

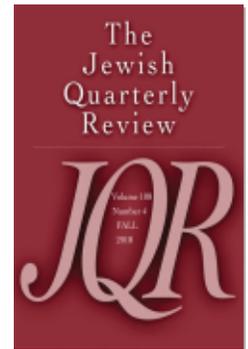


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Ancient Judaism

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Deceptive Intentions: Forgeries, Falsehoods, and the Study of Ancient Judaism

JONATHAN KLAWANS

WE SCHOLARS STAND AT A CROSSROAD, conjoining intersecting realms of lies. Political mendacity seems ubiquitous. Revelations about harassment present and past—often suppressed by lies, denials, and false protestations of ignorance—spring up all around. Forged Dead Sea Scrolls from God knows where, looted magic bowls from Syria and Iraq, and sundry other suspicious objects glare at us from computer screens and stare at us from hefty tomes. We must navigate in the directions of honesty and integrity: toward those finally telling their stories, toward those identifying forgeries, toward those reminding us that an undisclosed provenance serves to conceal crimes. Caught up in this time and place, I find that my suspicions have awakened and my tolerance for deception has dissipated. I can no longer grant the benefit of the doubt to inscriptions and objects coming from collectors and dealers. And as I work on ancient documents like *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* and *Letter of Aristeas*, I can no longer countenance a categorical distinction between pseudepigraphy and forgery—for this too can be construed as defending lies.

PSEUDEPIGRAPHY AND FORGERY

Those looking for clear definitions of the vast vocabulary pertaining to literary deceit can do no better than read Bart D. Ehrman's works on the

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subject.¹ We cannot and need not review the full range of vocabulary here, but we do well to reiterate his most pertinent definitional suggestions: pseudepigraphs are works with false titles, and there are two types: (1) works written anonymously that are later given false attributions (like various Psalms) and (2) writings that make false authorial claims (like Daniel 7–12, 2 Esdras, and the Pseudo-Paulines). According to Ehrman—and I now largely agree—those of the latter type constitute forgeries. The underlying motivation in these cases is to present the work in question as older, as more authoritative, than it would be if the true author were to identify himself. But whatever the incentive may be, the intent to deceive can readily be discerned.

Of course, there is another view. As Pierluigi Piovanelli recently put the matter, in response to Ehrman:²

Were the “real” authors of these writings moved exclusively by trivial purposes or were they sincerely convinced that they were inspired by, and speaking on behalf of, Enoch, Moses, Jesus, Paul, Shimon bar Yohai, and various other heroes of their memorial tradition?

And so we confront our problem: can we, as scholars, differentiate between sincerely held untruths and those held for trivial purposes? Since our authors have hidden their identities from us, how can we discern their true intentions? Is there not a problematic irony in the academic attempt to discern an author’s honest inspiration buried beneath a layer of deceit?

Many readers of this journal will know that the current debate is something of a replay. In his exhaustive treatment of literary falsehoods, Wolfgang Speyer offered a religious exemption, for what he called “genuine religious pseudepigraphy”³—marked by sincere belief and signs of revela-

1. Bart D. Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery: The Use of Literary Deceit in Early Christian Polemics* (New York, 2013), 29–145, esp. 29–32. For a briefer overview, see Ehrman, “Apocryphal Forgeries: The Logic of Literary Deceit,” in *Fakes, Forgeries, and Fictions: Writing Ancient and Modern Christian Apocrypha*, ed. T. Burke (Eugene, Ore., 2017), 33–49 (esp. 43–44).

2. Pierluigi Piovanelli, “What Has Pseudepigraphy to Do with Forgery? Reflections on the Cases of the *Acts of Paul*, the *Apocalypse of Paul*, and the *Zohar*,” in *Fakes, Forgeries* (ed. Burke), 50–60 (quote from 60).

3. Wolfgang Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum: Ein Versuch ihrer Deutung* (Munich, 1971), esp. 35–37; and “Religiöse Pseudepigraphie und literarische Fälschung im Altertum,” *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 8/9 (1965/66): 88–125. See discussion in Ehrman, *Forgeries*, 36–38. For a softer distinction between (some) pseudepigraphy and forgery, see

tory experience. Elias Bickerman, in his review of Speyer's work, famously objected, dismissing Speyer's distinction as both "gratuitous" and "useless."⁴ Bickerman was preceded in some respects by none other than Morton Smith, whose famous essay "Pseudepigraphy in the Israelite Tradition" came right out and called Deuteronomy a forgery, after first poking fun at scholars who would admit as much in their semi-private classrooms while warning their students against saying such things in public.⁵ In characteristic fashion, Smith called a spade a spade, outing those apologists who would, in his view, bury historical truth beneath layers of theologically tinged rhetorical distinctions, such as those differentiating a pseudepigraph from a forgery.⁶

As it happens, one of those apologists for pseudepigraphy was none other than Smith's revered teacher and lifelong friend, Gershom Scholem. Writing decades before Speyer—and with the Zohar firmly in mind—Scholem insisted on separating pseudepigraphy from forgery:⁷

Pseudepigraphy is far removed from forgery. The mark of "immorality, which is inseparable from falsehood, does not stain it, and for this reason it has always been admitted as a legitimate category of religious literature of the highest moral order. The historian of religion in particular has no cause to express moral condemnation of the pseudepigraphist. The Quest for Truth knows of adventures that are all its own, and in a vast number of cases has arrayed itself in pseudepigraphic

Anthony Grafton, *Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship* (London, 1990), 5–6.

4. E. J. Bickerman, "Literary Forgeries in Classical Antiquity," in *Studies in Jewish and Christian History: A New Edition in English Including "The God of the Maccabees,"* 2 vols., ed. A. Tropper (Leiden, 2007), 2:860–878 (quote from 861).

5. Morton Smith, "Pseudepigraphy in the Israelite Tradition," in *Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 18 = Pseudepigrapha I*, ed. K. von Fritz (Geneva, 1971), 191–215, esp. 191–93.

6. Smith does not attend to the matter of visionary experience, which is also part of Speyer's argument. On pseudepigraphy and visionary experience, see Michael E. Stone, *Ancient Judaism: New Visions and Views* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 2011), 90–121. Compare Armin D. Baum, "Revelatory Experience and Pseudepigraphical Attribution in Early Jewish Apocalypses," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 21.1 (2011): 65–92. Baum grants the visionary experience element but asserts nevertheless that pseudepigraphy in these cases would still involve deception, not about the nature of the experience but about the identity of the person who experienced the vision in question (esp. 81–86, 90–91).

7. Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1946), 204; the passage in question is also quoted in Piovanelli, "Pseudepigraphy," 60–61.

garb. The further a man progresses along his own road in this Quest for Truth, the more he might become convinced that his own road must have already been trodden by others, ages before him.

Here too, piety and humility—in quest of the Truth—defend against the charge of deceit. What would Smith have said to this? If the author had been someone other than Scholem, Smith's reply may have gone like this: "It remains only to notice what is perhaps a printer's error . . . the word 'Amen' has been omitted."⁸ But Scholem was Smith's revered teacher and friend, so Smith directed his public fire at other targets.

Smith had at least one opportunity to take Scholem to task directly, and privately, on the matter of pseudepigraphy, but then too he let it go. On receiving a clutch of early 1970s publications from Smith—including not just the essay on pseudepigraphy but also the popular (and controversial) Harper and Row volume on the Secret Gospel⁹—Scholem wrote to Smith (in a letter dated July 3, 1973), pressing him for his dismissive approach:¹⁰

The discussion on Pseudepigraphy has done much to enlighten me about some distinctions that could be made in this field. Still I wonder whether there are many secret texts which would not come under the title of pseudepigraphy, of one kind or another. Of all people, Mohammad seems the only authentic author of a secret text who can claim full credit. And in spite of all this, we will go on speaking of *Moshe Rabbenu*.

Smith's reply (dated July 13, 1973) responds to various other matters in the letter—but once again, Smith chose not to engage Scholem in a debate about pseudepigraphy.¹¹ We can only imagine what Smith really thought about Scholem's reference to *Moshe Rabbenu*—a sarcastic "Amen" perhaps? Whatever it was, polite concealment is something other than outright deceit.

8. Smith, review of *Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1 (ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans), *American Historical Review* 77.1 (1972): 98.

9. Smith, *The Secret Gospel: The Discovery and Interpretation of the Secret Gospel according to Mark* (New York, 1973). This was still some months before the publication of Smith's fuller academic work: *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973).

10. Guy G. Stroumsa, ed., *Morton Smith and Gershom Scholem: Correspondence, 1945–1982* (Leiden, 2008), 155.

11. Stroumsa, *Correspondence*, 157.

PSEUDEPIGRAPHIC DECEIT

If I have learned one teachable lesson about pseudepigraphs in the last few years it is this: no analysis of a work with false (or questionable) authorial claims can be complete without attending carefully to its internal rhetoric of deceit. How do we know, for instance, that the author of Pseudo-Phocylides was a liar?¹² Precisely because he repeatedly, and emphatically, attributed to Phocylides lines such as these:¹³

- (48) Do not hide one intention in your heart while speaking another;
 (49) and do not vary with the situation like the rock-clinging polyp.
 (50) In everything be sincere, and speak from the soul.

These warnings—articulated elsewhere in the poem as well (*Sentences* 7, 12, 16–17)—are part and parcel of this author’s duplicitous art. Whoever the writer was—and I think he was a Christian, not a Jew—he was a talented forger, drawing heavily from biblical sources while carefully concealing any (other) signs of his non-Phocylidean identity. He could surely “vary with the situation” and was hardly “sincere” in all of his words. Because we know he knows what a lie is, we can safely presume his intent to deceive.

We can say much the same for the *Letter of Aristeas*. While all modern readers recognize the pseudepigraphic nature of the work,¹⁴ a number of modern scholars deny that the author intended to deceive.¹⁵ Yet here too more caution may be in order. There is an underappreciated thread running through the work that justifies certain forms of deceit and demonizes those who reveal what should be kept secret. One fascinating passage in *Aristeas* purports to relate information learned by Aristeas and his colleague Andreas concerning the Temple, Jerusalem, and its defenses (§§

12. On this work see Klawans, “The Pseudo-Jewishness of Pseudo-Phocylides,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 26.3 (2017): 201–33; on the author’s intent to deceive, see esp. 211–13.

13. Translation in Walter T. Wilson, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (Berlin, 2005), 107.

14. On this, and all things related to *Aristeas*, see Benjamin G. Wright III, *Letter of Aristeas: “Aristeas to Philocrates” or “On the Translation of the Law of the Jews”* (Berlin, 2015); see 16–20 on the work’s pseudepigraphic features. According to Grafton, *Aristeas* is a “classic artifact of forgery” (*Forgers and Critics*, 15).

15. See, e.g., Erich S. Gruen, “The Letter of Aristeas,” in *Outside the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture*, 3 vols., ed. L. H. Feldman, J. L. Kugel, and L. H. Schiffman (Lincoln, Neb., 2013), 3:2711–68 (e.g., 2711, 2717, 2722, 2764), and also Abraham Wasserstein and David J. Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today* (Cambridge, 2006), esp. 22–23.

83–120). The section concludes with a curious, and somewhat confusing, account of how the Jews long ago persuaded the Persians that Judea’s copper and iron mines were unprofitable. Aristeeas here enthuses over how the Jews cleverly saved themselves by means of a falsehood (διαβολή; 119; cf. 252), a “pretense” (παρεύρεσις, 120; cf. 14). In today’s parlance, we might say that, in Aristeeas’s telling, the Judeans at that time launched a successful campaign of strategic disinformation, one that successfully deludes a foreign overlord.¹⁶

In another passage, *Aristeeas* treats the other side of this coin. Toward the end of the high priest Eleazar’s discourse on the law, he presents an analogy between weasels and informers, in the form of a riddle: “weasels conceive through the ear and give birth through the mouth” (§165), which is akin to a those who “have given body in speech to what they received through hearing and have entangled others in evils”—these are “utterly tainted with the pollution of their impiety” (§166).¹⁷ It is left for Aristeeas himself to spell out that the concern here is with informers (ἔμφανισταί), who deserve death for revealing secrets to the enemy (§§ 167–68). Close to the very center of this striking pseudepigraph, the moderately Hellenizing high priest Eleazar is said to have said to Aristeeas—in the form of a riddle—that it is a fundamental and even driving principle of Jewish law that some truths, even accurately discerned, are to be kept concealed.

These passages display something that has not been sufficiently appreciated heretofore: the *Letter of Aristeeas* goes out of its way to justify certain deceits in the form of disinformation and misinformation. What is more, earlier in the work, Aristeeas boasts about his own guile, when he persuaded the king to free enslaved Jews, acting on a “pretext” (παρεύρεσις, §14; cf. §120). Shortly thereafter, in front of his own king, Aristeeas secretly prayed to the Jewish God (§§16–17). These passages undercut any argument that this pseudepigraph can be absolved from the charge of intention to deceive. At the same time, these passages illustrate

16. If the words are modern, the concepts are not: Greeks too were interested in such things, even to the extent that classical military manuals (e.g., Xenophon, *The Cavalry Commander*, esp. 4.1–5.15) elucidate the strategic benefits of espionage (including agents undercover) and counterintelligence (including disinformation). For a general review, see Frank S. Russell, *Information Gathering in Classical Greece* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1999); see esp. 103–39 (on espionage generally); 186–89 (“Disguise, Covers, and Pretense”); and 216–18 (“Disinformation”).

17. Translation in Moses Hadas, *Aristeeas to Philocrates (Letter of Aristeeas)* (New York, 1951), 165.

how pseudepigraphic deceit was defensible from the point of view of the author, just as the deceptions discussed within the work are justified by given expedients.

There are plenty of other pseudepigraphic reflections on lies: the Pseudo-Paulines, for instance, enjoin readers to put away falsehood and speak the truth (Eph 4.25; cf. 6.14; Col 3.9).¹⁸ The author of the *Epistle of Enoch* (1 Enoch 92–105), who was certainly not Enoch himself, enjoins his readers not to “alter the words of truth, or falsify the word of the Holy one” (104.9; cf. 98.15). He then proceeds to complain bitterly about those sinners “who will alter and copy words of truth, and pervert many and lie and invent great fabrications, and write books in their own names” (104.10).¹⁹ In such works, assertions of sincerity are part of the ploy, while any justifications of deceit are possibly the most forthright passages to be found.

Perhaps the most outrageous justification for deceit I know of is to be found in *Clement to Theodore*—the possibly authentic but nevertheless suspect letter Morton Smith uncovered at Mar Saba in 1958.²⁰ Throughout the letter, (pseudo?-) Clement emphasizes to Theodore that truth and falsehood are measured in ways other than mere honesty. Because the Carpocratians are evil, even if they say something true, one cannot agree with them (I, 5–9). Human beings may think they know the truth, but the “true truth” of faith is what must be preferred (9–11). Of course, the secret true truth cannot be revealed to the evil ones, and one must therefore lie to them, even under oath (II, 11–16).²¹

Trying to get a full handle on what Clement ostensibly wants Theodore to know and say, to whom and when, my head spins. If the Clement speaking in the work believes what he writes, he would also be justified

18. Ehrman, *Forgery*, 541, 547; see also 24–26, 126–27.

19. Translation in George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation, Based on the Hermeneia Commentary* (Minneapolis, Minn., 2004), 162–63. On this passage in the context of pseudepigraphy, see Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha,” in *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview*, ed. J. J. Collins and D. C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, Mich., 2012), 193–96. Note also the earlier discussion of J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford, 1976), 50.

20. See Smith, *Clement of Alexandria*, and Smith, *Secret Mark*.

21. On these passages, see Smith, *Clement of Alexandria*, 11–15, 53–57; see esp. 53–54, where Smith acknowledges the contradiction between the private views expressed in the present letter and the public views Clement expresses in his known works, which seem much more circumspect regarding when deception may be permitted. On Clement and permitted deception, see also Ehrman, *Forgery*, 542.

in lying to Theodore. Indeed, once one makes this realization, either the letter no longer makes much sense or the letter cannot be trusted: if Clement was at all concerned that Theodore might reveal the true truth of the “secret gospel,” wouldn’t it all have been easier—to say nothing of safer—if Clement simply followed his own advice and lied to Theodore altogether, denying the existence of a Secret Mark? And if the author of such a letter revealing the highest of secrets—itsself an oddity at the least—would have lied to anyone in the service of what he perceived to be a greater good, is it not fair to wonder whether the author identified himself truthfully? There may be more than one good answer to these questions, but I am led back to the one thing I believe I have learned: any written work that makes false—or possibly false—authorial claims cannot be fully understood without grappling with its own internal rhetoric of deception.

TAKING BACK THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

Introducing his volume containing the extant correspondence between Morton Smith and Gershom Scholem, Guy Stroumsa repeatedly asserts that Smith’s letters to Scholem prove Smith’s honesty. According to Stroumsa:²²

Smith’s analysis of the Secret Gospel, though brilliant, may be ultimately unconvincing, but the continuous skepticism about the very existence of Clement’s letter, and accusations of forgery—a forgery perhaps made by Smith himself—have always seemed to me to stem from quite unscholarly grounds, usually implicit rather than explicitly stated. To my mind, the new evidence strongly points to the total trustworthiness of Smith’s account of his important discovery (though not necessarily of his interpretation of the document).

For these and other reasons, Smith’s honesty should be apparent to anyone “armed with common sense and lacking malice.”²³

Well, I think I have common sense, and I try my best, within human limitations, to live my personal and professional life free of hate.²⁴ Yet I still have my doubts about Morton Smith and the letter to Theodore. Most of my doubts are not really my own, but those of Charles Murgia,

22. Stroumsa, *Correspondence*, xxi.

23. Stroumsa, *Correspondence*, xv; cf. xvii, xix–xx.

24. I might as well note here, for the record, that the closest I ever came to meeting Smith was seeing him now and then, always from some distance, in the cafeteria of the Jewish Theological Seminary in the late 1980s.

Bart Ehrman, and Francis Watson.²⁵ I wish I knew what “implicit” and “unscholarly” grounds Stroumsa means specifically, but I do not think this characterization applies fairly to the three skeptical scholars I have just named. Moreover, the letter’s internal rhetoric of deceit seems to me to be both problematically over-the-top and woefully underanalyzed.²⁶ And as for Stroumsa’s main point: frankly, I do not find the letters sufficiently revealing about what really matters. When Scholem respectfully (indeed, almost piously) defended pseudepigraphy, Smith dodged a possible confrontation. While Scholem accepts the letter to Theodore as authentically Clementine, he rejects Smith’s attribution of antinomian ideas to Jesus.²⁷ Was this too an artful dodge? Was he in fact less agreeing than he allowed in writing—just like Smith? Regardless of how Scholem’s private comments to Smith are to be understood, the fact remains that Scholem never made much use of the Mar Saba letter—he left it to Smith to draw out any implications, even though any such implications would pertain to the history of ideas—above all, redemption though sin—near and dear to Scholem.²⁸ Be all this as it may, if we want the final word on the truth and falsehood of the letter to Theodore, it is not clear to me, on methodological grounds, how that final word could be found in letters penned by Morton Smith.

Admittedly, what I have are doubts, not proof. But when we are dealing with unverifiable and untestable artifacts—especially ones that make

25. Charles Murgia, “Secret Mark: Real or Fake?,” in *Longer Mark: Forgery, Interpolation, or Old Tradition*, ed. R. Fuller (Berkeley, Calif., 1976), 35–40; Ehrman, “Response to Charles Hedrick’s Stalemate,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11.2 (2003): 155–63; and Francis Watson, “Beyond Suspicion: On the Authorship of the Mar Saba Letter and the Secret Gospel of Mark,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 61.1 (2010): 128–70.

26. Watson constitutes one important exception in this regard; see “Beyond Suspicion,” esp. 138–39, 145–48.

27. Stroumsa, *Correspondence*, 155–56. On June 9, 1974, Scholem conveyed to Smith even greater doubts (this, after reading the copy of *Clement of Alexandria* that Smith had sent to Scholem): “I have tried to follow your argument and to separate the evidence from the hypothetical elements . . . But there seems to me a great difference between the stringency of your deductions and the hypothetical character of your assumption of Jesus as a mystical libertine” (*Correspondence*, 158–59).

28. On the various ways in which Scholem’s work influenced—and perhaps inspired—Smith, see Piovaneli, “Halfway between Sabbatai Tzevi and Aleister Crowley: Morton Smith’s ‘Own Concept of What Jesus “Must” Have Been’ and, Once Again, the Question of Evidence and Motive,” in *Ancient Gospel or Modern Forgery? The “Secret Gospel of Mark” in Debate*, ed. T. Burke (Eugene, Ore., 2013), 157–83.

controversial claims in and of themselves—the burden of proof shifts to those who would use the Mar Saba letter for an understanding of early Christianity or ancient Judaism. I am done giving away the benefit of the doubt when my gut tells me to be suspicious.

SUSPICIOUS OBJECTS

I was in Israel briefly during the Second Intifada. Having promised my family I would avoid the center of Jerusalem, I found myself shopping for jewelry in one of those shops near the King David Hotel (which, alas, was not where I was staying). As I strolled I also looked into the windows of nearby antiquities shops—they were closed, they usually are—but in the window of one I saw a beautiful magic bowl staring back at me. The bowl looked just perfect. Too perfect. Through the glass and wrought iron window grills, I couldn't make out a word. But I could hardly see a crack or a missing letter. A beautiful bowl. I turned to walk away, but then came back for one more look. No way, I thought, no way. How many hundreds of magic bowls have been sold to collectors through the antiquities market? Have the collectors who buy these things ever turned any down—for looking too perfect?

I have not yet come across other scholars worried about fake bowls—and I've asked a few over the years—so maybe I am taking a step too far, on ice too thin to support me. I confess: I know little about bowls. But I know I am not the only one vexed by *Hazon Gabriel*, the one and only “Dead Sea Scroll in Stone,”²⁹ that just so happens, by many readings, to include a potpourri of cryptic catchphrases like “in three days” (1, 19); “new covenant” (2, 17–18); “God of the chariots,” (1, 26) and more. Topping all this off, it is a pseudepigraph (2, 77, 80: “I am Gabriel . . .”).³⁰

Årstein Justnes's suspicions are available for now online, and his concerns echo some of what he and his colleagues have already established concerning the post-2002 Dead Sea Scrolls fragments (inconsistent paleography, disproportionate use of biblical material).³¹ The matter cannot

29. For transcriptions, translations, photographs, and analysis, see *Hazon Gabriel: New Readings of the Gabriel Revelation*, ed. M. Henze (Atlanta, 2011).

30. Here I follow the readings of Elisha Qimron and Alexey (Eliyahu) Yudit-sky, “Notes on the So-Called *Gabriel Vision* Inscription,” in *Hazon Gabriel* (ed. Henze), 31–38.

31. See Årstein Justnes, “Hazon Gabriel: A Modern Forgery?,” forthcoming in *Material Philology in the Dead Sea Scrolls: New Approaches for New Text Editions: Proceedings of the International Conference at the University of Copenhagen, 3–5 April, 2014*, ed. K. Davis and T. Hasselbalch; posted on Justnes's academia.edu page. On the forged scrolls, see Kipp Davis, “Caves of Dispute: Patterns of Correspondence and Suspicion in the Post-2002 ‘Dead Sea Scrolls’ Fragments,” *Dead Sea*

be fully addressed here, but let me add two concerns of my own. First, I find it suspicious that early, direct access to the stone was given to Israel Knohl, who just so happened to have previously published a speculative theory that the stone turns out, by some readings, to support.³² To me, this looks something like a preplay of the delivery of the Gospel of Jesus's Wife to Karen King.³³ It now seems clear that this small Coptic forgery made its way to Karen King by design, following a patterned practice whereby forgers or owners scout out scholars likely to be particularly receptive to the artifact in question.³⁴ Second, David Jeselsohn's account of his acquisition and authentication of the stone is unsatisfyingly vague. Jeselsohn states that he received the stone in 2000 or 2001 from the Jordanian antiquities dealer Ghassan Rihani (who passed away in 2001).³⁵ The delivery from Rihani—which included other unspecified items as well—was sent to Jeselsohn from the dealer's London address (not Jordan). Jeselsohn's brief account suggests (though it is too imprecise to be certain) that he purchased the stone before consulting credentialed academic experts to confirm its authenticity, and long before Ada

Discoveries 24.2 (2017): 229–70. This particular issue of *DSD* includes a number of essays addressing the current forgery crisis confronting scholars of the scrolls.

32. Israel Knohl, *The Messiah before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Berkeley, Calif., 2000); cf. Knohl, "The Apocalyptic and Messianic Dimensions of the Gabriel Revelation in their Historical Context," in *Hazon Gabriel* (ed. Henze), 39–59.

33. For a wide-ranging academic review of the affair concerning the Gospel of Jesus's Wife, see the essays collected in *New Testament Studies* 61.3 (2015). And among them, see especially Christopher Jones, "The Jesus' Wife Papyrus in the History of Forgery." The controversies surrounding the Gospel of Jesus's Wife also raise important issues concerning academia and gender; on this see Caroline T. Schroeder, "Gender and the Academy Online: The Authentic Revelations of the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife*," in *Fakes, Forgeries* (ed. Burke), 304–25.

34. See Jones, "Jesus' Wife." To be clear, my point in suggesting this structural comparison is not to cast any aspersion on Knohl—whose honesty I do not question—but only to suggest that a clever forger may well have hoped that a buyer/owner would share the stone with scholars who have vested interests in the inscription's content. As Jones points out, this pattern is part of the "syntax" of forgery and can clearly be seen with regard to the Jesus's Wife Papyrus.

35. On the likelihood of Rihani's trafficking in looted goods (in this case, magic bowls), see Neil J. Brodie and Morag M. Kersel, "WikiLeaks, Text, and Archaeology: The Case of the Schøyen Incantation Bowls," in *Archaeologies of Text: Archaeology, Technology, and Ethics*, ed. M. T. Rutz and M. M. Kersel (Oxford, 2014), 198–213, esp. 206–7. David Jeselsohn does not specify when he received the delivery from Rihani. In an essay published in 2011, he recalls receiving the stone "about ten years ago." For his full account, see Jeselsohn, "The *Jeselsohn Stone*," in *Hazon Gabriel* (ed. Henze), 1–9 (quote from p. 2).

Yardeni and others were invited to see the stone itself in 2005.³⁶ I think scholars deserve to know more about the stone's whereabouts from 2000 to 2005: what other objects were in this particular delivery from Rihani? Was a price for this singular object negotiated without either Jeselsohn or Rihani (or their agents or heirs) consulting outside scholars?³⁷

Perhaps good answers to these questions will emerge. I cannot detect deceit in what little we have been told, and, honestly, I want to trust the scholars who are publicly working on this document to have told us all they know. But there is still need for caution, on methodological grounds: the typically tolerated secrecy that obscures the find stories of objects likely looted serves also to prevent any proper analysis for clues of forgery. This too was a lesson we learned from the *Gospel of Jesus's Wife*: the most damning evidence against the papyrus was the less-skilled forgery delivered along with it.³⁸ From now on, we cannot evaluate isolated items selected from larger, but unavailable, collections or "deliveries." We need to know the full range of what Rihani had on offer at that time, and whether any of what we now know to be forgeries were passing through any of the same channels.

So until we can learn much more than we currently know, I will suspect that *Hazon Gabriel*—the Dead Sea Scroll in stone—may have been something of a trial run for what we now know came to light only a little later: Dead Sea Scrolls forged on parchment. Admittedly, I cannot prove any of this. But these days no one should have to prove that a uniquely sensational but unprovenanced object is suspicious. The benefit of the doubt is not ours to give. The uncertainty inheres in the unprovenanced object itself, radiating out from its mysterious, unstable core.

ALLOWING FOR THE INTENT TO DECEIVE

The various cases I have considered are not quite parallel. But apologies for Morton Smith remind me of apologies for pseudepigraphy, for looted bowls, for *Hazon Gabriel*. There is something polite, respectful, and—do I

36. See Jeselsohn, "The *Jewel John Stone*," 2–4.

37. On the sometimes secretive, sometimes public, roles scholars play in vetting objects for antiquities dealers and collectors, see Brodie, "Congenial Bedfellows? The Academy and the Antiquities Trade," *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 27.4 (2011): 408–37.

38. See Christian Askeland, "A Fake Coptic John and Its Implications for the 'Gospel of Jesus's Wife,'" *Tyndale Bulletin* 65.1 (2014): 1–10; and "A Lycopolitan Forgery of John's Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 61.3 (2014): 314–34. Note also Schroeder, "Gender and the Academy Online," in *Fakes, Forgeries* (ed. Burke), esp. 318–19, 321–23.

have this right?—gentlemanly about these trusting reluctances to probe for possible deceit. In this respect, too, Scholem was perfectly consistent: he defended pseudepigraphy against the charge of forgery, and he accepted the general authenticity of *Clement to Theodore*. Scholem was driven, in part, by the larger need to push back against the rationalist dismissal of Jewish mysticism as well as the personal desire to trust his student and colleague. But we are living in a different era. Sadly, what we need today is more suspicion and less trust.

We need to be alert to modern forgeries, and suspicious of any artifacts—especially sensational ones—whose provenance is unknown, mysterious, or unverifiable. We cannot presume the innocence of the markets, and we cannot avoid confronting the academic and moral issues arising before us. The tolerance for loot leaves us all the more vulnerable to being fooled by forgeries—but even if we are dealing with verifiably authentic (but nevertheless, likely looted) objects, are we facing the moral questions at stake honestly? We also need to be more careful when it comes to ancient forgeries (that is, pseudepigraphs). This matter is different: we cannot avert our eyes from ancient forgeries, for studying texts like *Letter of Aristaeas*, *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, *Jubilees*, and, yes, Deuteronomy is at the very center of our work. But we can be more alert. Are we apologizing for these works' deceptive natures or are we recognizing and grappling with their untruths and any ancient and modern justifications for them? I repeat, one last time, my new rule of thumb: no pseudepigraph (or alleged pseudepigraph) can be fully understood without contending with its internal rhetoric of deceit.

There is one final factor that gives me pause: the simple fact that some liars are just so damn good at it. We scholars must periodically remind ourselves that the very best fibbers, forgers, plagiarists, prevaricators—and deniers—may well be better at their dishonest crafts than the rest of us are at our honest ones. And this brings me back to the news. It seems so deceptively easy to see right through political mendacity that we can fail to realize that serial harassers have been hiding in our midst, in part, by their own shrewd deceit—aided, perhaps, by our own self-deluding denials. Harassment is much worse than dishonesty, but it persists by the power of lies. When we scholars forget any of this, we fall short of an important part of our academic responsibility, which is to be alert to deceptions and fakery wherever we fear we may find them, be that in our ancient sources, in antiquities markets, among collections private and public, or, yes, even within the academy.