. 64). However, the main aim is not necessarily to influence the perception of the outgroup negatively, but to boost the self-esteem of the members of the ingroup (Kuecker 2016, p. 72). The relationship between different groups largely depends on how each group perceives the other. This perception is closely linked to the self-perception of the ingroup. This was particularly true in first-century Mediterranean society, where individual identity was heavily influenced by the social group or groups to which a person belonged (Malina 1993, pp. 63–89).

Stereotyping simplifies the complexity of social identities. It creates in- and outgroups based on just one or a few identity markers. Yet, the identity of people is always complex, including in the centuries around the beginning of our era. Jewish people did not have one monolithic identity but belonged to several groups. As Arnal notes, 'Judaism is today, and apparently was in antiquity, a visible multivalent fusion of a wide range of identity markers and ways of conceptualizing identity' (Arnal 2009, p. 112). At distinct moments and in various contexts, divergent aspects of the variety of their social identity may be highlighted. Identity characteristics can be rearranged by importance in different contexts, which can create other similarities or contrasts between groups.

To map complexity and stratification groups, Roccas and Brewer's Social Identity Complexity Theory model is a good guide (Roccas and Brewer 2002; Kok 2014). This model will now be described and explained.

Roccas and Brewer distinguish four forms of dealing with social identity complexity: 1. intersection (a); 2. dominance (b); 3. compartmentalization (c); and 4. merger (d). These four forms are visualized in Figure 1 below and will be explained in the following paragraphs (Figure 1 is taken from Roccas and Brewer 2002, p. 90a).

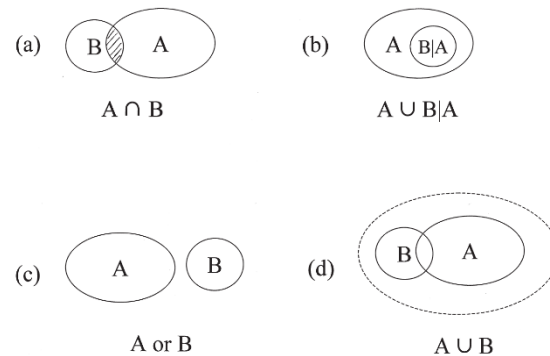


Figure 1. Visualization of four forms of dealing with social identity complexity (a–d).

Dealing with a social identity is referred to as an ‘intersection’ (a) when the subjective condition for belonging to the ingroup at any given time is composed of belonging to two (or more) social groups. For example, each ingroup member must be both Western (A) and university-educated (B). If either condition is not met, that person is counted as belonging to an outgroup. Roccas and Brewer visualize this in the figure with (a). The part where Figure A and B overlap (intersection) symbolizes the ingroup.

A second way of dealing with complexity, known as dominance (b), occurs when one characteristic dominates over the others. For example, if you belong to a specific religious denomination (B) but work in the banking industry (A), and your connection to the church is weaker than your connection to banking, you would primarily identify yourself as a bank employee. In this case, your social identity as a bank employee precedes your other social identities. You would feel a strong connection to other bank employees, even if they do not share the same religious denomination.

A third way of coping with social identity is compartmentalization (c). This is a form of identity in which a person switches between social identities based on the context. For example, a person may identify as both Turkish and Dutch. In Turkey or within a Turkish community, this person may adopt the Turkish identity but within the Netherlands, they may adopt the social identity of a Dutch person. These identities are activated in distinct contexts and are often mutually exclusive.

The fourth and final mode of dealing with social identity complexity is ‘merger’ (d). This implies that persons counts themselves as belonging to different ingroups at the same time. For example, if someone is a member of the music society, a teacher at an elementary school and a parent of three children, then all persons either at the music or at the elementary school or as a parent also belong to his or her ingroup. In the words of Roccas and Brewer, ‘In this mode, social identity transcends single categorical divisions between people (...). [T]he more social identities the person has, the more inclusive the definition of ingroup becomes (...)’ (Roccas and Brewer 2002, p. 91b). Decisive, then, is the person’s superordinate identity; this may be, for example, that they see all people as ‘creatures of God’.

3. The Semantic Domains Used

In both passages, the term ‘children of light’ (בני אור, υἱοὶ φωτός) is used and both passages refer to a final eschatological battle. This strengthens the idea that the sociolects³ of the Dead Scrolls and the Pauline literature were somehow related. Indeed, the designation ‘children of light’ as such and the articulation of an eschatological interpretive framework are found in multiple Jewish sources (Luk. 12:36; Joh. 12:36; Eph. 5:8; 1QS 1:9; 3:13) around the beginning of the Common Era, but the combination of this designation and the occurrences of six semantic domains for creating a more or less similar interpretative framework makes the case of intertextuality stronger. This does not suggest that the designation holds exactly the same meaning or nuances across different texts. Now, I will provide a further introduction to each source and discuss the semantic domains they have in common.

3.1. The War Scroll

The War Scroll (1QM) is the most extensive and best-preserved manuscript dedicated to describing an apocalyptic battle between the ‘children of light’ and the ‘children of darkness’. According to this text, the battle will culminate in the final victory of the ‘children of light’ and the destruction of Belial’s army. The manuscript itself is in relatively good condition (Schultz 2019, p. 322). A paleographic analysis of the script suggests that it dates back to the middle of the first century BCE (García Martínez 2010, pp. 304–5; García Martínez et al. 2007, p. 535), which is after Pompey intervened in Judah in 63 BCE (Jassen 2019, p. 580).

In the first column of the War Scroll—the column under discussion—an introduction to the scroll is given (García Martínez 2010, pp. 305–6; Schultz 2009, pp. 74–76). This introduction gives an abstract of the eschatological war and was probably added during the final stages of the redaction (Schultz 2009, p. 88). In this first column, words from several semantic domains are used. I only mention six similar domains with 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11: 1. Light and darkness: אור (light, 1:1, 3, 8, 11, 13, 14)⁴; חֹשֶׁךְ (darkness, 1:1, 7, 10)⁵; אור (to enlighten 1:8, 9)⁶; 2. Kinship: בְּנֵי (children, 1:1(2x), 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14)⁷; 3. War: מִלְחָמָה (war, 1:1, 3)⁸; צֵבָא (army, 1:1, 13)⁹; אֲדָרָה (troops, 1:1, 3)¹⁰; לְחָם (to battle, 1:2, 4)¹¹; לְהַשְׁמִיד (to destroy, 1:4)¹²; 4. Ethics: רָשָׁע (to transgress, 1:2)¹³; רֵשָׁעִים (transgressions, 1:6, 13)¹⁴; צְדָקָה (justice, 1:8)¹⁵; 5. Divinity: בְּלִיַּעַל (Belial, 1:2, 5, 13, 15)¹⁶; אֱלֹהִים (God/gods, 1:5, 8, 9, 10, 11(2x), 12, 14(2x))¹⁷; מַלְאָכִים (angel, 1:5)¹⁸; 6. Time: קֵץ (end, 1:4, 8)¹⁹; עֵת (time, 1:5)²⁰; מוֹעֵד (appointed time, 1:8(2x))²¹; יוֹם (day, 1:9(2x), 10, 11, 12)²². With all these words coming from different semantic domains, an interpretative framework is created, which I will illustrate in Section 3.3 shortly.

3.2. 1 Thessalonians

First, Thessalonians is generally believed to have been written in AD 50–51 (Ascough 2003, p. 162; Fee 2009, p. 5). The pericope 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 is about the day of the Lord and the call to live according to this coming event (Fee 2009, p. 184). In this passage, vocabulary from different semantic domains appears²³. Only six similar domains will be mentioned here: 1. Light and darkness (σκότος (darkness, 5:4, 5)²⁴; φῶς (light, 5:5)²⁵); 2. Kinship (ἀδελφός (brothers, 5:1, 4)²⁶; υἱός (sons, 5:5(2x))²⁷); 3. War (εἰρήνη (peace, 5:2)²⁸; ἀσφάλεια (security, 5:2)²⁹; ὄλεθρος (destruction, 5:3)³⁰; θώραξ (breastplate, 5:8)³¹; περικεφαλαία (helmet, 5:8)³²); 4. Ethics; νήφω (be sober, 5:8)³³; μεθύω (be drunk, 5:7)³⁴; ὀργή (anger, 5:9)³⁵; 5. Divinity (κύριος (Lord, 5:2, 9)³⁶, θεός (God, 5:9)³⁷); 6. Time (χρόνος (time, 5:1)³⁸; καιρός (time, 5:1)³⁹; ἡμέρα (day, 5:2, 4, 5, 8)⁴⁰; νύξ (night, 5:2, 5, 7)⁴¹). With these words originating from various semantic domains, an eschatological interpretative framework is constructed.

The following table (Table 1) provides an overview of the words found in 1QM 1:1–15 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 from the listed semantic domains.

Table 1. An overview of semantic domains and words used in 1QM 1:1–15 and 1 Thess. 5:1–11.

Semantic Domains	1QM	1 Thess. 5
1. Light and darkness	אור (light, 1:1, 3, 8, 11, 13, 14); חֹשֶׁךְ (darkness, 1:1, 7, 10); אִיר (to enlighten 1:8, 9)	σκοτός (darkness, 5:4, 5); φῶς (light, 5:5)
2. Kinship	בְּנֵי (children, 1:1(2x), 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14)	ἀδελφός (brothers, 5:1, 4); υἱός (sons, 5:5(2x))
3. War	מִלְחָמָה (war, 1:1, 3); חֵייל (army, 1:1, 13), גְּדֵייד (troops, 1:1, 3); לַחַם (to battle, 1:2, 4); לְהַשְׁמִיד (to destroy, 1:4)	εἰρήνη (peace, 5:2); ἀσφάλεια (security, 5:2); ὄλεθρος (destruction, 5:3); θώραξ (breastplate, 5:8); περικεφαλαία (helmet, 5:8)
4. Ethics	רָשַׁע (to transgress, 1:2); רַשְׁעָה (transgressions, 1:6, 13); צְדִיק (justice, 1:8)	νήφω (be sober, 5:8); μεθύω (be drunk, 5:7); ὀργή (anger, 5:9)
5. Divinity	בְּלִיַּעַל (Belial, 1:2, 5, 13, 15); אֵל (God/gods, 1:5, 8, 9, 10, 11(2x), 12, 14(2x)); מַלְאָךְ (angel, 1:5)	κύριος (Lord, 5:2, 9), θεός (God, 5:9)
6. Time	קֵץ (end, 1:4, 8); עֵת (time, 1:5); מוֹעֵד (appointed time, 1:8(2x)); יוֹם (day, 1:9(2x), 10, 11, 12)	χρόνος (time, 5:1); καιρός (time, 5:1); ἡμέρα (day, 5:2, 4, 5, 8); νύξ (night, 5:2, 5, 7)

3.3. The Constructed Interpretative Framework

The audiences of 1QM and 1 Thessalonians both interpret themselves and others in terms of kinship, referring to themselves as ‘children of light’ and not as ‘children of darkness’ (1QM 1:1, 9, 11, 13, 14(?); 1 Thess. 5:1, 5). They also view their relationships with others in terms of warfare, though this is more prevalent in 1QM than in 1 Thessalonians 5 (1QM 1:1–15; 1 Thess. 5:8). Both parties are described using ethical terms (1 QM 1:2, 8, 13; 1 Thess. 5:6, 7). Both texts suggest that an eschatological intervention will ultimately resolve the ongoing conflict (1QM 1:8–15; 1 Thess. 5:2, 3, 9). The constructed framework in each passage also assures the audience of the godly help for the ‘children of light’, although they are still required to engage in the battle (See Figure 2). Lastly, the contrasting symbolism of light and darkness in the pericopes emphasizes the separation between the groups.

It is superfluous to note that the frameworks are not completely equal. For example, in 1QM, Belial, the opponent of God, is mentioned, whereas this is not the case in 1 Thessalonians. Additionally, the term ‘brothers’ is an important designation in 1 Thessalonians, but it is not mentioned in 1QM 1:1–15 (Trebilco 2014, pp. 28–29; Jokiranta and Wassén 2009, p. 201). Furthermore, 1QM explicitly describes the opponents (Kittim) in the war; in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11, the ‘opponents’ are nearly absent.

The question of intertextuality and textual dependency is complex because both frameworks are based on elements from the same tradition—the Old Testament—and are part of a broader stream of Jewish literature from around the beginnings of the Common Era. The elements of these frameworks were separately present in the Old Testament (Frey

1997, p. 275). The way these elements are combined into a single conceptual framework is nevertheless new. I will discuss several elements that were also found in the Old Testament.

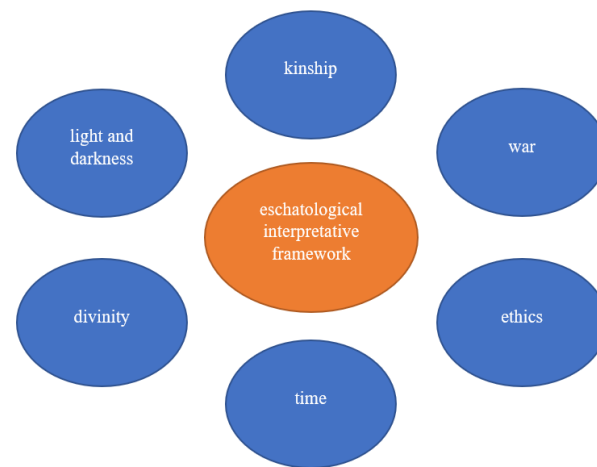


Figure 2. This figure shows the several semantic domains (blue ovals) from which an eschatological interpretative framework (orange oval) was constructed.

The concept of a final battle and the respective ultimate fates of the two opposing groups are already present in the Old Testament, specifically in passages like Daniel 11 and 12:1–4 (Davies 2010, pp. 12, 18). In contrast, the theme of battle in 1 Thessalonians is less prominent than in 1QM and is presented more metaphorically.⁴² Here, the “weapons” are explicitly described as symbols of hope, love, and faith. Nonetheless, war imagery permeates the entire passage, maintaining an eschatological focus (Smith 2004, p. 64).

Secondly, there is a longstanding tradition of viewing God as a warrior who fights for His people and grants them victory (Exodus 15:3; Numbers 21:14). The War Scroll also depicts God as a participant in the battle (1:9–12) (Davies 2000, p. 281) While this idea is less explicit in 1 Thessalonians, it suggests that God will provide safety (σωτηρ ἰ α, 5:9) to His people.

Thirdly, the Old Testament speaks of a time when God stands up for His people and settles the plea. This is the so-called “day of the Lord” (Amos 8:8–10; Zeph. 1:14,15; Ez. 38,39) (Davies 2000, pp. 279, 288; García Martínez 2010, pp. 303–4). While the War Scroll does not reference the “day of the Lord” as 1 Thessalonians 5:2 does, it does mention an “appointed time” (1:8–9) (Chester 2012, pp. 24–29; Fee 2009, pp. 184–86). Fourthly, the Old Testament also uses the contrast between light and darkness to contrast two camps and adds a moral valuation (e.g., Isa. 60:19, 20; Amos 5:18–20; Zech. 14:6,7). Fifthly, the notion that angels play a role in political conflicts and camp in warfare can be found in Daniel 11 and 12, among others (J. J. Collins 1975; Frey 1997, p. 313; Davies 2000, p. 288). This element of angels is absent from 1 Thessalonians, but there is Jesus Christ as a mediating figure (5:9) (Ellingworth and Nida 1976, p. 113).

The uniqueness is the combination of more separate elements from the previous literature into a new conceptual representation. The differences in how these frameworks are applied within various social contexts will be discussed in the following paragraphs. I now will examine the circumstances of the groups that need to be interpreted through these developed eschatological frameworks.

4. Social Context

To analyze the impact of the interpretative frameworks, it is important to understand the social context of the audience of 1QM and 1 Thessalonians. This is important because there is a correlation between the social setting, the language used, and the social identity

of a group (Halliday 1978, pp. 21–22, 159; Lincoln 1989, p. 10; Newsom 2004, p. 93; Trebilco 2014, p. 8). Therefore, understanding the audience's context, analyzed from the whole War Scroll and 1 Thessalonians, is necessary to analyze the effect of the created frameworks on social identity. However, reconstructing this social setting can be challenging. As Newsom points out, it is difficult to verify what the text claims against one's own observations of the community's activities. Consequently, the reconstruction may reflect not what they actually did, but rather what they thought they did, intended to do, or, at the very least, what they said they should do (Newsom 2004, p. 2). Bearing in mind the methodological necessity and the challenges of such reconstruction, the focus will be on describing the social context only from the manuscript 1QM and 1 Thessalonians itself, and also with an emphasis on internal differences in rank and role within the ingroups behind the texts being studied, as well as the problems they encountered in their social context. Describing the social context only from 1QM prevents the harmonization of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the necessity of the presupposition of the link between 1QM and Khirbet Qumran (De Looijer 2015). The use of only 1 Thessalonians for reconstructing the social context prevents difficult questions about the picture sketched in Acts and the dating of such a sketch (Tellbe 2001). This emphasis was chosen because I like to concentrate on the stereotyping effect and the texts' dealing with the complexity of social identity.

4.1. The War Scroll

The War Scroll is often referred to as one of the sectarian works (Duhaimé 2007, p. 133), although the classification 'sectarian' is currently debated (Bakker 2023, pp. 18–32). Still, the M-tradition is considered by most scholars as being group-specific. The scroll was understood as belonging to a community that lived in Khirbet Qumran (Schultz 2019, pp. 322–24). This article follows the presupposition that the War Scroll is somehow linked to this community (Brooke 2011).

Several issues are relevant for reconstructing the social context based on the War Scroll itself. First, the dating of the manuscript has been set in the mid-first century B.C.E., although the text of the manuscript has older layers (García Martínez 2010, pp. 304–5; García Martínez et al. 2007, p. 535). Currently, I am not focusing on analyzing the older layers through redaction criticism. Instead, my focus is on exploring the influence of the framework created in 1QM 1:1–15 on the social identity of the audience in the mid-first century when the manuscript was copied. Second, the text was written in Hebrew and found in Qumran. Both of these details indicate that Jewish people wrote it. Third, the writers (García Martínez et al. 2007, p. 537) appear to have been in a state of war, considering the specific war tactics which are described in detail (Gmirkin 1996, 1998; Weitzman 2009, p. 217). The enemies are characterized as the hosts of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, and the Kittites of Assyria and Egypt (1:1–4) (Evans 2016, p. 342). The ingroup probably experienced severe oppression from adversaries (1:13). This context suggests a Jewish background, where the traditional enemies of Judah are highlighted to illustrate the hostile circumstances facing the ingroup. Fourth, the text assumes familiarity with the temple cult in Jerusalem, as it writes, for example, about 'chief priests', 'priests', and 'Levites' (2:1–3; 5:16; 8:9). Fifth, both from the fact that there were chief priests, priests, and Levites and from the description of the army in the War Scroll, it can be inferred that diversity in rank and position existed in the Yahad.⁴³ The army consisted of officers, contingents, men of name, family heads, and infantrymen (3:2–8). It therefore seems logical to assume the difference in rank within the community in which the text was (over)written. Sixth, Israel is addressed as a unit, with terms such as people, your people, or Israel (8:9; 9:1; 10:2, 3; 8:9), although it also deals with apostates among the people (1:2). There is no strict distinction between the Yahad and the rest of the faithful Israelites in the War Scroll (1:12)

(Jost 2019, p. 208). Seventh, the presence of men is frequently mentioned, but it never explicitly makes mention of women (men of name (2:6); powerful men (2:8); men (5:3, 4; 7:12). However, the neutral term ‘people’ occurs also (8:9; 9:1; 10:9). This may include men, women, and children.

In short, from these data, we can conclude the following things about the social setting of the War Scroll (1QM): the manuscript 1QM was written by Jewish people, around the middle of the first century BCE, shortly after the intervention of Pompey on Jerusalem, with—following the impression of the text—a male-dominated group of varying ranks and roles.

4.2. 1 Thessalonians

The Thessalonian community had probably only recently emerged when 1 Thessalonians was written in 50–51 C.E. These Christ-followers seem to belong mainly to the same social class as Paul. There are three reasons for making this observation (R. F. Collins 1990, pp. 120–21; deVos 1999, p. 154; Barclay 1992, p. 56). First, Paul makes puns regarding his identity as a craftsman (1:3). Second, he sets himself up as an example. He writes that he worked night and day when he was with the Thessalonians (2:9). In doing so, he shows that he is one of them. Third, Paul urges them to work with their hands (4:11) so that they should be able to provide for themselves (4:12) (Ascough 2003, pp. 169, 173; Tellbe 2001, p. 93).

When describing the recipients of the letter, it is clear that there are distinctions within the group. These distinctions exist in at least three areas. First, religious origin was presumably not uniform (Gupta 2018). Second, the ethical way of life was unequal. Paul made a call to improve their way of life: ‘Do not sleep, but watch’ (5:6–7). The expression ‘not sleep but watch’ is employed metaphorically to denote a state of awareness and preparedness for the imminent day of the Lord (Martin 1995, p. 164). Some members of the ingroup are metaphorically “sleeping” (5:7), yet they will endure when the day of the Lord arrives, according to Paul (5:10).⁴⁴

Third, social status within the community was not uniform. Paul explicitly speaks of προῖσταμένους (those who are first/ those who lead) in the group (5:12). So there is some form of distinction in duties within the community (Ascough 2003, pp. 176–77). Despite these differences, all individuals (πάντες, 5:5) are framed within the described framework as children of light who require their weapons and will endure the approaching eschatological moment.

The letter indicates that the early Christ community faced opposition and oppression from the beginning (De Villiers 2005, pp. 308–11; Still 1999, pp. 208–67; Malherbe 2000, p. 178). Paul reported that he brought the gospel of God to Thessalonica amid much opposition (ἐν πολλῶ ἀγῶνι, 2:2). This opposition was directed not only at Paul but also at other followers of Jesus. They accepted the gospel amid much tribulation (ἐν θλίψει πολλῇ, 1:6) and suffered (τὰ αὐτὰ ἐπάθετε, 2:14) just like the Christ communities in Judea (Trebilco 2017, p. 234). This suffering was not only present when the message was received but still persists at the moment of writing 1 Thessalonians, according to Paul (Barclay 1993, p. 514; Fee 2009, p. 8). In 1 Thessalonians 3:3, Paul urges the followers of Jesus not to succumb to these afflictions (ταῖς θλίψεσιν ταύταις). He also mentions that he himself experiences these afflictions, making them identify with him (1:6, 3:4, 7) (O’Reilly 2020, p. 422). Donfried suggests that this tribulation may have included casualties among Jesus’ followers, given Paul’s focus on those who had already passed away (4:13–18) (Donfried 1985, pp. 349–50). However, Barclay disagrees, as Paul does not explicitly state that these departed individuals died in persecution, nor does he honor them as such. Barclay argues that the oppression (θλίψις) primarily consisted of social pressure and

exclusion (Barclay 1993, p. 514). Regardless, the apostle frequently indicates that the community faces considerable opposition, as shown by the use of *πολύς* (many) in *ἐν θλίψει πολλῇ* (in much oppression, 1:6) and *ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι* (amid much opposition, 2:2). Understanding these challenging social circumstances is important for interpreting the identity-shaping power of the created framework in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11.

Despite encountering persecution, the Thessalonians should maintain a positive attitude towards outsiders. They were encouraged to do good to everyone and be friendly to all (3:6, 4:12; 5:15). However, there was a negative portrayal of the ‘unbelieving’ Jewish people (2:13–16⁴⁵) and ‘the others’ (5:6). It seems that Paul may have referred to ‘the others’ (5:6) as the same group mentioned in 2:14 as *συμφυλέτης* (fellow citizens). There are several reasons to support this idea. Firstly, there is a strong connection between 1 Thessalonians 2:13–16 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11, as both passages convey a highly negative tone. The wrath of God is directed towards the outgroup in both 2:13–16 and 5:1–11 (*ὀργή* (wrath), 2:16, 5:9). The passage 2:13–16 suggests that the Thessalonians are experiencing the same situation as the Judeans (Tellbe 2001, pp. 107, 113). It would be strange to explain the strong opposition against *οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι* (the Jews) without there being any *οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι* (the Jews) in Thessalonica with whom a conflict was experienced.

Secondly, in 1 Thessalonians, it seems that the Christ community in Thessalonica is facing suspicion from some people regarding Paul. Paul preached the gospel in the church despite facing a lot of conflict (2:2). He defends himself by stating that his teachings were not based on error or impure motives, and he did not use deceit (2:3). This could be his response to the accusations made against him. This defense can be well understood in the context of internal Jewish debates about true and false prophecy (Horbury 1998, pp. 14–16, 111–26; Sandnes 1991, pp. 195–223). The accusation is that he would speak prophetically to please people (2:4) and that he would use flattering words as a pretext for greed (2:5) (Tellbe 2001, p. 99). In 1 Thessalonians, the accusers are not exactly identified. But we most likely have to differentiate between outgroups, at least persecuting people on one hand (2:14; 5:3) and other people on the other (3:12, 4:12; 5:15).

5. The Interpretation of the Social Context

In this section, I will discuss the impact of the created frameworks on their comprehension of the social context. Firstly, I will address the issue of stereotyping and its purpose, and then I will explain how the framework addresses the complexity of social identity.

5.1. Stereotyping the Social Context

This paragraph describes how the nearly similar frameworks in 1 QM and 1 Thessalonians deal with two different social contexts in stereotyping the groups within these social settings.

5.1.1. The War Scroll

The created framework in the War Scroll (1QM) stereotypes the faithful Israelites on the one hand and the unfaithful ones, the Kittim and other primordial enemies (Edom, Moab, Ammon and Philistea), on the other (Schultz 2009, p. 129).⁴⁶ The ingroup of faithful Israelites are all ‘children of light’ (1QM 1:1, 9, 11, 13, 14(?)) and ‘children of righteousness’ (1:8) and will ultimately receive eternal salvation, although there are differences in the ethical way of life and ranks and roles within the ingroup. The previously described distinctions within the ingroup, such as distinctions in social status and gender, were brushed away in favor of depicting the distinctions with the outgroup.⁴⁷ The outgroup is depicted as being on the side of Belial and his angels; they are the wicked ones and will be defeated at the appointed eschatological moment (1QM 1:14–15).

This way of stereotyping in- and outgroups is a phenomenon to empower the self-esteem of an ingroup. It is clearly stated in the scroll that, although the ingroup will experience difficult times (1:13), ultimately the victory is theirs (1:14–15). So, although their group esteem, due to their circumstances at this moment, seems low, interpreting their circumstances in the way the framework suggests, their group esteem outweighs the esteem of the outgroup(s). In the words of Jassen, ‘As such, the War Scroll manifests a form of eschatological retribution far more potent than anything previously encountered in sectarian texts. The War Scroll redeploys the Hellenistic/Roman war machine in crafting its fantasy of retributive justice. In so doing, the imbalance between the empowered and disempowered is dramatically inverted’ (Jassen 2019, p. 574). The reasoning is that although they may suffer losses now, in the end, they will overcome the outgroup. The War Scroll is not imbued with naive optimism, but it anticipates setbacks, and these are integrated into the reasoning of redemption. Such a phenomenon of cognitive dissonance between experienced setbacks and ideal victory has been described by Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter in their classic book, *When Prophecy Fails* (Festinger et al. 1964, p. 253). This interpretive framework—seeing downturns within a larger perspective that ultimately forebodes victory—is a method of coping with the so-called dynamic of social comparison within a group (Tajfel 1978, p. 76), reinforcing the identity of the ingroup and preventing persons from leaving the ingroup.

5.1.2. 1 Thessalonians

In the framework created in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11, the ingroup is denoted as ‘children of light’ (οἱ υἱοὶ φωτός (5:5)) and not in darkness or of darkness (ἐν σκότει (5:4), οὐδὲ σκότους (5:5)).⁴⁸ They were referred to as ‘brothers’ and ‘believers’ due to their faithfulness to Christ and loyalty to the Christ community (Burke 2003, 2012; Trebilco 2014, pp. 22, 74–75). In contrast to them stood an outgroup, denoted as ‘those who say peace and security’ (Weima 2012, p. 332; Harrison 2011, pp. 51–52) and ‘the others’, and indirectly stereotyped with pejorative words or phrases such as ‘being drunk’, ‘darkness’, ‘sleeping’, and ‘destined for wrath’ (Cho et al. 2015, p. 3). In this way, ingroup-similarity and outgroup-dissimilarity are constructed (Meeks 2003, pp. 94–96; McNeel 2014, p. 92). The manifest distinctions within the ingroup were brushed aside to depict distinctions with an outgroup.

As described, the Christ community in Thessalonika finds itself in oppression. In case of oppression or losing warfare, belonging to a group is problematic. A critical point looms when the advantages of belonging to the ingroup no longer outweigh the disadvantages (Tajfel 1978, p. 76). For the continuation of a group, it is, therefore, necessary to signify its circumstances and to heighten the advantages of belonging to the group by, for example, mentioning the destructive choice of leaving the group to strengthen one’s own identity. The created eschatological interpretative framework fulfils this task perfectly. The more believers are ridiculed or ostracized, the clearer the distinction becomes between believers and nonbelievers, and insiders and outsiders. This reinforces the belief in the apocalyptic division between those destined for salvation and those destined for wrath. As they face opposition, believers perceive their opponents as being darkened in their understanding, captured by the power of evil forces, and deserving of the judgment they will soon face (Barclay 1993, p. 518).

So, they must see today’s oppression in light of the coming eschatological event and be ready for the metaphorical battle when the day of the Lord arrives. Ultimately, salvation will be theirs (5:9).

5.2. Dealing with the Complexity of Social Identity

This section explores how the frameworks address the social identity complexity of the group. It will examine the characteristics that define people as belonging to the ‘children of light’ in both passages and how the texts deal with social complexity using Roccas and Brewer’s Social Identity Complexity Theory.

5.2.1. The War Scroll

The framework in 1QM 1:1–15 describes the boundaries of the group identity in terms of ‘ethnicity’⁴⁹ and loyalty to the covenant and makes these identity markers dominant in terms of differences within early Judaism.

The designation ‘children of the light’ most likely refers, according to 1QM 1:1–3, to the people who belong to the tribes of Levi, Judah, and Benjamin, who were faithful to the covenant (Schultz 2009, p. 103), because 1QM, in 1:1–3, parallelized these tribes and the faithful ones. Another designation that qualifies the same group is ‘the exiled of the desert’. This designation most likely also refers to those of the three tribes who return from the Babelion exile (Yadin 1962, p. 4).

Some scholars, in my view under the influence of their exegesis of 1QS, interpret the designation ‘children of the light’ (1QM) as referring to the Yahad only (Eshel 1991, p. 126; Davies 1977, p. 115). Eshel suggests reading 1:2 differently and placing the period not after ‘those who transgress against the covenant,’ but after mentioning the tribes of Levi, Judah and Benjamin. These tribes are then those who break the covenant. However, it is unlikely that these three tribes have such a negative connotation in the War Scroll. After all, the three tribes do not have this in any of the other Dead Sea Scrolls, while those other scrolls were presumably read and listened to at the same time by the same people (Schultz 2009, pp. 113, 121–22).

The emphasis on the entirety of Israel, rather than on specific movements as the Yahad, is also apparent elsewhere in 1QM. In 1QM 17:6–9, it is mentioned that, following the ultimate triumph, all of Israel will govern the entire earth during a period of prosperity and justice (G. Holtz 2009, pp. 28, 33–34; Davies 2007, p. 39). The distinction between faithful and unfaithful Israelites ceases to exist within Israel.

The audience of 1QM likely highlights the emphasis on all of Israel in the War Scroll due to increasing concerns about Roman intervention in 63 B.C.E. This focus underscores the clear boundaries established in the War Scroll between Israel and its adversaries, which would be understood by the audience as the distinction between all of Israel and the Romans. Instead of comparing themselves with other non-Yahad Jewish people, they compare themselves with the Kittites (Romans), who are strongly negatively portrayed in 1QM 1:1–15. The context extends from just the groups within Israel to the Israelites and the Romans. This extended context⁵⁰ leads to minimizing the differences with the other Israelites and focusing on the dominant identity marker, which is ethnicity, and loyalty to the covenant.

The constructed framework in 1QM most likely deals with the complexity of social identity by way of dominance, where ethnic identity takes precedence over other aspects such as belonging to specific religious movements, social status and gender. Such a phenomenon can be illustrated with the model created by Roccas and Brewer (Figure 3 is taken from Roccas and Brewer 2002, p. 90a), where (A) represents belonging to the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi, and (B) represents belonging to the Yahad or another specific movement.

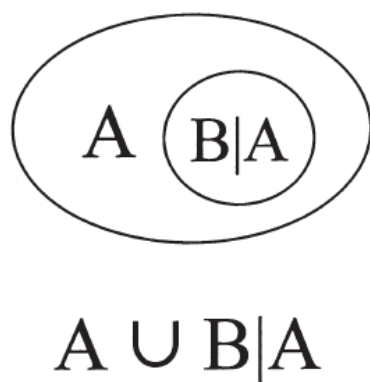


Figure 3. Dominance.

In this extended context, belonging to a specific group within Judaism becomes less significant. When not confronted by hostile non-Israelites in a social context, the ethnic identity of being an Israelite can take a back seat and be replaced by the identity of belonging to a specific group.

The constructed framework engenders a sense of unity within Israel, fostering hope among its citizens and encouraging them to adhere to the covenant and make moral decisions that align with their identity, as posited by the authors.

5.2.2. 1 Thessalonians

The framework in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 describes the Thessalonian Christ community in terms of loyalty to Christ (faith), waiting for the day of the Lord (hope) and family language (love).

The social identity of the members of the Christ community in Thessalonica is layered. They do belong to the community, but at the same time, they presumably have distinct ethnic and religious backgrounds, as well as a different status in the community—one of leadership or not (cf. 5:15)—and different attitudes (watching or sleeping, 5:6, 10) toward the Lord’s return. Paul transcends these differences using designations such as ‘brothers’ and ‘children of light’. They are all ‘in Christ’ and ‘not in darkness’ (1 Thess. 4:16; 5:4). He thereby makes them part of a more extensive group, because these designations and phrases refer not only to the Christ community in Thessalonica but also to Christ-communities throughout the Roman Empire, who belong to the same ‘family’ (Trebilco 2014, p. 22).

In 1 Thessalonians, the way Paul deals with social identity is called ‘merger’ in terms of SICT. The letter as a whole emphasizes that distinctions based on ethnic or religious backgrounds (A), or even attitudes toward the Lord’s Day (B), should be less important than belonging to Jesus Christ. Roccas and Brewer illustrate this approach to managing the complexity of social identity in a figure on the right (Figure 4, is taken from Roccas and Brewer 2002, p. 90a).

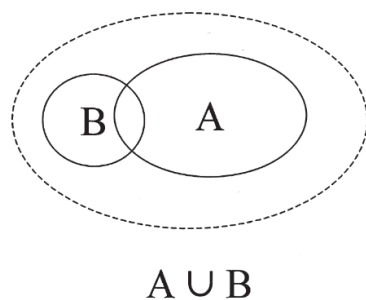


Figure 4. Merger.

The dotted line indicates that all who believe in Jesus Christ belong, regardless of differences in religious background (A) and life attitudes toward the Lord's Day (B). At the same time, the dotted line indicates that the ingroup has an open attitude toward outsiders and their handling of social identity has a high degree of complexity (Roccas and Brewer 2002, pp. 91b, 92ab).

So, the boundaries between 'the children of light' (5:5) and 'the others' (5:6) were, in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11, demarcated in terms of faithfulness to Jesus Christ and eschatological hope, regardless of social status, ethnicity, gender, etc.

6. Conclusions

This article demonstrates that 1QM 1:1–15 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 create a comparable eschatological framework based on six semantic domains: time, ethnicity, war, light and darkness, divinity, and kinship. By comparing the frameworks presented in the War Scroll and 1 Thessalonians, similarities and differences emerge between the two texts. Both utilize similar semantic domains to construct their interpretive frameworks, which help them understand the challenging circumstances faced by their respective, struggling minority groups. They must preserve, hold their weapons ready, and live according to the will of God, for God's intervention will rescue the 'family' of light and will provide enough retribution.

Despite these remarkable similarities, differences cannot be ignored. The texts employ different terminology from similar semantic domains. Additionally, although both frameworks are comparable, they stereotype various groups based on different characteristics. In the War Scroll 1:1–15, the boundary between ingroups and outgroups is primarily defined by ethnicity and loyalty to the covenant. In contrast, 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 emphasizes loyalty to Jesus Christ and knowledge of His return as the strongest distinguishing factors.

In 1QM 1:1–15, the predominant ethnic and covenant identifiers likely emerge during periods of oppression, overshadowing affiliation with the Yahad. The rise of the Romans and their intervention in 63 BCE probably gave the Yahad and other Israelites a shared opposition to a common adversary. This event is believed to have contributed to an escalation in the prominence of shared ethnic identity, as well as a deepened sense of allegiance to the covenant, among these populations.

The Christ community in 1 Thessalonians was likely facing persecution from a specific group of outsiders, among whom were probably 'non-believing' Jewish people. As a result, identifying with Jesus Christ was more important than ethnic identity. The group was somewhat open to outsiders and encouraged treating them well. However, towards persecutors, probably also 'non-believing' Jewish people, the boundaries were not expanded but rather strengthened.

To conclude, although there are remarkable similarities between the War Scroll 1:1–15 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11, it is still necessary to examine the social function of the created framework. By doing so, the purpose of a comparable framework is discovered to be significantly different in both texts.

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Notes

- 1 Manuscript 1QM is one of the manuscripts that contain a text presented as the War Scroll. For now, I equalize the War Scroll and the manuscript 1QM to make it simple; nevertheless, there is a difference between copies of the War Scroll and the ‘ideal’ War Scroll itself.
- 2 See the following website: <https://semanticdictionary.org/> (accessed 5 September 2024). It should be noted that this dictionary is not based on Qumran Hebrew, but on biblical Hebrew. Qumran Hebrew has changed somewhat in spelling and words may have gained (additional) place in other semantic domains. For example, the expression בני אור (children of light) does not appear in Biblical Hebrew.
- 3 Halliday defines sociolect or social dialect as follows: ‘[a] social dialect is a dialect—a configuration of phonetic, phonological, grammatical and lexical features—that is associated with, and stands as a symbol for, some more or less objectively definable social group’ (Halliday 1978, p. 159).
- 4 *Semantic Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew* (SDBH), H0216. This dictionary can be accessed on www.semanticdictionary.org. The following footnotes will only refer to the semantic domain code.
- 5 SDBH, H2822, H2824.
- 6 SDBH, H0215.
- 7 SDBH, H1121a, H1121b, H1122, A1123, H4192.
- 8 SDBH, H4421.
- 9 SDBH, H2428a, H2429.
- 10 SDBH, H1416, H1417.
- 11 SDBH, H3898.
- 12 SDBH, H8045.
- 13 SDBH, H7561.
- 14 See note 13.
- 15 SDBH, H6664.
- 16 SDBH, H1100.
- 17 SDBH, H0410, H0411, A0412.
- 18 SDBH, H4397.
- 19 SDBH, H2822, H7093.
- 20 SDBH, H6256.
- 21 SDBH, H4150.
- 22 SDBH, H3117, H3118.
- 23 For searching the semantic domains, the following book is used (Louw and Nida 1996). The following footnotes will only refer to the semantic domain code.
- 24 LOUW—NIDA, 14.53.
- 25 LOUW—NIDA, 14.36
- 26 LOUW—NIDA, 10.49.
- 27 LOUW—NIDA, 10.42.
- 28 LOUW—NIDA, 22.42.
- 29 LOUW—NIDA, 21.10.
- 30 LOUW—NIDA, 20.33.
- 31 LOUW—NIDA, 6.39.
- 32 LOUW—NIDA, 6.38.
- 33 LOUW—NIDA, 88.86.
- 34 LOUW—NIDA, 88.283.
- 35 LOUW—NIDA, 88.173.
- 36 LOUW—NIDA, 12.9.
- 37 LOUW—NIDA, 12.1.
- 38 LOUW—NIDA, 67.1.
- 39 See note 38.
- 40 LOUW—NIDA, 67.178, 67.186.
- 41 LOUW—NIDA, 67.192.
- 42 Also, in 1QM, the war imagery is most likely a metaphor for a moral distinction and eschatological conflict, and not a description of a physical battle (Jassen 2019, pp. 573–74; Weitzman 2009, p. 217).
- 43 For the term Yahad, look at the following references (Metso 2007; J. J. Collins 2009; Jost 2019, pp. 208–9).

- 44 I disagree with those who interpret the term ‘sleeping’ (καθε ύ δω, 5:10) as a euphemism for being dead (Johnson 2016, p. 145; T. Holtz 1986, p. 222; Morris 1984, p. 101). Instead, I understand it in the same way as ‘to sleep’ in 5:7 (καθε ύ δω). While καθε ύ δω (5:7,10), indeed, can be a synonym for κοιμάω (to sleep, 4:13), which can metaphorically mean ‘to die’, καθε ύ δω has never been used in that way in the previous literature (Luckensmeyer 2009, pp. 306–13; Edgar 1979, p. 349; Lautenschlager 1990).
- 45 The authenticity of 1 Thess. 2:13–16 is assumed (Tellbe 2001, p. 105; Weatherly 1991; Still 1999, pp. 24–45).
- 46 In times of writing the manuscript 1QM around the middle of the first century, before the common era, the designation ‘Kittim’ most likely referred to the Romans (Lim 2000, pp. 469–71; Alexander 2003, p. 29; Davies 2000, p. 295).
- 47 See Section 4.
- 48 The Greek σκότει (darkness) in 5:4 is a local dative. This dative expresses the location of ‘the children’ (von Siebenthal and Hoffmann 2008, p. 258). The construction with ἐν (in) also has a relational dimension. This relational dimension is evidenced by the fact that the children are not in darkness, but in Christ (4:16). The phrase οὐδὲ σκότους is a genitivus qualitatis (von Siebenthal and Hoffmann 2008, pp. 234–36). The Greek φωτός (light) in 5:5 is also a genitivus qualitatis. This genitive gives a characterization of the υἱοί (sons): sons of light. The phrase ἐν σκότει (in darkness) is contrasted with ἐν Χριστῷ (in Christ, 4:16) (Konstan and Ramelli 2007). The exegesis of ἐν (in) in ἐν Χριστῷ (in Christ) shows that ἐν (in) can contain both a relational and local dimension (Barclay 1999, p. 6). Son notes in his analysis of ἐν Χριστῷ (in Christ) that ‘throughout all the instances [of ἐν Χριστῷ], whether the verb denotes a status/state or an activity in Christ, a locative sense still remains’ (Son 2001, pp. 202–12).
- 49 Here, by ethnicity I mean only the distinction between Jewish and Gentile people that frequently appears in Jewish literature. To what extent ‘ethnicity’ existed in ancient times is a point of debate. Today, ethnicity is a static concept. In ancient times, it may have been more dynamic. This means that a person could change ‘ethnicity’ (Palmer 2016, pp. 26–37, 218).
- 50 The extended context is the context in which the view is not only on Israel itself, but also on other people. For the consequence of such a broader view, see (Haslam 2004, pp. 33–34).

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