



## Judaism, Hellenism, and Sectarianism

The Qumran corpus began in the distinctive historical experience of a sectarian group, one that emerged out of Second Temple Judaism and then withdrew to Qumran, where it accumulated a library. The sect came into being the moment the group came together as a recognizable movement with its own self-consciousness and self-definition. At that point, the group's distinct ideological stance distinguished it as separate from others.

Although the sect's early ideology emerged out of the religious culture of Second Temple Judaism, the group that finally bequeathed us the manuscripts at Qumran was nevertheless unique in many respects. Therefore, we must seek to establish historically when and how the group arose and what specific conflicts shaped its history and ideology.

The Qumran sect inherited many texts and traditions that helped generally to formulate its teachings, and with the aid of recently released material, we can now establish specifically the main influences. In particular, a new text, the *Halakhic Letter*, offers us vital information not only on the ideologies of that time but also on the era's political realities. Let us now review the political and religious situation in Judea so that we can understand how the *Halakhic Letter* fits into the history of the sect.

The corpus of scrolls we will study illumines primarily the period from the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C.E. through the Great Revolt of the Jews against Rome in 66-73 C.E. During those crucial years, the Jewish people entered into a confrontation with Hellenism, laid the groundwork for the Second Commonwealth, and reestablished their national existence, only to see it extinguished by their Roman conquerors. It is out of this historical and cultural background that the Qumran scrolls arose. In particular, the information the scrolls provide us is most relevant to the years between the Maccabean Revolt of 168-164 B.C.E. and the turn of the era.

In 538 B.C.E., immediately after his conquest of Babylonia, Cyrus (II) the Great,

king of Persia and Media, decreed that the Temple of the Jews in Jerusalem was to be rebuilt and that all the exiles who wished might return home. This decree inaugurated the period of the Second Temple, also known as the Second Commonwealth.

The Persian period was formative for the Second Jewish Commonwealth. During that time, Jerusalem was rebuilt and its sacrificial ritual reconstituted in the Second Temple. Equally significant was the granting of temporal—not just religious—authority to the high priesthood. This system of government survived into the Hasmonaean period after the Maccabean Revolt, becoming an object of protest in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in other contemporary literature.

The Hellenistic period began formally with Alexander's conquest of Palestine. However, the date of conquest does not mark the beginning of Hellenistic influence in the region. Already in the fourteenth century B.C.E., the Near (Middle) East as a whole, and Palestine and its Jewish residents more particularly, came under the sway of increasing Aegean influence.

Due to increased trade connections, that influence became much more extensive during the Persian period, when Greek coinage became the standard in the Land of Israel. The cultural phenomenon we call Hellenism exercised such power in ancient Judea that it left a lasting imprint on Judaism and the Jewish people. Indeed, the phenomenon of sectarianism in Judaism, to which the scrolls are our best witness, was largely the indirect result of forces set in motion by the influence of Hellenism.

#### UNDER PTOLEMIES AND SELEUCIDS

After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C.E., his generals, known as the *diadochi* (successors), were unable to maintain the unity of the empire. Individual generals claimed control over specific areas. Palestine found itself caught in a tug of war between Ptolemy, ruler of Egypt, and Seleucus, ruler of Syria, until 301 B.C.E., when Ptolemy finally secured his hold on Palestine. In the shadow of this political instability, local Jewish autonomy and the already significant role of the high priest grew stronger. This continuing instability also retarded the inroads of Hellenism.

During the third century, Ptolemaic and Seleucid armies conducted five major battles in Palestine, but the Ptolemies maintained control. Because the country was often beset by Seleucid attacks and Bedouin incursions, Ptolemaic military units were stationed throughout Palestine. Many Greek cities were established as military colonies, and many of the soldiers stationed there married native women. In addition, an extensive Ptolemaic bureaucracy existed in Palestine to manage the affairs of government, taxation, and the economy. Ptolemaic presence allowed Hellenism to gain a more secure foothold in Palestine, but Judaea continued to be governed by the high priest and the priestly aristocracy.

#### The Hellenistic Period

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| 332 B.C.E. | Alexander the Great conquers Palestine                         |
| 323        | Alexander's death and division of Empire                       |
| 301        | Ptolemaic rule over Palestine established                      |
| 201-198    | Seleucid conquest of Palestine                                 |
| 175-164    | Antiochus IV Epiphanes   |
| 175-171    | Jason High Priest  |
| c. 175     | Hellenistic Reform   |
| 171-167    | Menelaus High Priest   |
| 168-164    | Maccabean Revolt   |
| 167-166    | Antiochus decrees persecution                                  |
| 166-160    | Judah Maccabee leads rebellion                                 |
| 164        | Judah conquers Jerusalem and rededicates Temple                |
| 160        | Judah defeated and killed                                      |
| 157        | Jonathan enters Jerusalem                                      |
| 152        | Jonathan establishes independence and is appointed high priest |
| 143        | Jonathan murdered  |
| 142        | Simon assumes rule   |
| 140        | Public assembly confirms Simon as high priest and ruler        |
| 134        | Murder of Simon  |
| 134-104    | John Hyrcanus  |
| 104-103    | Aristobulus I  |
| 103-76     | Alexander Jannaeus   |
| 76-67      | Salome Alexandra   |
| 67-63      | War between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II                     |
| 63         | Roman conquest by Pompey                                       |

In 201 B.C.E., the Seleucid king Antiochus III invaded Palestine and quickly conquered it. Although Antiochus affirmed the right of the Jews to live according to their ancestral laws, Hellenism was by now firmly established in Palestine.

#### HELLENISM AS A CULTURAL PHENOMENON

Hellenism represented the synthesis of Greek culture with the native cultures of the Near East. In a dynamic process, the ever-evolving Hellenistic culture, itself an amalgamation of the Greek and the native, became the raw material for further synthesis with other native cultures not yet under the sway of Hellenism.

Indeed, it was not even the Greeks themselves who spread their own culture to the East, but the Macedonians, whose own civilization derived from that of the true Hellenes, who greatly intensified the process leading to Hellenism's eastward spread. And as it penetrated the Near East, it merged with the native culture. Over many centuries, Hellenistic culture evolved into many different forms in the Near East. Alexander's conquest completed the process of contact and union between East and West.

The Greek city-state, known as the *polis*, was the vehicle for the assimilation and Hellenization of the natives. Such city-states, populated mostly by native Near Easterners, were the cultural melting pots of the East, the home of institutions that promoted the Greek way of life: schools, theaters, and gymnasias. They also expressed Greek culture through athletic contests, Greek language and literature, architecture, and philosophy. Native Near Easterners gravitated to the arts and sciences of the Hellenic world, soon taking the lead in such disciplines as literature and philosophy. The Greek emphasis on physical culture and beauty also spread throughout the Near East. The religion of the Greeks gradually fused with native religions in the form of many different local cults. The official cult of the polis encouraged the constant symbiosis of Greek and Near Eastern elements.

Reacting to this overwhelming influence, natives often redefined and reinterpreted their own traditional cultures in light of what they considered their modern civilization. This process of reinterpretation gave rise to several varieties of Hellenistic Judaism—and to a bitter struggle over how much accommodation to Hellenism each group would tolerate.

#### HELLENISTIC TRENDS IN PALESTINIAN JUDAISM

During the two centuries before the Maccabean Revolt (168–164 B.C.E.), the new amalgamation of Hellenic and native cultures severely challenged the traditional Jewish way of life. However, that confrontation had differing effects both within Palestinian Jewish society and throughout the country.

The Jewish group least affected by the process of Hellenization was the peasantry, who visited the cities mainly to sell their produce or to make religious pilgrimages to Jerusalem. In the cities they certainly came into contact with more Hellenized Jews and with non-Jews. Yet their language and culture remained Hebraic, and Hellenism's influence on them was restricted largely to the use of Greek words for the various new items they encountered. On the whole, these common people had no intention of abandoning their ancestral way of life for the new cultural symbiosis.

The situation of the urban masses was very different. Although artisans and traders lived in predominantly Jewish cities, the extent of their contact with the

Greek world was much greater than that of residents in rural areas. Literature such as the Book of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus), parts of which were found at Qumran and Masada, testifies to the moderate influence of Hellenistic culture on traditional and pious Jews in the early second century B.C.E.

The urban population found itself forced to use the Greek language simply to be understood. Increasingly, throughout the third and second centuries B.C.E., Hellenism exercised a greater and greater influence on architecture and cultural life even among traditionally pious Jews. Certain aristocratic families connected closely with the priesthood were more Hellenized than most other Jews in these cities, perhaps as a result of their greater contact with the wider Hellenistic world or for political and economic reasons.

Those Jews who were interested in an even greater form of Hellenization gravitated to the Greek cities, mostly on the seacoast and in the area later known in Roman times as the Decapolis, located in the northern Jordan valley and Transjordan. In these regions, Greek was the everyday language, and the dominant culture was Hellenistic. Such Jews compromised with the pagan cults primarily by interpreting the city liturgies as extensions of their monotheistic Judaism. Indeed, they radically reinterpreted the Jewish Scriptures to be consistent with these pagan cults. In order to ease the transition from the ancient Near Eastern life of the Palestinian Jew to the new, cosmopolitan life of the Hellenistic Jew, this Jewish group tried to remake Judaism into a subculture of the Greek cosmos.

These trends coexisted for a time within Judaean society until they came into open confrontation. Beginning in the late second century B.C.E., extreme Hellenizers of the type previously known only in the Greek cities took control of the Jerusalem priesthood and attempted to transform Jerusalem into another Hellenistic polis. This event set the stage for the Maccabean Revolt.

#### THE MACCABEAN REVOLT

The ascension of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.E.) to the Seleucid throne continued to fuel the political instability in Palestine that had resulted from the constant Ptolemaic-Seleucid warfare. In a move certain to provoke the Jewish population, Antiochus sold the office of high priest, traditionally a hereditary succession, to Jason, the highest bidder. Jason also bought the right to establish in Jerusalem a gymnasium and an ephebeion (a Hellenistic school), intending, through such centralized educational and cultural institutions, to turn the city into a Hellenistic polis. The right to live according to the Torah, granted to the Judaicans by Antiochus III, was now rescinded. In its place, the Jews were to live under the law of the Greek city. Jews suddenly found themselves second-class citizens under an oligarchy. The Hellenized aristocracy, on the other hand, saw many benefits to the new reforms: citizenship in a Greek city, trade with other

such cities, the minting of coins, and other advantages particularly attractive to the wealthy and powerful.

Even with these political and commercial changes, the Temple and its rituals continued according to the ancient tradition. Yet Jason's brand of Hellenization was not enough for some. Amidst violent struggles between moderate and extreme Hellenizers and political intrigue connected with the supporters of Ptolemies and Seleucids, foreign deities were introduced into the Temple, creating further friction. To extreme Jewish Hellenizers, the ancestral God of Israel was simply another manifestation of the supreme deity known in Syria as Baal Shamim (Master of Heaven) and in the Greek world as Zeus Olympius.

The earliest attempts at organized rebellion were probably led by the Hasidim, a group of pietists who found the religious compromises in Hellenistic Jerusalem totally unacceptable. Rebellion was mounting, and Antiochus acted to stem it.

To do so, he enacted the infamous persecutions. Understanding all too well that the only way to defeat the rebels was by attacking the forces that inspired them—the Torah, the commandments, and the culture of the Jewish people—Antiochus struck at the heart of Jewish practice. But his actions had precisely the opposite effect from the one he intended. After years of struggle and insurrection, fueled by the Jewish Hellenizers' attempts to foist their way of life on the entire nation of Israel, the Jews reached their boiling point and struck back.

Antiochus's persecutions were enacted in the winter of 167–166 B.C.E. Foreign idolatrous worship and cultic prostitution were introduced into the Temple in December 167 B.C.E. Throughout Palestine, the Sabbath and Festivals were to be violated. High places were built where unclean animals were to be offered. Circumcision was outlawed. The laws of kosher food were not to be observed. The penalty for violating these ordinances was death.

Throughout the land Jews found themselves confronted by officials who sought to enforce the new regulations with a vengeance, burning Torah scrolls and executing those who hid them. The stage was now set for confrontation of two opposing forces—the Jewish people and the Seleucids. The appearance of the Hasmonaean (Maccabean) family would soon ignite the flames of full-scale revolt.

Several thousand rebels coalesced around the Hasmonaean family, led by Judah the Maccabee and his brothers John, Simon, Eleazar, and Jonathan. This army began to take control of villages throughout the countryside. By 166–165 B.C.E., they had taken Judaea.

Under Judah the Maccabee (hammer), the Jewish armies defeated successive Seleucid generals, who attempted to put down the uprising. In December of 164 B.C.E., Judah and his men took Jerusalem, and on the 25th of the Hebrew month of Kislev, Judah purified the Temple and reorganized the sacrificial worship to conform to the Jewish tradition. This event is commemorated in the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah (rededication). The main objective of the revolt—elimination of the persecutions and restoration of Judaism to the nation—had been achieved.

Next, Judah undertook wars throughout the Land of Israel to extirpate paganism from the country and eliminate Hellenizing rivals. Judah was killed in battle against the Seleucids in 160 B.C.E. The Hasmonaean now rallied around Jonathan, his brother. Again the Hellenized Jews sought to rule, and again the Hasmonaean plagues them on all sides. For several years, the post of high priest remained vacant as war raged. Finally, responding to competing offers from both sides vying for succession to the Syrian throne, Jonathan, with the support of the Syrian pretender Alexander Balas, appeared in the robes of the high priest on the Festival of Sukkot (Tabernacles) in the year 152 B.C.E. A dynasty had dawned that would rule the Jewish people until the coming of the Romans in 63 B.C.E.

#### HASMONAEAN TAKEOVER OF THE TEMPLE

Immediately following the revolt, there occurred a crisis in the Jewish priesthood that had a direct impact on the formation of the Qumran sect and its establishment in the Judean Desert.

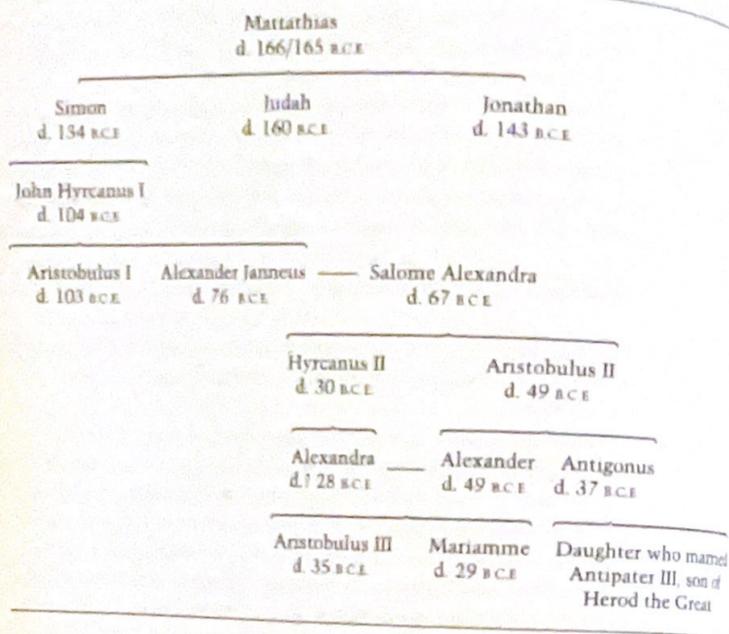
The Zadokite priests, tracing their ancestry to Zadok, high priest in the time of King Solomon, had occupied the high priesthood virtually without interruption up to the Maccabean revolt. Yet members of this group, known as Sadducees, were also among the extreme Hellenists who had perpetrated the Hellenistic reforms and opened up Judaea to the interference of the Seleucids, the Antiochan persecutions, and the Maccabean wars. However, many Sadducean priests during this period continued to be pious, maintaining the ancient traditions of the Temple in Jerusalem.

As a result of the revolt, the Zadokites lost control of the high priesthood to the Hasmonaean, the Maccabean family. When the dust of the revolt had settled, Jonathan the Hasmonaean, not of the Zadokite line, had been proclaimed high priest. Hasmonaean takeover of the high priesthood was made permanent only later at an official assembly in the time of Simon: "forever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise" (I Maccabees 14:41).

The change must have been welcome to many elements of the Jewish population. After all, the Zadokites had led the people astray by their corruption in the last years before the revolt. The Hasmonaean, on the other hand, were looked upon as reformers, ready to maintain the purity and holiness of the Temple and Jerusalem, for which they had fought so valiantly. Only later would those hopes also be dashed, as the Hasmonaean rulers themselves became increasingly Hellenized. But in the flush of victory, the Jews of Palestine hailed the rise of the Hasmonaean high priesthood as signaling a return to the purity of Israelite worship.

However, it is unlikely that the entire population greeted the new regime with unqualified acceptance. The old Zadokites, especially the pious priests, must have bitterly resented Hasmonaean control of the office of high priest. Even more objectionable to them were the changes in Temple practice introduced by the

## The Hasmonaean Family



Hasmonaean under the influence of the Pharisees. From Josephus and talmudic sources, we know that the Pharisees at this time held both political power and religious authority and that their views probably played a large role in the conduct of both government and priesthood, although that role was not as great as the Pharisees themselves might have wanted. Additional proof of Pharisaic hegemony comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls, as we will see.

### JEWISH SECTS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE MACCABEAN REVOLT

In this historical setting, we first meet, in the writings of Josephus, the three major sects of the period—Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. The group that collected the Dead Sea Scrolls also arose at that time, being yet another response to these events. Though scant direct information exists about most of these sects, the Dead Sea sectarians have left us their ancient library, which is now reshaping our understanding of all of the groups of Second Temple Judaism. For our purposes, a sect can be defined as a religious ideology that may develop

the characteristics of a political party in order to defend its way of life. The way the term is generally used in the study of ancient Judaism differs from its usual usage in religious studies, wherein "sect" commonly denotes a group that has somehow split from a mainstream movement. Thus, in the Second Temple period, we refer to all Jewish groups as sects, regardless of size or importance.

Competing sects each sought adherents among the people. Although all were Jewish and regarded the Torah as the ultimate source of Jewish law, each had a different approach or interpretation of Jewish law and considered other groups' approaches illegitimate. The various sects also held differing views on such theological questions as the nature of God's revelation, the free will of human beings, and reward and punishment. They also took different stands on how much acculturation or assimilation to Hellenism they were willing to tolerate.

The greatest conflict arose over the most important symbol of Jewish life—the Temple itself. When one group would brand as illegitimate sacrifices made by the priestly caste in charge of sacrifices or would accuse them of conducting services improperly, fierce intersectarian conflict would erupt. The Pharisees and Sadducees each sought to control the temporal powers that gave one sect or another the right to determine how the priests would minister in the Temple.

Sadducees and Pharisees were the major participants in the Jewish religious and political affairs of Greco-Roman Palestine. In fact, the gradual transfer of influence and power from the priestly Sadducees to the learned Pharisees went hand in hand with the transition from Temple to Torah that characterized the Judaism of this period.

At the same time, a number of sects with apocalyptic or ascetic tendencies also contributed to the texture of Palestinian Judaism. Some of these sects played a crucial role in creating the backdrop against which Christianity arose. Others encouraged the messianic visions that twice led the Jews into revolt against Rome. Still others served as the locus for the development of mystical ideas that would eventually penetrate rabbinic Judaism. Each of these groups was characterized by its adherents' extreme dedication to its own interpretation of the Torah and the associated teachings it had received.

#### SADDUCEES

The Sadducees were a recognizable group by about 150 B.C.E. Predominantly aristocratic, they were mostly either priests themselves or had intermarried with the high-priestly families. They tended to be moderate Hellenizers whose primary loyalty was to the religion of Israel but whose culture was greatly influenced by the Greek environment in which they lived.

The Sadducees derived their name from Zadok, the high priest of the Jerusalem Temple in the time of Solomon. The Zadokite family of high priests served at the head of the priesthood throughout First Temple times—except when foreign wor-

ship was brought into the Temple—and then during Second Temple times—until the Hasmoneans wrested control of the high priesthood from them. Ezekiel had assigned the priestly duties exclusively to this clan (44:9–16).

The Sadducees rejected the "traditions of the fathers" that the Pharisees considered law. For this reason, later rabbinic sources picture them as rejecting the Oral Law. However, the notion promulgated by some church fathers that the Sadducees accepted only the Torah as authoritative, rejecting the Prophets and the emerging corpus of Writings, is unsubstantiated by any earlier sources.

It is difficult to date the many differences that early rabbinic texts ascribe to the Pharisees and Sadducees, especially because some of this information is preserved only in very late, posttalmudic sources. The differences discussed in the earliest Mishnaic materials are of particular interest. We learn from these sources that the Sadducees required compensation for injuries done by a person's servants, whereas the Pharisees required compensation only in the case of one's animals, according to their interpretation of the Torah's laws (Exodus 21:32, 35–36). The Sadducees required that false witnesses be executed only if the accused had already been put to death as a result of such false testimony (Deuteronomy 19:19–21). The Pharisees imposed this penalty only when the accused had not been executed. The Sadducees criticized the inconsistencies in the Pharisaic interpretation of the purity laws, and the Pharisees regarded Sadducean women as menstrually impure because they followed improper interpretations of these laws. In general, the Sadducees regarded the purity laws as applying exclusively to the Temple and the priests, and they refused to extend those laws into the daily life of all Jews. To the Pharisees that extension was fundamental to their approach.

Why did the Sadducees disagree so extensively with Pharisaic tradition? What made the two diverge on so many matters of Jewish law?

Later Jewish tradition claimed that all the differences revolved around the Sadducean rejection of the Oral Law. Based on this assumption, modern scholars have argued that the Sadducees were strict literalists, who followed the plain meaning of the words of the Torah. Yet such an approach does not explain most of the views on legal matters attributed to the Sadducees.

The Sadducees also differed from the Pharisees on theological questions. They denied the notions of reward and punishment after death and the immortality of the soul, ideas accepted by the Pharisees. They did not believe in angels in the supernatural sense, although they must have acknowledged the "divine messengers" mentioned in the Bible. To them, because of human beings' absolute free will, God did not exercise control over human affairs.

It is difficult to pinpoint the precise beginnings of the Sadducees party. The primary aristocracy, tracing its roots to First Temple times, had increased greatly in power during the Persian and Hellenistic periods because it controlled both

the temporal and spiritual affairs of the nation. Although some priests had been involved in the extreme Hellenization leading up to the Maccabean Revolt, most of the Sadducean lower clergy had remained loyal to the Torah and the ancestral way of life.

In the aftermath of the revolt, a small, devoted group of Sadducean priests probably formed the faction that eventually became the Dead Sea sect. Unwilling to tolerate the replacement of the Zadokite high priest with a Hasmonean, which took place in 152 B.C.E., they also disagreed with the Jerusalem priesthood on many points of Jewish law. Recent research indicates, as we will see, that soon after the Hasmonean takeover of the high priesthood, this group retreated to Qumran.

Other moderately Hellenized Sadducees remained in Jerusalem. It was they who were termed Sadducees, in the strict sense of the word, both by Josephus in his descriptions of the Hasmonean period and by the later rabbinic traditions. They continued to play a key role in the Hasmonean aristocracy, supporting the priest-kings and joining with the Pharisees in the governing council. After dominating that body for most of the reign of John Hyrcanus and Alexander Jannaeus, they suffered a major political setback when Salome Alexandra turned so thoroughly to the Pharisees. In the Herodian era, the Sadducees regained power when they made common cause with the Herodian dynasty. In the end, it was a group of Sadducean lower priests who, in deciding to end the daily sacrifice for the Roman emperor, triggered the full-scale revolt against Rome in 66 C.E.

Closely allied to the Sadducees were the Boethusians, who seem to have held views similar to those of the Sadducees. Most scholars ascribe the origin of the Boethusians to Simeon ben Boethus, whom Herod appointed high priest in 24 B.C.E. so that Boethus would have sufficient status for Herod to marry Boethus's daughter Mariamme (II). This theory, however, is completely unproven. In fact, certain parallels between Boethusian rulings and material in the Dead Sea Scrolls argue for a considerably earlier date. Although there certainly were some differences between the Sadducees and the Boethusians, the latter appear to have been a subgroup or an offshoot of the Sadducean group.

As recorded in rabbinic literature, the primary dispute separating the Sadducees from the Pharisees pertained to the calendar. The Sadducees held that the first offering of the Omer (barley sheaf, Leviticus 23:9–14) had to take place not on the second day of Passover, as the Pharisees claimed, but rather on the first Sunday after Passover, in accord with Leviticus 23:11, "on the morrow of the Sabbath." To ensure that this Festival was observed on the proper day of the week, the Sadducees adopted a calendar that, like the one known from the Dead Sea sect and the Book of Jubilees, was based on both solar months and solar years. Following that calendar, the holiday of Shavuot would always fall on a Sunday.

Even though this approach seemed to accord better with the literal interpre-

tation of the words "on the morrow of the Sabbath," the Pharisees could accept neither the innovative solar calendar (the biblical calendar was based on lunar months) nor the interpretation on which it was based. To them, "Sabbath" here meant Festival.

The Sadducean approach had a major impact on political and religious developments in the Judaism of the Second Temple period. Sadducean offshoots played a leading role in the formation of the Dead Sea sect. There is even evidence that some Sadducean traditions remained in circulation long enough to influence the Karaite sect, which came to the fore in the eighth century C.E. Yet despite their important role in these phenomena, the Sadducees ceased to be a factor in Jewish history with the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. The sacrificial system, in which they had played such a leading role, was no longer practiced. Their power base, the Jerusalem Temple, was gone, and their strict legal rulings augured poorly for the adaptation of Judaism to the new surroundings and circumstances of the years ahead.

#### PHARISEES

The Pharisees derived their name from the Hebrew *perushim*, meaning "separate." This designation probably refers to their self-imposed separation from ritually impure food and from the tables of the common people, later termed 'am ha-'aretz (people of the land) in talmudic sources, who were not scrupulous regarding laws of Levitical purity and tithes. Originally, the name may have been a pejorative term used by their opponents.

Talmudic sources describe those who observed the laws of purity as *haverim* (associates), and groups of such people as *havurot* (fellowships). The *haverim* are contrasted with the 'am ha-'aretz. Although most historians assume that those *havurot* were Pharisaic, the sources never associate the terms "Pharisee" and *haver*.

In rabbinic sources, the Pharisees are sometimes identified as the "sages," an anachronism resulting from the Rabbis' view of themselves as the inheritors of the Pharisaic tradition. Although the Pharisees' influence grew steadily until they eventually came to dominate the religious life of the Jewish people, scholars estimate that they numbered only six thousand in Herodian times.

Who were these Pharisees and where did they come from? Because the Pharisees first appear by name in the extant sources during the reign of Jonathan, brother of Judah the Maccabee (about 150 B.C.E.), many scholars have tried to identify them with the Hasidim, the allies of Judah in the Maccabean revolt. That theory, however, cannot be substantiated, because our information about the Hasidim is very limited. It is probable that the Hasidim were not a sect or party but rather a loose association of pietists, as denoted by the term in later talmudic literature. Equally unsupported is the notion that the pre-Maccabean Hasidim gave rise to the Essenes.

Rabbinic sources trace the origins of the Pharisees back even earlier—to the Persian and early Hellenistic periods, when the Men of the Great Assembly were said to have provided Israel's religious leadership. Some modern scholars have identified the Men of the Great Assembly with the *soferim* (scribes), thereby making them the forerunners of the Pharisaic movement.

Unfortunately, the historical evidence does not allow us to draw any definite conclusions here. All we know is that the Pharisees appear suddenly, as a distinct entity, in the Hasmonaean period and that Pharisaic theology and organization must have been developing somewhat earlier. How much earlier and in what form we simply cannot say.

The Pharisees appear in Hasmonaean times as part of the governing council in coalition with the Sadducees, with whom they sought to advance their vision of how the Jewish people should live and govern themselves. Under the Hasmonaean rulers John Hyrcanus (138–104 B.C.E.) and Alexander Janneus (103–76 B.C.E.), conditions led the Pharisees further and further into the political arena. As the Hasmonaean rulers became increasingly Hellenized, the Pharisees expressed greater opposition to them. Under John Hyrcanus, there was a decisive Hasmonaean tilt toward the Sadducees. By the time of Alexander Janneus, the Pharisees were in open warfare with him, and he was consequently defeated by the Seleucid king in 88 B.C.E. That rout led to a reconciliation between Alexander Janneus and the Pharisees. This entire story is recounted in the Dead Sea Scrolls, as we will see. During the reign of Salome Alexandra, the Pharisees were the dominant political element—in control of the affairs of the nation—although the extent of their influence has been exaggerated by many scholars.

The Pharisees themselves were divided over the question of how best to respond to the Hellenizers in power. Some advocated an accommodationist policy toward the government, so long as it allowed them to practice Judaism according to the Pharisaic view. Others, maintaining that no government was acceptable unless it was controlled by Pharisees, advocated revolt. This dispute, a leitmotif throughout the history of Pharisaism and continuing in rabbinic Judaism, became central in the two Jewish revolts against Rome.

By and large, the Pharisees had three major characteristics: First, they represented primarily the middle and lower classes. Second, and perhaps as a consequence of their lower social status, they really did not become Hellenized but seem to have remained primarily Near Eastern in culture. To be sure, they may have adopted Greek words or intellectual approaches, but they viewed as authoritative only what they regarded as the ancient traditions of Israel. Third, they accepted what they termed the "traditions of the fathers"—nonbiblical laws and customs believed to have been passed down through the generations. These teachings supplemented the written Torah and were part of what the Rabbis later would call the Oral Law. They are said to have been extremely scrupulous in observing the Torah and to have been expert in its interpretation.

In a number of significant teachings, the Pharisees espoused views that were later incorporated into the rabbinic tradition. Primary among these were beliefs in the immortality of the soul, reward and punishment after death, and angels, as well as the idea of divine providence. The Sadducees rejected all of these ideas. Unlike the Sadducees, who totally denied the notion of divine interference in human affairs, the Pharisees believed that God could play a role there. To the Sadducees, free will was complete and inviolable; to the Pharisees, it was circumscribed. The Essenes, in contrast, maintained a belief in predestination, as did the Dead Sea sect.

Although Josephus, our only source describing the theological disputes between these groups, dresses these various sectarian views in Greek philosophical garb, it is obvious that these disputes emerged from varying interpretations of biblical tradition. Therefore, the basic outlines of the controversy may be accepted as authentic.

How seriously should we take later rabbinic claims that the Pharisees dominated the ritual of the Jerusalem Temple? That question has sparked considerable controversy. Recently, scholars have been inclined to discount such reports as a later reshaping of history in light of post-destruction reality. We will see, however, that the *Halakic Letter*, found at Qumran, proves that the views assigned to the Pharisees in a number of Mishnaic disputes are exactly those in practice in the Jerusalem Temple. Whether the dominance of the Pharisaic view was due to their political power or whether their views were indeed widely held in the Hasmonaean period cannot be determined with certainty.

Repeatedly, Josephus stresses the popularity of the Pharisees among the people. Given his firsthand knowledge of the last years of the Second Temple period, we should credit this view, although we also need to acknowledge Josephus's definitely pro-Pharisaic prejudices. The Pharisees' popularity, together with their unique approach to Jewish law, laid the groundwork for their eventual ascendancy in Jewish political and religious life. The Oral Law concept that grew from the Pharisaic "traditions of the fathers" allowed Judaism to adapt to the new and varied circumstances it would face in talmudic times and later. In time, Pharisaism would become rabbinic Judaism—the basis for all subsequent Jewish life and civilization.

#### ESSENES

The Essenes, a sect noted for its piety and distinctive theology, were known in Greek as *Essenoi* or *Essaioi*. Although numerous suggestions have been made about the etymology of the name, none has achieved scholarly consensus. The most recent theory, and also the most probable, holds that the name was borrowed from a group of devotees of the cult of Artemis in Asia Minor, whose demeanor and dress somewhat resembled those of the group in Judaea.

Since the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls, most scholars have identified the Qumran sect with the Essenes. In fact, the only information we have about the group is gleaned from Greek sources, primarily Philo, Josephus, and Pliny the Elder. The term "Essene" does not appear in any of the Qumran scrolls.

According to the testimony of Philo and Josephus, there were about four thousand Essenes—scattered in communities throughout Palestine—although there is some evidence that they avoided the larger cities. The Roman author Pliny identifies an Essene settlement between Jericho and Ein Gedi on the western shore of the Dead Sea. For those scholars identifying the Essenes of Philo and Josephus with the Dead Sea sect, that location—in the vicinity of Qumran—has been regarded as decisive proof of their claims. As we shall soon see, identification of the sect is a much more complex issue.

#### ESSENE PRACTICES

Essene children were educated in the ways of the Essene community, but only adult males could enter the sect. The community was organized under officials to whom obedience was required. A court of one hundred could expel from the community any members who transgressed.

Aspiring members received three items—a hatchet, a loin-cloth, and a white garment—and had to undergo a detailed initiation process that included a year of probation. They were then eligible for the ritual ablutions. After that stage, candidates had to undergo a further two years of probation, after which they had to swear an oath—the only oath the Essenes permitted. In the final stages of their initiation, the candidates bound themselves by oath to be pious toward God, just to men, and honest with their fellow Essenes, and to properly transmit the teachings; to be kept secret were the names of the angels. The initiates were then allowed to participate in the sect's communal meals and were considered full-fledged members.

The Essenes practiced community of property. Upon admission, new members turned their property over to the group, whose elected officials administered it for the benefit of all. Hence, all members shared wealth equally, with no distinctions between rich and poor.

Members earned income for the group through various occupations, including agriculture and crafts. The Essenes avoided commerce and the manufacture of weapons. All earnings were turned over to officials, who distributed funds to buy necessities and to take care of older or ill members of the community. Not only did the Essenes provide aid for their own members, but they also dispensed charity throughout the country. Special officers in each town took care of traveling members.

Characteristic of the Essenes were their moderation and avoidance of luxury. They viewed income only as a means of providing the necessities of life, and that

approach guided their eating and drinking habits as well as their choice of clothes. It also explains why they did not anoint themselves with oil. Indeed, they saw oil as transmitting ritual impurity. Asceticism manifested itself most strongly among those Essenes who were celibate. But it appears that in many cases celibacy may not have been absolute, but instead practiced later in life, after the individual had had children.

The Essenes' attitude toward the Jerusalem Temple was ambivalent. Whereas they accepted the notion of a central place of worship in Jerusalem, they disagreed about how the Temple authorities understood purity and sacrifices. They therefore sent voluntary offerings to the Temple but did not themselves participate in its sacrificial worship.

The Essenes began their day with prayer, after which they worked at their occupations. Later, they assembled for purification rituals and a communal meal prepared by priests and eaten while wearing special garments. After the members silently took their places, the baker and the cook distributed the food, according to the order of the diners' status. The community then returned to work, coming together once again in the evening for another meal. At sunset, they recited prayers once again. Though some of these practices were common to other Jews of the period as well, the Essenes' unique manner of practice separated them from their fellow Jews.

Ritual purity was greatly emphasized. Ablutions were required not only before communal meals but also after relieving oneself and after coming in contact with a nonmember or a novice. Members were extremely careful about attending to natural functions modestly. They immersed often in order to maintain ritual purity and refrained from expectorating. They customarily wore white garments, regarding modesty of dress as very important. Noteworthy was their stringency in matters of Sabbath observance.

Essene teachings were recorded in books that the members were duty bound to pass on with great care. Essenes were reported to be experts on medicinal roots and the properties of stones, the healing powers of which they claimed to have derived from ancient writings.

According to Greek sources, the Essenes embraced several fundamental beliefs. One was the notion of unalterable destiny. Another was their belief in the immortality of the soul. According to Josephus, they held that only the soul survived after death. Josephus asserts that in that respect their belief was very close to that of the Pharisees.

Josephus first mentions the Essenes in his account of the reign of Jonathan the Hasmonean (152-143 B.C.E.), when describing the religious trends of the time. He says that the Essenes participated in the war against Rome in 66-73 C.E. and that some were tortured by the Romans during the revolt. With the destruction of the country following that unsuccessful uprising, the Essenes disappeared.

Ever since the discovery of Qumran cave 1 in 1947, scholars have attempted to identify the Qumran sect with one of the groups known to have existed in Second Temple times. Those who seek to identify the sect with the Essenes tend to gloss over points of disagreement, pointing only to similarities between the two groups. Yet, important differences do exist between descriptions of the Essenes and Qumran sectarian teachings, regarding details of the initiation process and of Jewish law.

The major sects of Second Temple times participated in religious and political ferment throughout their existence. The results of that ferment would eventually determine the future of Judaism. The failure of the Great Revolt and the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. settled once and for all some of the most volatile issues. The Sadducees lost their power base; the Essenes and the Dead Sea sect were physically decimated; extreme apocalypticism had been discredited. The Pharisaic approach alone was left to accommodate itself to Roman rule and post-Temple worship, in time becoming the Judaism known today. The legacy of the other sects, however, lives on in their rediscovered writings, in the sectarian teachings that influenced the medieval Karaites, and in some aspects of the new theology of Christianity.

One of the sects that disappeared was the Dead Sea sect. Now, after almost two thousand years of silence, its writings have been rediscovered. How did it fit into this picture of sectarian strife in the Second Commonwealth? And from its library what can we discover about what happened so many years ago?

Examining the origin and early history of the sect will help us to understand the forces that operated after the Maccabean Revolt and how various Jewish groups reacted to those forces. While some sects were accommodating themselves to the new order in various ways, the Dead Sea group decided it had to leave Jerusalem altogether in order to continue its unique way of life.

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## CHAPTER 5

### Origins and Early History

To understand the schism that gave birth to the Dead Sea sect, we need to frame it against the background of Jewish history and sectarianism in the Hellenistic period. But we now have even more specific information about the particular conflicts, mostly over sacrifices and ritual purity, that led the sectarians to break away and form a distinct group. Indeed, we will see that the origins of the sect are to be traced to the internal priestly turmoil associated with Hellenistic reform, the Maccabean Revolt, and the rise of the Hasmonaean dynasty and high priesthood.

#### EVIDENCE OF THE *HALAKHIC LETTER*

A Qumran text, today known as the *Halakhic Letter*, demonstrates quite clearly that the root cause that led to the sectarian schism consisted of a series of disagreements about sacrificial law and ritual purity. The full name of this document is *Miqsat Ma'ase ha-Torah* (some legal rulings pertaining to the Torah). The writers of its text list more than twenty laws that describe the ways their practices differed from those prevailing in the Temple and its sacrificial worship. But even more important, the document reveals more precise information than we have previously had about the origins of the sect.

The *Halakhic Letter* begins with a statement about its own intent:<sup>4</sup>

These are some of our [legal] rulings [regarding God's [Torah] which are [some of the] rulings of [the] laws which we hold, and all] of them are regarding [sacrifices] and the purity of. . . . (*HALAKHIC LETTER B1-3*)

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<sup>4</sup>Information on this and all texts quoted or cited in this book is found in the Guide to Dead Sea Scrolls Texts Cited at the back of the book. All translations presented here are by the author, except for biblical texts, which for the most part follow the New Jewish Publication Society translation. *Square brackets* are used to indicate restorations made by scholars to fragmentary scroll texts. *Parentheses* are used to indicate explanatory material added to the translation.

The first sentence announces that what follows are some of "our (legal) rulings" that "we hold." Throughout the letter the authors refer to themselves in the plural. What then follows is a list of twenty-two halakhic matters over which the sectarians disagree with the addressee of the letter. For most of these, the text includes both the view of the writers as well as that of their opponents. Such phrases as "but you know" and "but we hold," indicate the polemical nature of the text. Later we will look at one of the document's specific laws, which demonstrates unquestionably that this group adhered to the Sadducean trend in Jewish law.

The second part of the letter returns to general principles, presenting the writers' general views on the schism now under way. The authors state:

[You know that] we have separated from the mainstream of the people and from all their impurities and] from mixing in these matters and from being involved [with them] regarding these matters. But you k[now that there cannot be] found in our hands dishonesty, falsehood, or evil.

(HALAKHIC LETTER C7-9)

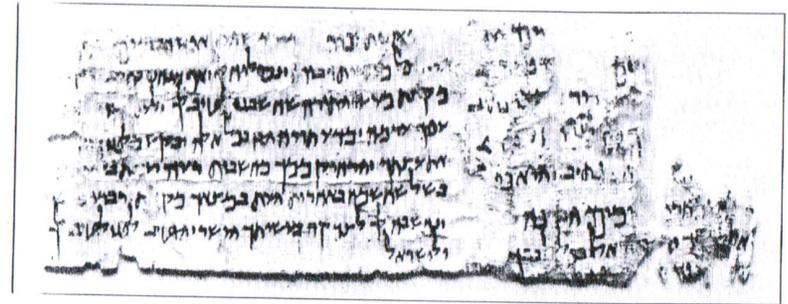
The writers here state that in accepting the aforementioned rulings, they had to withdraw from participation in the rituals of the majority of the people. The purpose of this document was to call on their erstwhile colleagues in Jerusalem and the Hasmonaean leader to effect a reconciliation that would allow them to return to their role in the Temple. Needless to say, reconciliation meant accepting the views this document puts forth. Accordingly, the authors make the general statement that the addressees know that the members of this dissident group are reliable and honest, meaning that the list of laws is indeed being strictly observed as stated by the authors.

At this point, the letter plainly explains its purpose:

[For indeed] we have [written] to you in order that you will investigate the Book of Moses [and] in the book[s] of the P[ro]phets and of Davi[d . . .], in the deeds] of each and every generation. (HALAKHIC LETTER C9-11)

The sectarians have written to the addressee (now for the first time in the singular) in order that "you" will examine the words of the Torah, the Prophets, and David (presumably the biblical accounts of the Davidic monarchy), as well as the history of the generations.

The text now turns to what is to be found in those particular documents, that is, the Scriptures that the sectarians want their opponent to search. The addressee is told (again in the singular) that it has been foretold that he would turn aside from the path of righteousness and, as a result, suffer misfortune. The text of the *Halakhic Letter* then predicts that in the End of Days, the ruler will return to God. All of it is in accord with what is written in the Torah and in the



**Halakhic Letter** The announcement of the existence of a foundation document of the Qumran sect, now known among scholars as MMT, helped to trigger the campaign for release of the scrolls. The document, shown here in one of its six manuscripts (E), is an epistle purportedly sent to the Jerusalem Temple leadership by the founders of the sect. Its positions on matters of Jewish law demonstrate that the founders of the sect were Sadducees in origin. *Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.*

Prophets. This time the authors do not mention the Writings, probably because the relevant blessings and curses do not occur there.

The text now returns to the discussion of the kings, recalling the blessings fulfilled during the time of Solomon, son of David, and the curses visited on Israel from the days of Jeroboam, son of Nebat (c. 922-901 B.C.E.), through the time of Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.E., last king of Judah).

Next the writers state that in their view some of the blessings and curses have already come to pass:

And we recognize that some of the blessings and curses which are written in the B[ook of Mo]ses have come to pass, and that this is the End of Days when they will repent in Isra[el] fo[r]ever . . . and they will not backslid[e].

(HALAKHIC LETTER C20-22)

Here the authors reveal their belief that they are currently living on the verge of the End of Days, a notion that later became normative in Qumran messianic thought. It is also clear that they considered their own age the period foretold by the Bible as the final repentance of Israel.

In light of these beliefs, the authors exhort the addressee (singular) to recall the events surrounding the reigns of Israel's kings, to examine their deeds, and to note that those who observed the laws of the Torah were spared misfortune, their

transgressions forgiven. Such was the case with David, whom the addressee is asked to remember.

The authors then sum up why they sent this text to the addressee:

And indeed, we have written to you some of the rulings pertaining to the Torah which we considered were good for you and your people, for [we have seen] that you have wisdom and knowledge of the Torah. Understand all these (matters) and seek from Him that He correct your counsel and distance from you evil thoughts and the counsel of Belial, in order that you shall rejoice in the end when you find some of our words correct. And let it be considered right for you, and lead you to do righteousness and good, and may it be for your benefit, and for that of Israel. (*HALAKHIC LETTER C26-32*)

Here the phrase *Miqṣat Ma'ase ha-Torah* (some of the rulings pertaining to the Torah) appears. The authors state that the letter is intended for the benefit of the addressee and the nation. The addressee is credited with being wise and having sufficient knowledge of the Torah to understand the halakhic matters presented in the letter. The writers call on him to mend his ways and renounce all of his incorrect views on matters of Jewish law. Doing so will lead him to rejoice at the end of this period (the End of Days), for he will come to realize that the writers of the letter are indeed correct in their views. His repentance will be judged a righteous deed, beneficial both for him and for all Israel.

One of the interesting features of the *Halakhic Letter* is the way the grammatical number of addressees shifts. In the introductory sentence, the letter is addressed to an individual, but in the list of laws, the authors engage in a dispute with a group ("you," plural). When the text returns to its main argument—at the conclusion of the list of laws—it shifts back to the singular. We will see later that the plural sections are addressed to priests of the Jerusalem Temple, and the singular to the Hasmonaean ruler.

To understand the nature of this text, we will consider an example of one of its halakhic controversies—the law regarding liquid streams:

[And even] regarding (poured out) liquid streams, we sa[y] that they do not have [pu]rity. And even the liquid streams do not separate between the impure [and the] pure. For the moisture of the liquid streams and [the vessel] which receives from them are both considered one identical moisture. (*HALAKHIC LETTER B56-58*)

This enigmatic rule refers to questions of ritual purity in the pouring of liquids from one vessel to another. In a case when the upper vessel is pure and the lower one is not, the question in our text concerns whether the upper vessel—the source of the liquid stream—can be rendered impure when the stream itself links the two vessels together. The text of the *Halakhic Letter* asserts that the entire entity is "one moisture," that is, that the impurity does rise back up the stream, against the direction of the flow, so as to render the upper vessel impure.

This law has a close parallel in the Mishnah. There, in reporting a number of disputes between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the Mishnah states:

The Sadducees say: "We complain against you Pharisees. For you declare pure the (poured out) liquid stream." (*M. YADAYIM 4:7*)

In contrast to our text and the Sadducean view implied in the Mishnah, the Pharisees ruled that in such cases the stream did not impart impurity to the pure vessel from which it was being poured. To them, the impurity of the lower vessel could not flow up, against the flow of the stream, to render the upper vessel impure. Because the Sadducees, in this and many other cases, share the same positions we find in the *Halakhic Letter*, we can convincingly show, using this and other Qumran texts, that the Qumran sect had a substratum of Sadducean halakhic views.

It appears that this letter was written to the head of the Jerusalem establishment, the high priest. The comparisons with the kings of Judah and Israel must have been particularly appropriate to someone who saw himself as an almost royal figure. In the letter, the ruler is admonished to take care lest he go the way of the kings of First Temple times. Such a warning could be addressed only to a figure who could identify, because of his own station in life, with the ancient kings of biblical Israel.

The *Halakhic Letter* makes no mention of the Teacher of Righteousness or any other leader or official known from the sectarian documents. Because the sect's own official history, presented in the *Zadokite Fragments*, claims that their initial separation from the main body of Israel took place some twenty years before the coming of the teacher, we can conclude that the *Halakhic Letter* was written by the collective leadership of the sect in those initial years. This explains why the teacher does not appear in this text.

## HISTORICAL RAMIFICATIONS

The *Halakhic Letter* has wide ramifications for our understanding of Jewish history in the Hasmonaean period. In the letter, the views ascribed to the opponents of the emerging sect are the same as those usually attributed in rabbinic literature to the Pharisees or the early Rabbis. When mishnaic texts preserve Pharisee-Sadducee conflicts over the same matters discussed in the *Halakhic Letter*, the views of the letter's authors match those of the Sadducees.

Only one possible explanation can be offered for this phenomenon: The earliest members of the sect must have been Sadducees unwilling to accept the status quo established in the aftermath of the Maccabean revolt. The Maccabees, by replacing the Zadokite high priesthood with their own, reduced the Zadokites

to a subsidiary position for as long as Hasmonaean rule lasted. Even after leaving Jerusalem, the Dead Sea sect continued to refer to itself or its leaders as the "Sons of Zadok." Our text makes clear that the designation "Sons of Zadok" is to be taken at face value. These were indeed Sadducees who protested the imposition of Pharisaic views in the Temple under the Hasmonaean priests.

That interpretation explains why the writers of the *Halakhic Letter* constantly assert that the addressees know the authors' views to be correct. The founders of the sect aimed their halakhic polemics (addressed to a plural opponent) at their Sadducean brethren who continued to serve in the Temple and accepted the new reality. It was these remaining Jerusalem Sadducees who now followed views known to us from Pharisaic-rabbinic sources and who, in the view of the authors of this letter, knew very well that the old Sadducean practices were otherwise than what they were now observing.

Although it may be hard for us moderns to conceive that a schism of such magnitude could occur over what appear to be minor aspects of ritual law, we must remember that to the various factions in the Jerusalem priesthood and to the Jewish people in ancient times, the correct conduct of sacrificial worship was the primary guarantor of their welfare. Indeed, they regarded the sacrificial system as the prime connection of the people of Israel to God, the source of blessing for the land and its inhabitants. Had not many Jews only recently risen up in arms in the Maccabean Revolt in order to ensure the purity of that worship against foreign, pagan influence? Now, in the aftermath of that rebellion, no one was willing to accept easily the conduct of this worship in any way inconsistent with his own particular views.

Thus, when Temple worship was entrusted to a usurper—the Hasmonaean high priest who acted according to already existing Pharisaic views—some pious Sadducees formed a sect and seceded from participation in the ritual of the Jerusalem Temple. At first the sect sought a reconciliation. When that failed, the members experienced disappointment and confusion.

The dissonant Zadokite priests increasingly saw themselves as a sectarian group. We can date the true beginnings of our sect to the moment the Qumran Zadokites' moderate attempts at reform failed, convincing them that Hasmonaean succession was not temporary but permanent.

Some have challenged this theory of the sect's Sadducean origins, arguing that it does not explain the group's more sectarian or radical tendencies, especially the animated polemic and xenophobia so often found in later sectarian texts. But those later texts reveal the eventual effects of the earlier schism. After they failed in their initial attempts, exemplified by the *Halakhic Letter*, to reconcile and win over the Hasmonaean and the remaining Jerusalem Sadducees to their own system of Temple practice, the Qumran Zadokites gradually developed the sectarian mentality of the despised, rejected, and abandoned outcast. Accordingly,

they began to look upon themselves as the true Israel, condemning and despising all others.

Another challenge to this theory is the incongruity between some of the beliefs of the sect in its heyday with teachings Josephus attributes to the Sadducees. However, Sadducean priests were not uniform in their degree of Hellenization nor in all their beliefs. Josephus's descriptions concern only the somewhat Hellenized Sadducees of the Roman period. Moreover, I am not claiming that the Dead Sea sect as we know it is Sadducean, only that its origins and the roots of its halakhic tradition lie in the Sadducean Zadokite priesthood.

The *Halakhic Letter* is a sectarian document from the earliest stage in the sect's development, when its members still hoped to return to participation in Temple worship. It is not even certain that the letter postdates the beginning of the self-imposed exile of the sect. In this document we learn of the disagreements about Jewish law that led to the formation of the sect. It was only later that the Teacher of Righteousness and other leaders, most probably priestly, developed the group that was to produce the complete corpus of sectarian texts. Another Qumran text—the *Temple Scroll*, essentially a rewritten Torah into which the author has inserted his own views on Jewish law—is also composed of sources deriving from the Sadducean tradition. Indeed, the finds at Qumran are now providing us with insights into this tradition never before available.

The revelations contained in the *Halakhic Letter* demand that we reevaluate some of the older theories identifying the sect with known Second Temple groups. First, the theories that seek to link the sect and its origins with the Hasidim (pietists) must now be abandoned. Other theories tying the emergence of the sect to some subgroup of the Pharisees are certainly no longer tenable. The dominant Essene hypothesis, if it is to be maintained at all, requires radical reorientation. Those holding this theory must now argue that the term "Essene" came to designate the originally Sadducean sectarians who had gone through a process of radicalization until they became a distinct sect. Alternatively, they must broaden their understanding of the term to include a wide variety of similar groups, of which the Dead Sea sect might be one.

The notion that the collection of scrolls at Qumran is not representative of a sect but is a balanced collection of general Jewish texts must also be rejected. There is by now too much evidence proving that the community that collected those scrolls emerged out of sectarian conflict and that that conflict sustained it throughout its existence. The *Halakhic Letter* characterizes the conflict as a disagreement over points of Jewish law with those in control of the Temple in Hasmonaean Jerusalem. Further, the nature of the collection, even if it contains many texts not explicitly sectarian, which might have been acceptable to all Jews in Second Temple times, is still that of a subgroup with definite opposition to the political and religious authorities of the times.

## THE EXODUS TO QUMRAN

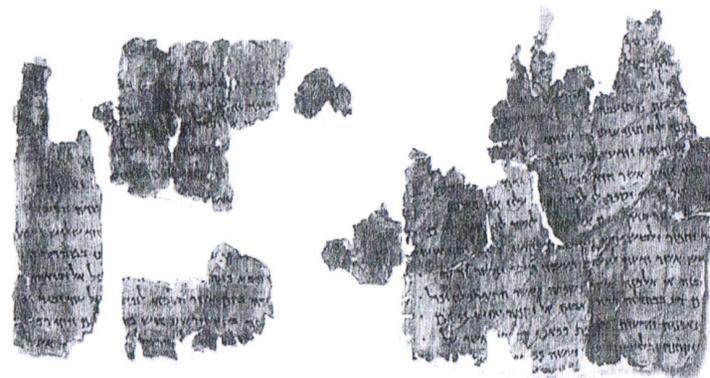
When the group who composed the *Halakhic Letter* decided to move to Qumran, the members took a decisive step in their own evolution. They now defined themselves as a dissenting group struggling against an unsympathetic majority. This was not a sudden step, however. It seems likely that the Qumran center was established after a period of groping that lasted about a generation. Only then did the sect retreat to Qumran. The Teacher of Righteousness, whose leadership had been established sometime after composition of the letter, probably influenced the decision.

How can we determine the nature and date of the exodus to Qumran? Our conclusions must rest on the archaeological finds at Khirbet Qumran and on the literary evidence of the sectarian texts. And central to an understanding of the event is familiarity with the text known as the *Zadokite Fragments*, the first scroll discovered by Solomon Schechter among the manuscripts of the Cairo *genizah*. Today, we know of at least nine additional manuscripts of this text, which were found at Qumran. Affinities in language and ideology indicate that this document belonged to the Qumran sectarians. Further, other sectarian texts contain excerpts from that text, indicating that it indeed was a document central to the thought of the Qumran sect. Modern scholars refer to this text also as the *Damascus Document* or *Damascus Covenant* due to its symbolic reference to Damascus as the land of the sect's exile.

The text is divided into two parts: the Admonition and the Laws. (Our discussion focuses first on the Admonition and the Laws. (Our discussion focuses first on the Admonition. We will return later to the Laws when we discuss the subject of Jewish law in the Dead Sea Scrolls.) Although the Qumran manuscripts of this text indicate that there was additional material at the beginning of the *Zadokite Fragments*, they preserve very little significant material from that section, which must at one time have been part of a much longer passage. The text of the *Zadokite Fragments* as preserved in medieval manuscripts begins by declaring that in ancient times, Israel went astray. As a result, God "hid His face" and allowed the destruction of the First Temple (dated in modern scholarly chronology to 586 B.C.E.). Yet a remnant of the defeated people remained, and it was they who ultimately formed the sect. In this narrative, the sectarians regard their way of life and belief as a direct continuation of biblical tradition, claiming to be the tradition's true recipients.

The text presents its understanding of the formation of the sect as follows:

And in the period of wrath, three hundred ninety years after He had handed it [the Temple] over to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylonia, He remembered them [Israel] and caused to grow from Israel and Aaron the root of a plant [i.e., the sect]. (ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS 1:5-7)



**Qumran Manuscript of the *Zadokite Fragments*** The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls made it immediately clear that the *Zadokite Fragments* (or *Damascus Document*), which had come to light previously in two medieval manuscripts, was closely related to the new documents. Subsequently, nine fragmentary manuscripts of this composition were found at Qumran, and they have greatly increased the extent of the preserved text. Shown here is a portion of a late-first-century B.C.E. manuscript, which discusses marriage, among other things. Note the stitches at the left where this sheet of parchment was connected to the next. *Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.*

This official chronology, written by the sectarians themselves, poses problems for scholars. If we calculate from the modern scholarly dating of the destruction of the First Temple, we arrive at 196 B.C.E. for the founding of the sect. This dating does not square with the archaeological data, however. Further, based on evidence in the *Halakhic Letter*, the sect must have formally separated itself after the Maccabean Revolt of 168–164 B.C.E.

Nevertheless, there is evidence that ancient Jews did not have a chronology that matches ours for dating the destruction of the First Temple. Because of a vast gap in the chronology of the Persian period, it is doubtful whether ancient Jews could have made such a calculation with any degree of accuracy. Therefore, we can only assume that we have approximate information from the period. We therefore must be content to date the founding of the sect sometime in the second century B.C.E.

The text of the *Zadokite Fragments* then tells about a period of confusion followed by the rise of the sect's leader, the Teacher of Righteousness:

Then they understood their transgression and knew that they were guilty. They were like blind [men] groping on the road for twenty years. Then God paid attention to their deeds for they sought Him whole-heartedly, and He set up for them a Teacher of Righteousness to direct them in the way of his [the teacher's] heart. (ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS 1:8–11 = D<sup>a</sup> 2 I 12–15)

It appears that during an initial period—perhaps of twenty years—the sect was leaderless and perhaps even formless until the Teacher of Righteousness established his leadership over it. Only with the teacher's emergence and his assumption of control did sectarian teachings and a distinctive way of life take shape.

From what we learned earlier from the *Halakhic Letter*, we can accept as reliable the account in the *Zadokite Fragments* that describes this initial period between the schism and the emergence of the teacher's leadership. It was during that period, most probably, that the *Halakhic Letter* was sent and a reconciliation attempted. After their failure to win over the Jerusalem Sadducees and the Hasmonaean high priest the sect became a permanent entity, no longer expecting to rejoin the Jerusalem establishment.

The Teacher of Righteousness assumed leadership of the sect and introduced his teachings; at that time or shortly thereafter the sect moved to its site in the wilderness at Qumran. Both the archaeological dating of the site and the literary materials about Damascus confirm the fact.

The *Zadokite Fragments* has a portion that has become known as the "Well *Midrash*" (6:3–11), which prominently features the Damascus imagery. It is an excellent example of *pesher* interpretation, a form of biblical interpretation that reads biblical verses as prefigurations of contemporary events. Here a verse from Numbers is interpreted: "A well which the officers have dug, which the notables of the people have dug . . ." (Numbers 21:18).

The *Zadokite Fragments* explains:

The well is the Torah and those who dig it are the returnees (or: penitents) of Israel who leave the land of Judaea and who live in the land of Damascus. (ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS 6:4–5)

On the face of it, this text seems to refer to an exodus of the sectarians from Judaea to Damascus, where they settled, at least for a time. Below this, on the same page, the sectarians are described as:

those who enter the new covenant in the land of Damascus. (6:19)

Again this text refers to an exodus to Damascus.

Before continuing, I would like to comment on the expression "new covenant." In several texts the sectarians term themselves "those who have entered

the covenant," referring to the new covenant they entered when they constituted or joined the sect. This idea derives from Jeremiah 31:31–32, which speaks of a renewal of God's covenant with Israel in the End of Days. The term as it is used in this text must be sharply distinguished from the Christian concept of a new covenant, that is, a New Testament, which will replace the old covenant (so-called Old Testament) with a new scripture.

In another *pesher*-type exegesis, the text interprets Amos 5:26–27, "And you shall carry . . . the star of your God which you have made for yourselves, and I will exile you beyond Damascus." There we find:

And the "star" (Amos 5:26) is the interpreter of the law (the sectarian official who interprets Torah for the sect with divine inspiration) who comes to Damascus. (ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS 7:18–19)

A literal reading of this passage would suggest that the interpreter of the law left Judaea and joined his fellow sectarians at Damascus. Later on, in describing sectarians who ceased to live according to the ways of the sect, the *Zadokite Fragments* speaks of:

those people who had entered the new covenant in the land of Damascus and have turned away and rebelled, and turned aside from the well of living waters. (ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS 19:33–34)

The "well of living waters" is God's Torah as correctly interpreted by the sectarians. The Damascus theme is continued further on when the text describes those:

. . . who have despised the covenant and the agreement to which they swore in the land of Damascus, which is the new covenant. (ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS 20:11–12)

Writing before the *Halakhic Letter* was known, many scholars deduced from these passages that after the initial schism, there was an actual exodus to Damascus. This theory further claims that in Damascus the sect took shape and set down the foundation of its teachings. From there, it is assumed, the group moved on to the sectarian settlement at Qumran. Some have actually sought to locate a historical event that might have led to that exodus. Others have suggested excavation of modern-day Damascus in an attempt to find the remains of this group.

What then is Damascus? Is it a real place or a metaphorical term? We know that the sectarians, especially in the *Zadokite Fragments*, often spoke in code words. We find all kinds of pseudonyms for actual personages, yet almost never a personal name that would allow a definite identification. The Jewish sects of the day are never mentioned by name even though we see numerous references to them designated with code words in the sectarian texts. Why then should we fall

into the trap of taking place names literally? Rather it is more likely that "Damascus" is a code word for Qumran.

The notion is strengthened even more by the use of Damascus as a symbol in other texts of the period. The New Testament pictures Paul receiving a vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3–6). It is likely that the symbolic meaning of Damascus as an eschatological stopover would have led to its use here. Indeed, even in Amos 5:27 it is connected with the destruction of syncretist Israelites—those who had mixed worship of the God of Israel with pagan ways—in the End of Days.

In addition, we should mention the suggestion that Damascus was actually at one time the name of the toparchy (administrative district) in which Qumran was situated. This suggestion assumes that Qumran, even though it is located on the western shore of the Dead Sea, was at one time part of the same administrative unit as Damascus and could, therefore, bear its name.

In any case, these possibilities all taken together allow us to regard Damascus as a symbol. Accordingly, we need not seek any specific exodus to Damascus. Rather, we can assume that the desert settlement of Qumran was the Damascus to which the sectarians referred and that it was there that the sect established its settlement at about the same time as the Teacher of Righteousness (perhaps the very same first interpreter of the law) came to the fore.

It is indeed curious that the sectarian texts from Qumran contain no mention of the name of the site; Khirbet Qumran is the Arabic name. Some scholars have theorized that it may be the biblical place Secacah (Joshua 15:61), although this is probably an iron age site located 4 miles [7 kilometers] southwest of Qumran. In any case, it was to Qumran, not to Damascus, that the sect migrated.

There is one additional text, *Rule of the Community*, that must be considered here because it makes the connection between the sectarians' separatism and the desert. *Rule of the Community*, also known as *Manual of Discipline* (a Christian monastic term imposed on the text), was one of the first seven scrolls discovered in cave 1. This almost intact document lays out the basic theology of the sect as well as its rules of admission and initiation and its code of punishments. At one point, the scroll speaks of the separation of the Qumran sectarians from the main body of Israelites:

When these form a community in Israel, according to these rules they shall be separated from the midst of the settlement of the people of iniquity to go to the desert, to clear there the road of the Lord, as it is written, "In the desert clear the road of the Lord; straighten in the wilderness a highway for our God" (Isaiah 40:3). This is the interpretation of the Torah [which] He commanded through Moses to observe, according to everything that is revealed from time to time, and as the prophets have revealed by His holy spirit.

(*RULE OF THE COMMUNITY* 8:12–16)

The passage appears to refer directly to the exodus to the desert. But in fact, this separatism is to be understood symbolically as fulfilling the command of Isaiah 40:3 to prepare a way through the wilderness as part of the preparations for the End of Days. The passage then goes on to tell us how to interpret that preparation. To prepare the way in the desert means to interpret the Torah, specifically to explain it according to sectarian interpretations.

Despite its mention of the wilderness, the text makes no direct connection between the sect and the desert region. Nonetheless, it is only against the background of the sect's settlement at Qumran that such desert imagery makes sense. In fact, the desert motif is extremely prominent in sectarian literature. The sectarians saw themselves as living a pristine life like that of the Israelites in the period of desert wandering. Further, they saw themselves as having gone into the desert to receive the Torah, just as Israel had in the period of the Exodus. All this is to be expected from a group that had left the more thickly settled areas of Judaea to relocate in the wilderness, there to maintain its own standards of sanctity and purity.

The sect came into being, then, after the Hasmonaeans had taken over the high priesthood, about 152 B.C.E. Thereafter, they attempted, as we can see from the *Halakhic Letter*, to reconcile with their Zadokite-Sadducean brethren who continued to serve in the Jerusalem Temple, as well as with the Hasmonaean leaders. When this failed, they still were leaderless until, at some point, the Teacher of Righteousness arose to lead them. It was he who gave the sect shape and direction. Eventually he led the group from its Sadducean origins toward its intensely apocalyptic, sectarian mentality and toward the many beliefs that differentiated the sect from the Sadducees. Probably during the early years of the teacher's career—within a generation or so after the founding of the sect—the members of the group established the sectarian center and library at Qumran. The next chapter discusses what kind of community ultimately developed there.

## The Character of the Community

We have already established that the Qumran sect began in the period immediately after the Maccabean Revolt, and we have sketched its origins and early history. In this chapter, we take a look at the sect's organizational patterns and way of life.

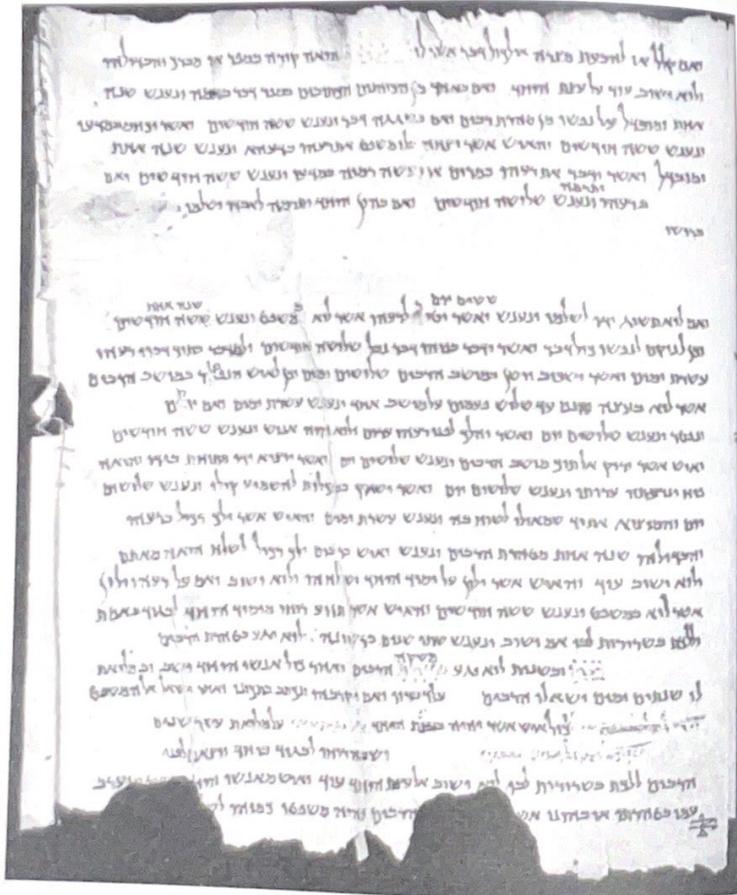
All of the various aspects of sectarian life were intended for one purpose—the achievement of a life of purity and sanctity in the present to prepare for the End of Days. Although it has been suggested that some characteristics of the sect derive from the Hellenistic milieu in which it functioned, it is more likely that its organizational patterns arose primarily from the needs and aspirations of the sect to fulfill the commands of the Torah as the members understood them. It was, after all, for this very purpose that the sect was constituted. To ensure the continuity and integrity of the sectarian way of life, the sect developed specific initiation rites, a strict discipline of ritual purity, and strict regulations governing behavior and property.

### ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS

#### INITIATION RITES

One of the most singular aspects of sectarian life among the variety of Jewish groups in the Second Temple period was the practice of initiating members into the group. A number of sources give specific evidence for such an initiation process. The Qumran scrolls, particularly *Rule of the Community* and the *Zadokite Fragments*, describe such a process, and Josephus and Philo mention that the Essenes also had such a rite. Further, it is known that such practices existed in the fellowship (*havurah*) described in rabbinic sources.

Primarily, initiation rites mark a dividing line between those inside and outside a group. Study of initiation rites also yields much information on group



**Rule of the Community** The Dead Sea sectarians were guided in their lives by a text entitled *Rule of the Community*, which set out how members were to be accepted, members' obligations, the conduct of the affairs of the sect, basic theological beliefs, and the code of punishments. This scroll was one of the original seven scrolls found in 1947, and it serves as a basic text for the study of the sectarian community that gathered the Dead Sea Scrolls. Photograph by John C. Trever. Courtesy of the School of Theology at Claremont.

structure and group purpose. Indeed, the hierarchy of the Qumran sect, the individual's place in the sect, the privileges an individual was accorded or which were withheld from him, and the initiation rites themselves were all intimately connected with the founding principles of the sect and its aspirations.

Many of the laws on this topic can be found in *Rule of the Community* and the *Zadokite Fragments*. We can also compare evidence from accounts about the Essenes and from rabbinic sources dealing with the *ḥavurah*. After examining these materials, we can draw some conclusions about how the initiation process functioned and what role it played in Qumran sectarian life.

EVIDENCE FROM *RULE OF THE COMMUNITY*

*Rule of the Community* contains the fullest prescriptions for entry into the Qumran sect. Entry consisted of a complex process comprising several stages. The first step involved examination by a sectarian official followed by instruction in the regulations of the group:

As to every one of Israel who volunteers to join the council of the community, the man who is appointed at the head of the assembly (literally, "many") shall examine him regarding his understanding and deeds. If he is capable of grasping the instruction, he (the official) shall bring him into the covenant to return to truth and to turn from all iniquity. Then he shall instruct him in all the regulations of the community.

(*RULE OF THE COMMUNITY* 6:13–15)

After this examination and instruction, the candidate for membership advances to the next step, which occurs after an unspecified interval; he is brought before the general community or its assembly:

When he comes to stand before the assembly, then everyone shall be asked regarding him. Then according to the decision that shall come forth from the council of the community, he shall be brought near or kept away. When he approaches the council of the community he may (still) not come in contact with the pure food of the community until they examine him regarding his spirit and his deeds, until he has completed a full year. Nor may he mingle (his property) with the property of the community.

(*RULE OF THE COMMUNITY* 6:15–17)

The text makes clear that during the one-year initiatory period the candidate is a conditional member. He still may not touch pure food, not even the pure solid food that is less susceptible to ritual impurity than the liquid food. Furthermore, his property may not be made available for communal use, a privilege extended only to full members.

The next stage in the initiation takes place after a year and involves an examination by the assembly, apparently led by the priests and those associated with them:

And when he completes a year in the community, the assembly shall be asked regarding him, according to his understanding and his observance of the Torah. And if the decision shall go forth regarding him to draw near to the council of the community, according to the priests and the men of their covenant, they shall bring near both his property and his labor into the hand of the man who is the examiner of the property of the community. Then he (the examiner) shall write it (the property) in the accounting with his own (the examiner's) hand, but he (the examiner) may (still) not spend it for the community. (RULE OF THE COMMUNITY 6:18-20)

During this time the sectarian is still only conditionally admitted. He becomes more integrated into the sect but is still not a full-fledged member until a second year passes, culminating in another examination by the assembly:

He may not come in contact with the liquid food of the community until he completes a second year among the men of the community. Then, if the decision shall go forth for him to bring him near to the community, then he (the examiner) shall register (literally, "write") him in the list, in his proper place among his fellows, for Torah, judgment, and purity, and to mingle his property. Then his counsel shall be for the community as well as his judgment. (RULE OF THE COMMUNITY 6:20-24)

When he finally is fully accepted into the sect, the new member may come into contact even with the pure liquids of the community, which are more susceptible to impurity than solids. And he can now share in the communal property and the work of the group, and so his property is mingled. He also is entitled to participate in the sectarian assembly and to contribute his counsel to the community. This final acceptance by the entire assembly adds his name to the roster that was used, among other things, for mustering the able-bodied into battle array.

#### EVIDENCE FROM THE ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS

The *Zadokite Fragments* sets out a second set of rules regarding entry into the sect:

And thus is the ruling for the entire period of wickedness for everyone who turns from his corrupt way: On the day when he speaks with the examiner who is over the community, they shall muster him with the oath of the covenant which Moses made with Israel, his promise to re[turn] to the Torah of Moses with all [his] heart and [with] a[ll] his soul, to that which has been derived to do in a[ll] the period of his drawing near. But let no one make known to him the [sectarian] regulations until he stands before the examiner, lest he turn out to be a fool when he examines him. And when he takes upon himself (or "swears") to return to the Torah of Moses with all [his] heart and with all [his] soul, they (the sectarians) are innocent of him if he transgresses. (ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS 15:6-13 = D<sup>a</sup> 17 I 1-4, D<sup>b</sup> 10 II 6)

This text effectively describes a two-stage novitiate: According to this version, after presenting himself to the examiner, the recruit is mustered and takes an oath. From this point on, he is a conditional member and so may not be taught the true teachings of the group—the sectarian law—until he completes a second test. At that point, he may be admitted to that knowledge. One must presume that the examiner, when presented with the new recruit, can, if he wishes, reject him, although this is nowhere mentioned. After a period of low status, the recruit is once more probed by the examiner. Presumably, at this point he becomes a permanent member.

There seems to be a fundamental disagreement between this text and the material from *Rule of the Community*. Although both texts require an oath upon one's initial entrance, only *Rule of the Community* explicitly requires at this point an examination by the official. And according to *Rule of the Community*, the second examination, after an initial period of instruction, takes place in front of the assembly, whereas in the *Zadokite Fragments*, it occurs in front of the same examiner. In the *Zadokite Fragments*, it is explicitly forbidden to teach the recruit the secret laws and lore of the sect until he is inducted even further. A similar idea is only hinted at in *Rule of the Community* [9:17]. Unlike *Rule of the Community*, the *Zadokite Fragments* does not even mention either further induction of the recruit or his gradual access to pure solid food after a year and liquid food only after a second year.

Theoretically, a number of possible explanations might be offered for these differences. It is possible that *Rule of the Community* was written later and therefore presents a more complex or simply a modified system of initiation. But it is more likely that *Rule of the Community* legislates specifically for the sectarian center at Qumran, and the *Zadokite Fragments* for groups scattered in camps throughout the Land of Israel. That explains why the *Zadokite Fragments* discusses only the first two stages of the novitiate: because sect members in the regional communities could attain only this minimal status. Members could be inducted to full membership, including the right to touch pure solid and liquid food, only under the rigorous standards maintained, as far as we know, at Qumran alone. Furthermore, full admission was available only to those who had devoted themselves to much more complex and prolonged study than what was available in other, scattered sectarian communities. Only at Qumran was there an assembly, which explains why in the *Zadokite Fragments* the examiner must substitute for the assembly.

If so, we have reached a very important conclusion about the nature of the sect: Its members were scattered throughout Palestine, not just organized in one place, and the regional centers would send their members to study at the main location, apparently in Qumran. Members would go to Qumran for periods of study so as to attain the highest levels of sectarian purity and to complete their initiation into the group.

## RITUAL PURITY

The entire process of sect admission is intimately linked with issues of ritual purity and impurity. A recruit, even after examination by the official, instruction in some sectarian teachings, and reexamination by the community, was considered ritually impure and was not permitted to come in contact with any of the sect's victuals. After a second public examination, possible only at the sectarian center, he was allowed to touch the solid pure food of the community for a year. Apparently, even after being permitted to touch solid food, he was not considered entirely free of the danger of ritual impurity until he passed the final examination before the sectarian assembly. After that final examination a year later, he was allowed to touch even the liquid foods of the community. Only then did he become a full member of the group and was he considered ritually pure.

The sect's approach is based on a concept of purity similar to that found in rabbinic halakhah. The very term for "liquid" in our text, *mashqeh*, is used in Mishnaic terminology to designate a liquid fit for human consumption that may be rendered ritually impure. According to rabbinic legislation, purity regulations regarding such liquids are in certain senses stricter than those regarding solid foods. Even the smallest amount of liquid that has been rendered impure can in turn render clothing, food and drink, or vessels impure. In contrast, solid food is capable of rendering other substances impure only if it occupies the volume equivalent of an egg.

There is yet a further stringency in regard to liquids: whereas solid foods decrease in their levels of impurity as the impurity is passed from one object to another, the impurity of liquids does not decrease regardless of how many times the impurity is transferred from liquid to liquid.

It is likely that the Qumran sectarians based their initiation process on a set of regulations similar to those we have just described for the early Rabbis. The Rabbis, too, were stricter regarding contact with liquid foods than with solids. To understand the reasoning behind this system, we must remember that one who eats or drinks impure food will, according to these regulations, become impure in the same degree as the food one has consumed. Indeed, this attempt to extend purity regulations into the everyday life of the sectarian was part of the larger tendency in Second Temple Judaism to bring the sanctity of the Temple into the home and family.

Based on those considerations it is now possible to understand the initiation rites. One who is not a member is impure at the highest level of impurity possible. Only a dead body has greater impurity. During the first year, a candidate is impure in the first degree. In his second year, he is impure by being prohibited from touching the liquid food of the sect. Only after becoming a full member of the group is he presumed entirely pure and is he then permitted to touch both liquid and solid food.

What emerges from study of sectarian material is an understanding of the unique relationship between repentance, initiation into the sect, and ritual purification. To the sectarians, ritual purification was no more than a symptom of spiritual purification. Indeed, the sect believed that no amount of lustration or ablution would render pure anyone who was still an unrepentant transgressor (*Rule of the Community* 3:4-6):

He will not be purified by atonement rituals,  
nor will he become pure in waters of lustration.  
He will not be sanctified in seas or rivers,  
nor will he be purified in any waters of ablution.  
Impure, impure he will remain as long as he despises the divine regulations,  
so as not to be disciplined by the counsel of His community.

To the sect, then, ritual purity and impurity were symbolic manifestations of the moral and religious state of the individual.

Although the ritual purity rules followed by the sect might not have been identical to those put forward in rabbinic sources, the aspects treated here were common to both. These observations give us a clue to the observances of the Pharisaic forebears of the Rabbis, allowing us to infer that the Pharisees did observe many of the purity laws found in later sources. Once again the scrolls have taught us about Pharisaic Judaism as well as about the Qumran sect—not through the lens of polemic, but by demonstrating commonly held practices of ritual purity.

## COMPARISON TO THE ESSENES

Now that we have analyzed the initiation laws of the sect in two versions, we can compare two other bodies of evidence: the procedures for entry into the Essene sect and those in use by the *ḥavurah*.

Initiation into the Essene sect is described by Josephus. The Essenes required that the candidate first study Essene teachings for a period of one year. During that period, he received the Essene equipment—the hatchet, loincloth, and white raiment. The hatchet was used as a digging tool to make holes for excrement; the loincloth and raiment were the normal garb of the members of the Essene community. If a candidate proved acceptable during this period, he was allowed to proceed to the next step.

For a period of two years the recruit's character was further tested, but he was also taught more and permitted access to the "purer kind of holy water." He was still not permitted to touch the common food or to attend community meetings. After this two-year period, he was again judged and, if found acceptable, was

expected to undertake a series of oaths to obligate himself to the principles of the group. Thereafter, he became a full member.

Interpreting what is meant by admission to the "holy water" is difficult. Most scholars interpret it to refer to admission to the ritual baths, assuming that before attaining a certain level of membership, candidates were not permitted to use the Essene sect's purification facilities. It is also possible to understand "holy water" as referring to the liquid food of the sect, in which case we would have to assume some confusion on the part of Josephus. In all likelihood, the Essenes would first have admitted members to the solid food and later to the liquid, because solid food is less susceptible to impurity.

Although this process of the Essenes is somewhat similar to that described by the Qumran texts, there are important distinctions. In the Qumran materials, a novice takes an oath at the beginning of the process; in Josephus's description, he does so at the end. In the Qumran texts, he is admitted to common meals at an earlier stage than Josephus's Essenes, who can eat with members only at the very end of the process.

Of course, one of the central questions in Qumran studies concerns the relationship between the Essenes of Philo and Josephus and the sect. In order to show that the Essenes and the Qumran sect were not one and the same, we would need more evidence than that provided by a few minor differences in their admissions procedures. Despite Josephus's claim that he himself went through the process of Essene initiation, it may be that historical changes or the coexistence of different groups under the general heading "Essene" might make the situation much more complex.

#### THE HAVURAH

Early rabbinic sources mention a *havurah*—best translated as "fellowship"—that was formed to enable members (*haverim*; singular, *haver*) to properly observe the laws of tithes and Levitical purity. Sources describe these *haverim* as part of the community of Mishnaic sages. In the scholarly literature it has become customary to describe this group as "the Pharisaic *havurah*," although there is no direct reference to the Pharisees within the texts. Indeed, the Rabbis responding to the anonymous descriptions of the *havurah* in the sources all lived in the early second century C.E., thus casting some doubt on the assumption that the *havurah* dates to Second Temple times. Nonetheless, these regulations indicate that groups such as this one existed in rabbinical circles in the early centuries of the common era. It is possible, therefore, that such groups were found among the Pharisees in the Hasmonaean and Herodian periods, but no definitive evidence can be cited. Therefore, to avoid drawing conclusions without any evidence, we refer to them simply as the *havurot* described in rabbinic sources.

From passages in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, it is possible to reconstruct the pattern of admission into the *havurah*. The procedure seems to have been as follows: The novice took an initial oath or declaration to accept the group's rules of ritual purity and to eat only food that he knew for certain was properly tithed. This process conferred on the initiate the status of a "reliable person."

After some undisclosed period, there was another initiatory oath or declaration in order to become a *haver*. There followed a period of twelve months during which the recruit observed some of the regulations and was taught. Finally, the *haver* was examined, and if accepted, was permitted to share common, solid food. After another twelve months (or one month according to another opinion), the new *haver* could be admitted to membership as far as liquid foods were concerned. The candidate was now a full member of the fellowship.

When we compare these regulations with those of the Qumran sect, we can see many parallels, such as the required initial oath, the three-stage process, instruction as part of the process, and the sequence of admission to the solid, then liquid, food. But there are also some differences. For example, in the *havurah*, the initial oath was already public; at Qumran, it was taken only before the examiner. In the *havurah*, there were two oaths taken; at Qumran, only one.

Comparing the initiation rites of the Qumran sect with those of the *havurah*, we are reminded of similar comparisons between the Qumran sect and the Essenes as described by Josephus. Differences in the evidence provided by the scrolls versus that in the rabbinic material regarding the *havurah* indicate that despite their similarities, the two groups did not practice the same initiation rites and were therefore not identical. Indeed, in the Judaism of this formative period, numerous groups of this kind existed, and these documents provide but three examples of how such groups inducted members. Yet despite many differences, all the Jewish groups of this period shared much more in common than is usually assumed.

Some parallels to the Qumran initiation procedures have been cited from evidence about the Hellenistic guilds. And though we do not doubt that such parallels existed, they provide only partial analogies to the sectarian system. Most important, these Hellenistic initiation procedures did not include a system of progression through increasing levels of purity. In contrast, the Qumran sect, Essenes, *havurah*, and all other such Jewish groups did include such a system, because all of their rituals were designed to help them fulfill Jewish law. The initiation process practiced by the Qumran sect and other Jewish groups is in no way analogous to those used by Hellenistic guilds, although they do share some details in common. It is also interesting to note that no such initiation rites were required to enter the early Christian community. Only later did such rites become prominent in Christian monastic orders.

## COMMUNAL USE OF PROPERTY

One of the most commonly held beliefs about the Qumran community is that it practiced communism of property, that is, that all property was corporately owned. Those subscribing to that view and to the notion that sect members were celibate (a subject to be discussed in a later chapter) presume that the sect prefigured the early church that was to emerge in the second half of the first century C.E. To test the theory, we examine the passages that deal with the issue of property in the sectarian texts.

As in so many other matters, the text of the *Zadokite Fragments* discusses issues about property from a different viewpoint from that of *Rule of the Community*. Whereas *Rule of the Community* presents regulations applicable only to the sectarian center, the *Zadokite Fragments* addresses the smaller communities located throughout the country.

The material in the *Zadokite Fragments* shows beyond a doubt that the society envisaged there was to be based on private property and private enterprise. Indeed, not even a hint of any aspect of communal property can be found in the work.

Numerous references in the *Zadokite Fragments* confirm the practice of private ownership in the sect. In one passage, there is explicit reference to the system of voluntary offerings to the Temple (*Zadokite Fragments* 16:14-15), a practice that assumes the existence of private property. Another passage (*Zadokite Fragments* 16:16) actually mentions donation of a private field to the Temple.

A set of laws about doing business with non-Jews (discussed in detail in a later chapter) is extremely significant to our discussion because it suggests the widespread private ownership of property among sect members (*Zadokite Fragments* 12:8-11). This passage forbids the sale of animals lest they be used for pagan sacrifices. Likewise, untithed produce could not be sold to non-Jews lest it then be resold to a Jew who was unaware it was untithed Jewish produce. Finally, the sale of slaves that had begun the process of conversion to Judaism (the status the Rabbis called the "Canaanite slave") was also prohibited.

The economic structure depicted here was the typical rural economy of Palestine of the Hasmonaean period. Grain crops and slaves were the private property of the individual. Similar economic activity in the Judean Desert area is known from the legal documents found in the Bar Kokhba caves. The threshing floor and winepress mentioned in this text, however, need not necessarily have belonged to the sectarians. In most areas of Palestine, private individuals brought their own produce to be processed in communally owned installations such as threshing floors and wine and olive presses. Taken altogether, these references in the *Zadokite Fragments* attest to the private possession of produce by sect members.

Clearly, members of this group participated in wider trade, even with non-Jews. Otherwise, laws regulating these activities would have been unnecessary. As for trade with Jews who were not members of the sect, the text declares:

Let no man, from any of those who have entered the covenant, do business with the men of the pit except hand to hand (i.e., for cash). And let no man do anything in business unless he has made it known to the examiner and done [it] with [his] counsel, lest they err. (*ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS* 13:14-16 = D<sup>a</sup> 18 II 1-4)

Here we have several regulations. First, there is the requirement that any business done with nonmembers of the sect, that is, with other Jews, be conducted only in the form of cash transactions. The only likely reason for that rule is to avoid violating any of the Torah's prohibitions on charging interest to one's fellow Jew (Exodus 22:25, Leviticus 25:36-37, Deuteronomy 23:19-20). Apparently, the sect regarded the regular methods for conducting business through credit, then current in Palestine, as a violation of those laws. This impression is also supported by evidence from later rabbinic sources and from the complex contracts found in the Bar Kokhba caves.

The second regulation requires that a member obtain the approval of the examiner before entering into any business deal. This measure was intended as a safeguard against error and against the violation of some commercial law of the Torah or the sect's laws. Again we see that this text presumes a free economy, with buying and selling (albeit not on credit) with outsiders.

The group described in the *Zadokite Fragments* taxed the salaries of its members regularly in order to fulfill its obligations of social service:

And this is the rule for the community to provide for all their requirements: two days' salary per month minimum. And they shall give [it] to the examiner and the judges. From it they shall give for their tribulation and from it they shall sustain the poor and needy, the old man who is bent over, the man who is afflicted, the one who is taken captive by a foreign people, the young woman who has no close relative, and the youth for whom no one cares. (*ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS* 14:12-16 = D<sup>a</sup> 18 II 5-9)

The sectarians had to pay a tax of 8 percent of their personal income to be distributed to the needy by the examiner and the judges. We do not know whether the poor and needy mentioned here were expected to be members of the sect. The sect's practice of charitable behavior clearly recalls the traditional Jewish law that requires every community to care for the needs of those less fortunate in its midst.

Many specific details in the Sabbath code of the Qumran sect also assume that members own property and private houses; these passages do not fit the setting of a communal settlement. Indeed, as we have seen, the society envisaged in the *Zadokite Fragments* is definitely based on private property and enterprise. Nowhere is there any mention of communal ownership or use.

Yet if we consult *Rule of the Community*, we learn that there may have been different arrangements at the sectarian center at Qumran or elsewhere. For the Qumran community, our basic information comes from the process of admission into the sect. Since we have studied this process in detail earlier, we need only isolate and review certain details relevant to property.

If a recruit passed the second examination, before the assembly, he still was not permitted to mingle his property with that of the sect, just as he was still forbidden to touch the pure food. A year afterward, if he was again approved by the same assembly, his property and labor (or income) were registered by the examiner, who still could not spend any of the funds. After a second one-year period and another examination (the third by the assembly), the recruit became a full member, and his property was to be mingled.

Two observations can already be made. First, as the new member climbed the ladder of ritual purity, property was increasingly mingled. Thus, there was some connection between the two aspects. Further, the community required a record of this property. In the intermediate period, the funds were held in escrow until it was determined whether or not the sectarian was to attain full status. It is already clear that at the Qumran center, for those who had progressed to full membership, there was some kind of pooling of property.

The first regulation in the sectarian penal code refers to property:

If there is found among them (the sectarians) a man who lies regarding property, they shall separate him from the midst of the pure food of the community for one year, and he shall be fined one-fourth of his food ration.

(*RULE OF THE COMMUNITY 6:24-25*)

Apparently, the problem of individuals' withholding property from communal use was serious enough to require legislation. This same problem existed in the early Christian church, which also required the surrender of goods to the group (Acts 5:1-11).

We should pause to explain that the penal code is found in both *Rule of the Community* and the *Zadokite Fragments*. The manuscripts of *Rule of the Community* give evidence of at least two recensions of this code. Whereas the medieval manuscripts of the *Zadokite Fragments* preserve only an abbreviated code, there is a longer one in the Qumran fragments of this text. These various versions demonstrate that such a code was in force during the entire history of the sect, both in the sectarian center and in the so-called camps. The text evolved as penalties were modified over time.

This first provision of the penal code already reveals another aspect of the issue. The penal code contains a series of regulations that prescribe the docking of one-fourth of a miscreant's food ration for some specific period. In order for the community to dock or reduce an individual's rations, it would have to permit

### Sectarian Offenses and Punishments

| OFFENSE  | PUNISHMENT   |
|--|--|
| Misuse of the divine name  | Permanent expulsion  |
| Informing against the sect   | Expulsion  |
| Complaining against the teachings of the sect                        |  |
| Rebelling against the teachings of the community                     | Separation from pure solid food for 1 year<br>Reduction of food ration by one-fourth for 2 years<br>Separation from pure drink for 2 years |
| Speaking angrily against the priests                                 | Separation from pure food and reduction of food ration by one-fourth for 1 year  |
| Intentionally insulting another                                      |  |
| Knowingly lying about money  |  |
| Gossiping against one's fellow                                       |  |
| Replying stubbornly to a superior sect member                        | Reduction of food ration by one-fourth for 1 year  |
| Accidentally speaking angrily against the priests                    | Reduction of food ration by one-fourth for 6 months  |
| Speaking deceptively to one's fellow                                 |  |
| Bearing a grudge against one's fellow                                |  |
| Walking about unclothed  |  |
| Complaining about one's fellow unjustifiably                         |  |
| Speaking obscenely   | Reduction of food ration by one-fourth for 3 months  |
| Dealing deceitfully with the property of the community               | Restitution with penalty or reduction of food ration by one-fourth for 60 days   |
| Falling asleep during the assembly                                   | Reduction of food ration by one-fourth for 30 days   |
| Missing a vote   |  |
| Spitting in the assembly   |  |
| Exposing one's genitals  |  |
| Laughing loudly and foolishly  |  |
| Interrupting one's fellow  | Reduction of food ration by one-fourth for 10 days   |
| Absence without reason from the assembly for three days in a session |  |
| Gesticulating with one's left hand during conversation               |  |

individuals to possess their own food. However, food allocation is not the same as a full-blown concept of private ownership. But it does indicate that the Qumran sect subscribed to a concept of individual possession, for without such a concept, allocating food and imposing fines would make no sense.

This system of punishments was equivalent to a process of demotion. When one transgressed, one was regarded as ritually impure and, therefore, was forbidden access to the pure food. Such a ban placed one on the same level as a recruit who had not yet completed the process of initiation. In fact, reduction in the transgressor's food ration was almost a reversal of the mingling of his property, which had marked his induction into the sect.

Some scholars have regarded these fines as evidence that the community described in *Rule of the Community* practiced the same system of private property as the community depicted in the *Zadokite Fragments*. Such, however, is not the case. Rather, what *Rule of the Community* describes is a system designed to make property available for common use. But even if the community could use this property, individuals still possessed differing personal allocations, which could be altered by the levying of penalties. In order for members to be fined, their individual property had to be recorded. All this clearly bespeaks the fact that private ownership in the Qumran community was retained.

Thus, upon entrance into the sect, members made their property available for common use but did not fully surrender ownership, for that would violate the principle of private ownership enshrined in the Bible. This two-tiered economic system explains why the same text describes both private ownership and communality of property. Put simply, use was communal but ownership was private.

#### RELATIONS WITH OUTSIDERS

Among the oaths that bound sectarians upon entrance into the group, according to *Rule of the Community*, is the following:

... that he will not enter into community with him [the outsider] regarding his work or his money lest he cause him [the sectarian] to be guilty of transgression, for thus it is written, "From every deceitful matter you shall keep afar" [Exodus 23:7]. ... That he not eat of anything belonging to them, nor drink, nor buy from them anything which is not for cash, as it is written, "Stay away from man who has living breath for in what manner is he considered?" [Isaiah 2:22]. For all those who are not counted in His covenant, one must keep them away and all that belongs to them.

(*RULE OF THE COMMUNITY* 5:14-18)

Although property was used in common by members of the sect, members were to forswear similar commercial and work relationships—partnerships, so to speak—with those outside the group. The above-cited text specifies the reason:

the avoidance of deceitful dealings. A very similar ruling appears in the *Zadokite Fragments* (20:7-8). Presumably, doing business with those who did not adhere to sectarian interpretations of Jewish law about business and commerce would lead sect members to violate those laws. In the second part of this text, we are told that nothing may be taken from outsiders unless it is paid for. One must separate from outsiders completely.

The abstention from food and drink was legislated most likely because the sect followed different laws of ritual purity and impurity from those of other Jews. And the prohibition of all noncash transactions with nonmembers can only be explained, as already noted, as a special safeguard against potential violation of sectarian law that was likely to occur if members followed the credit and loan practices then current in Palestine.

These texts give us important insights into the economic structure of the society to which *Rule of the Community* applied. Such insights make clear that members could enter into a variety of transactions or partnerships with outsiders. How then can we reconcile the apparent contradiction between these laws and the mingling of property described in the initiation process? We can conclude only that the mingling referred to communal use, not ownership, of property. Members of the sect thus continued to own their own property and could exercise over it the normal jurisdiction and powers of an owner.

That members of the sect were forbidden to enter into transactions with outsiders that would involve the mingling of property is reiterated in another passage:

As to the property of the men of holiness who live (literally, "walk") in perfection, let them not mingle their property with the property of the men of deceit who have not purified their way to separate from iniquity and to walk in the perfect path. (*RULE OF THE COMMUNITY* 9:8-9)

"Men of deceit" refers here to Jews who were not members of the group.

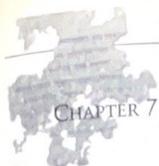
Thus, the *Zadokite Fragments* presumed complete private use and private ownership of property, whereas *Rule of the Community* described a society built on the principle of communal use but private ownership of property. This explanation fits in well with the comparison of the two documents and their social settings previously proposed. Just as the *Zadokite Fragments* allowed initiates to progress through only the second stage of purity, so too it made no provision for the conversion of members' property to communal use. It is thus clear that members of the scattered sectarian contingents in the towns of Palestine never became full members of the sect.

On the other hand, *Rule of the Community* sets out the more elaborate initiation process leading to the highest level of membership in the sect. After attaining full membership, the property of the new member was mingled and was thus

made available for use by any sect member who had attained full membership. However, members retained ownership of their property and could use it for business purposes. Of course, the sectarian was expected to conduct his business affairs while mindful of the various restrictions embedded in sectarian legislation.

Sectarian life was formulated into a complex system of initiation procedures, similar to parallel processes followed by the Essenes and the *ḥavurah*. Those procedures were intertwined closely with the attainment of higher states of ritual purity. Behind the procedures lay the notion that ritual purity was a symbol of the inner spiritual purity of the sectarian and of his closeness to God. As he progressed up the ladder of ritual purity, he progressed spiritually. In the main sectarian center, it was possible to progress to the highest level of full membership, although in sectarian communities located elsewhere, it was possible to attain only the first two stages. For this reason, the mingling of property for communal use was practiced at Qumran, but not in the other camps. Even within the main center, aspects of the biblical notion of private ownership persisted, as can be seen in the commercial laws of the sect.

The Qumran group had come into being under the leadership of Zadokite priests. It soon developed thereafter under the leadership of the Teacher of Righteousness and a variety of other leaders and officials. We now turn to those leaders and their role in the history of Jewish communal and religious leadership.



## CHAPTER 7

## Leadership

The Qumran sectarian texts mention a number of leadership positions. The forms of leadership did not necessarily exist at the same time, so it is possible that the use of various terms indicates different historical periods in the life of the sect. The study of the nature of leadership elites in religious groups in general, and in Jewish ones in particular, is crucial to an understanding of the nature of such groups and their teachings. We therefore have much to learn about the Qumran community by examining its primary forms of leadership as described in sectarian documents and the role of each form in the life of the sect. As we learn about these leaders and offices, we should remember that the sect shared the general tendency of Second Temple Judaism to move from priestly to lay leadership—a transfer of authority best exemplified by the evolution of the Pharisaic sages into the talmudic Rabbis.

## ZADOKITE PRIESTS

At the very founding of the sect, Zadokite priests played a leading role. Yet even though we have considerable documentary evidence about their prominence in the sect, the role of the Zadokite priests may have been largely ceremonial or even anachronistic. As founders of the sect, the Zadokite priests probably passed from actual to ceremonial leadership as the sect attracted lay Israelite followers with the passing of time. Nonetheless, the Zadokites were certainly the initial leaders until the Teacher of Righteousness assumed control. If we accept the claim of the *Zadokite Fragments* that the period before the Teacher of Righteousness lasted only twenty years (*Zadokite Fragments* 1:9–11), then this part of the history of the sect lasted no more than a generation or so. Apparently, the Zadokite priests continued to play a leadership role for sometime after, although it is not clear for how long or how extensively.

These priests were clearly at the heart of the sect's early ideology. The

*Zadokite Fragments* describes in metaphoric terms the establishment of the sect as the remnant, that is, the only Israelites who truly maintained the commandments when everyone else in the Jewish community had gone astray (*Zadokite Fragments* 3:12–20). Then it quotes the promise of God through Ezekiel:

This is in accord with what God promised them through Ezekiel the prophet, saying, "The priests and the Levites and the Sons of Zadok who maintained the service of My Temple, when all Israel went astray from Me, they shall offer Me the fat and blood" [adapted from Ezekiel 44:15]. "The priests": these are the penitents of Israel who leave the land of Judaea and those who join them. "And the Sons of Zadok": they are the chosen ones of Israel, the renowned men, those who arise in the End of Days.

(*ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS* 3:20–4:4)

This text is an interpretation of a passage in Ezekiel chosen for its reference to the Zadokite priests. In this interpretation, the phrase "the priests . . . the Levites . . . the Sons of Zadok" has been broken apart in order to describe three separate groups. First are the priests (who are certainly Zadokites), identified as the repentant ones who have abandoned the land of Judaea, probably referring here to Jerusalem. Ezekiel's "Levites," originally an adjective modifying "priests," here is understood to refer to those who have joined the priests. Finally, the Sons of Zadok are identified as the chosen of God, those who will inherit the End of Days.

That these obviously anachronistic ideas are raised at all in biblical commentaries requires some explanation. The *pesharim*, as mentioned previously, are not commentaries as we know them, but rather contemporizing interpretations of specific biblical material. In them, the sectarian writers interpreted the visions of the prophets of the Hebrew Bible as referring to events in their own time. They searched for—and found, albeit sometimes in a very veiled manner—allusions to events and personages relevant to their current circumstances.

From this complex *peshar* interpretation (of which more examples are discussed in a later chapter), this author deduces that the sect was initially formed by Zadokites, who were then joined by others. In other words, the initial leaders were the Zadokite priests who left Jerusalem.

*Rule of the Community* also testifies to the primacy of this priestly group:

This is the rule for the men of the community who volunteer to turn aside from all evil and to hold fast to all which He has commanded according to His will: to separate from the congregation of the men of iniquity to be a community as regards Torah and property. And they shall answer according to the Sons of Zadok, the priests, who observe the covenant, and according to the majority of the men of the community who hold fast to the covenant. According to them shall go forth the decision regarding every matter of Torah, property or judgment. (*RULE OF THE COMMUNITY* 5:1–3)

Then follows a series of obligations for the sectarian. The text next goes on to describe the oath of admission to be taken by new members, a topic treated earlier. For the moment, we shall look at only one portion of this text.

He shall take upon himself with a binding oath to return to the Torah of Moses, according to everything which He commanded, with all his heart and all his soul, according to everything which is revealed of it [i.e., the Torah] to the Sons of Zadok, the priests, who maintain the covenant and seek (or study) His will, and according to the majority of the men of their covenant who volunteer together for His truth, and to conduct themselves according to His will. (*RULE OF THE COMMUNITY* 5:8–10)

Here the Sons of Zadok appear as leaders of the sect, but not as the sole seat of power. Rather, they are in association with the majority of the men of the community, who together are expected (as we know from other texts) to make all decisions regarding financial matters or Torah for the members of the sect.

The prominence of this group, based as it was on the Zadokite-Sadducean role in the founding years of the sect, took its cue as well from biblical tradition regarding this priestly clan. Zadok was one of Solomon's two high priests. The Bible gives precedence to him, because his priestly colleague Abiathar was eventually banished (I Kings 2:26–27). It was therefore natural for a sect so closely linked to and inspired by biblical tradition to place the Zadokite priests in a position of leadership and authority. The sect found further validation for the legitimacy of the Zadokites in the vision of the future Temple and the sacrificial service described near the end of Ezekiel, which sets out an entire code of priestly service, limiting the priesthood to Sons of Zadok (Ezekiel 44:9–31).

The introduction to *Rule of the Congregation*, a messianic text from cave 1 (not to be confused with *Rule of the Community*), indicates that in the End of Days, the Zadokite priests would retain at least their ceremonial role:

And this is the rule for all the congregation of Israel in the End of Days: when they assem[ble as a community to li]ve according to the regulation of the Sons of Zadok, the priests, and the men of their covenant who have [turned away from living in the way of the people] . . . (*RULE OF THE CONGREGATION* 1:1–3)

The Assembly of the End of Days will be conducted under the direction of the Zadokite priests and their followers. Though it is possible that this role for the Sons of Zadok is only titular and ceremonial in this text, it is a role that acknowledges their initial function as founders and leaders of the sect. And though other officials would clearly join the Sons of Zadok in leading the community of the End of Days (*Rule of the Congregation* 1:23–25), the Zadokite priests would conduct the meetings of the Assembly (*Rule of the Congregation* 2:1–3).

*Rule of Benedictions*, which I believe was part of the ritual of mustering the

sectarians in the End of Days, contains a blessing to be recited in honor of the Zadokite priests:

... whom God chose to strengthen His covenant [eternally and to examine all of His laws in the midst of His people and to instruct them as He commanded, and who established [His covenant of truth], and in righteousness commanded all of His laws and lived a[s] He had chosen.

(RULE OF BENEDICTIONS 3:22-25)

In this passage, the Zadokite priests fulfill their role as instructors of the law and of its correct, that is, sectarian, interpretation. The sect believed that the Zadokites had been chosen from among God's people to fill this role. The passage also confirms beyond a doubt that the term "Sons of Zadok" did not refer to the sect in general, but rather to a segment of the group entrusted with teaching and interpreting the law to others. It also shows that the sectarians expected that leadership role to continue in the End of Days.

The expectation that the Zadokite priests would play a messianic role seems to challenge the assumption that their leadership eventually became simply symbolic or anachronistic. In fact, the entire text of *Rule of the Congregation* is a rehearsal in the present for what was to occur at the End of Days. That is, the sect regarded its present behavior and procedures as instrumental in bringing to realization its dreams and aspirations for the future. Accordingly, the text suggests that when it was authored at least, the Zadokites still maintained an important role in the conduct of the sect's affairs.

Such a leadership structure would fit well with the sect's self-image as a replacement Temple. Because the Zadokites considered the current conduct of the sacrificial system in Jerusalem illegitimate, it makes sense that they would include priests among their core leadership group, replacing their former role in sacrificial worship with that of leaders of the sect. Indeed, the sect saw its entire religious life and communal existence as a substitute for the Temple worship in which they no longer participated.

Other priestly leaders may have also played a significant role in the life of the sect. A number of passages refer to Aaronide priests. For example, *Rule of the Community* specifies:

Only the sons of Aaron shall have control over law and property, and according to them shall the decision go forth for every norm of the men of the community. (RULE OF THE COMMUNITY 9.7)

In that text, and in others of its type, it is most likely the Zadokite priests who are intended, for in other passages that have been quoted here, sectarians appear to have delegitimized all others.

Yet we cannot be certain that other priests did not have a role in the sect, especially in light of numerous biblical traditions to that effect. After all,

Deuteronomy 17:8-13 enjoins that in difficult cases requiring further investigation, the litigants are to go up to the chosen city to be judged by "the Levitical priests and the judge." Deuteronomy 21:5, perhaps reflecting an idealized command, requires that all lawsuits be decided by priests. The priest was also expected to be a teacher of Torah, as is clear from Deuteronomy 33:10, and to render decisions in matters of impurity and diseases. Indeed, we cannot be sure if all of the priestly officials of the sect were Zadokite. Certain legal passages mention only the Sons of Aaron.

#### TEACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

No Qumran figure has been more frequently discussed than the Teacher of Righteousness. Although his sobriquet also may be translated as the "correct teacher," the current translation has become almost a technical term in the field of Qumran studies and cannot be easily replaced. The "teacher" has been credited with so much that he is often falsely identified as the author of texts to which he has no explicit relationship. Assuming that only direct references to this figure can be taken to concern him, I will attempt to reconstruct all that legitimately can be said about him. It is also possible that the term may have designated not only one but a series of figures who occupied the role of sectarian leader over a period of time.

The *Zadokite Fragments* makes a few references to the Teacher of Righteousness. We have already seen in our study of the origins of the sect that according to this text (*Zadokite Fragments* 1:11), the teacher was believed to have been sent by God to lead the sect after its separation from the Jerusalem religious establishment.

An extended passage in the *Zadokite Fragments* refers to the role of the teacher as legislator. In referring to the fate of members who have held fast to the teachings of the sect, the text states:

All those who have held fast to these regulations, to [go] out and to come in according to the Torah, shall listen to the voice of the teacher [or and who have listened to the voice of the teacher] . . . (ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS 20:27-28)

Only a bit farther down the same page, this teacher is explicitly identified as the Teacher of Righteousness. The text refers to:

. . . those who have been instructed in the original regulations by which the men of the community were judged, and who have listened to the voice of the Teacher of Righteousness . . . (ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS 20:31-32)

The context of this passage indicates that it is speaking about the age of tribulation, what the Rabbis would later call "birthpangs of the messiah." The sect

hoped to emerge from the age of tribulation into the future age of messianic perfection.

From these two passages we learn that the teacher is expected to show his followers how to put the Torah into practice and that it is his wise instruction that all must obey. The sect believed that Jewish law consisted of two complementary parts: the revealed, written Torah (*nigleh*) and the hidden or secret (*nistar*), known only to the sect. It was this second body of law with which the teacher had endowed them. Therefore, his teachings had the same validity as the Torah itself.

At least part of the *Zadokite Fragments* was authored after the teacher's death, as is clear when the text speaks of the period:

From the day when the teacher of the community was gathered in (passed away) until the arising of a messiah from Aaron and Israel.  
(ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS 19:35-20:1)

In this text, although the teacher has died, the sect still looks forward to the speedy coming of the messiah. Thus, contrary to the claims of many scholars, the teacher himself was not regarded as a messianic figure, even though he had arisen on the eve of the End of Days (*Zadokite Fragments* 6:11).

Though it is difficult to be specific on this matter, it seems that the sect suffered a crisis with the death of its first primary leader. It had expected that the messianic era was soon to dawn and that no successor to the Teacher of Righteousness would be needed. Nonetheless, the sect weathered this crisis and was able to replace its leader with various officers, who later managed its affairs.

The *Peshar Habakkuk*, the sectarian commentary on the biblical Book of Habakkuk, contains much information about the teacher and his career and tribulations. The teacher was opposed by the Man of Lies (*Peshar Habakkuk* 2:2). In interpreting the words of Habakkuk 1:5, following the textual reading "See O treacherous ones . . ." [see verse 13], the scroll writes:

[The interpretation of the matter concerns] the treacherous ones together with the Man of Lies. For they did not [listen to the words of] the Teacher of Righteousness from the mouth of God. (PESHER HABAKKUK 2:1-3)

Here the teacher is depicted as a sectarian leader and messenger of God opposed by those who reject his teachings. Later we will see that these opponents are probably the Pharisees, the predecessors of the talmudic Rabbis.

This same theme appears in Habakkuk 2:2, which discusses the writing of a vision on tablets "in order that the reader would be able to read it [literally, "run"] quickly." *Peshar Habakkuk* says:

Its interpretation concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of His servants the prophets.  
(PESHER HABAKKUK 7:3-5)

According to this passage, God granted the teacher the ability to understand the true meaning, that is, the sectarian interpretation of the words of the canonical prophets. The teacher therefore could understand the historical processes unfolding at that time as well as the true interpretations of Jewish legal matters and the Torah about which so much friction existed between the sect and its opponents.

The sect always believed that it would be rewarded for its steadfast adherence to the teacher's authority. Interpreting Habakkuk 2:4 ("But the righteous man shall live by his faith"), the text states:

Its interpretation concerns all those who observe (lit. "do") the Torah in the House of Judah (the sect), whom God will save from the place of punishment because of their toil and their faith in the Teacher of Righteousness.  
(PESHER HABAKKUK 8:1-3)

Later on, the teacher is mentioned in an interpretation of Habakkuk 1:13 ("Why do you look on, treacherous one, [and] keep silent when an evil man swallows up one more righteous than he?"):

Its interpretation concerns the House of Absalom and the men of their council who were silent during the reproof of the Teacher of Righteousness and who did not help him (the teacher) against the Men of Lies. (PESHER HABAKKUK 5:9-12)

This text depicts an experience of the teacher when he was verbally abused by the Man of Lies. A certain group, called here the "House of Absalom," stood by and did not come to the teacher's assistance. Apparently, the group's name derives from the biblical story of Absalom's rebellion against his father, David (II Samuel 15-18). We learn here of the teacher's dispute with the leader of an opposing group.

The teacher was also plagued by a Wicked Priest, certainly a designation for one of the early Hasmonaean rulers. On Habakkuk 2:8 ("For crimes against men and wrongs against lands, against cities and all their inhabitants"), *Peshar Habakkuk* relates:

Its interpretation concerns the [W]icked Priest, whom, because of [his] transgression against the Teacher of Righteousness and the men of his council, God handed over into the hand[s] of his enemies to afflict him . . .  
(PESHER HABAKKUK 9:9-10)

The sect saw the suffering of the Wicked Priest as a direct result of his persecution of the teacher.

In the interpretation of Habakkuk 2:15 ("Ah, you who make others drink to intoxication as you pour out your wrath, in order to gaze upon their nakedness"), we find a more specific explanation of the nature of the Wicked Priest's transgression. Our text reads the final phrase as if it said, "in order to gaze upon her appointed times":

Its interpretation concerns the Wicked Priest, who pursued the Teacher of Righteousness to swallow him up with his wrathful anger to the place of his exile. And at the time of the day of rest of the Day of Atonement, he (the Wicked Priest) appeared before them, to swallow them up and to make them stumble on the day of the fast of their abstention from work.

(PESHER HABAKKUK 11 4-8)

The teacher led the people in a "place of exile," that is, when they were already at their sectarian center. Although it cannot be proven that this is a reference to Qumran, it is the most probable location for these events. The Wicked Priest pursued and attacked the sect "with his wrathful anger" as they were celebrating the most holy Day of Atonement—one of the appointed times—and disrupted their fast and prayers.

The seriousness of the attack against the teacher and his followers is magnified by its occurrence on the Day of Atonement. But it is important to point out that it was this sect's Day of Atonement, not that of the rest of the Jewish people. This most important detail indicates the sect's adherence to a different calendar, a point to be taken up further in a later chapter.

One final characteristic of the teacher may be gleaned from *Pesher Psalms*. In interpreting Psalms 37:23 ("The steps of a man are prepared by the Lord"), the text states:

Its interpretation refers to the priest, the Teacher of [Righteousness, whom] God [pr]omised would arise, fo[r] He [God] prepared [i.e., predestined] him [the teacher] to build for Him a congregation . . . (PESHER PSALMS A 1 III 15-16)

This text completely accords with the notion in *Pesher Habakkuk* that God gave the teacher the gift of an almost prophetic message. Here we learn that the teacher was a priest. If this detail is true, it would fit well with the historical picture previously suggested. We can easily imagine that out of the Zadokite priestly leadership, one priest would emerge to take control of the sect and give it shape and form. We could then easily comprehend the competition between him and the Wicked Priest. It is curious, however, that only this text identifies the teacher as a priest.

We can see from the preceding discussion that the Qumran documents do not give us very much information about the teacher. Nevertheless, some scholars have assumed him to be the author of various texts and have increased his role far beyond what is warranted by the documents we have studied. They see him, for example, as author of *Rule of the Congregation* and *Thanksgiving Hymns*. Some of the early Qumran scholars were inclined to see in him a proto-Jesus. A similar view has recently been espoused by some who wish to claim that the scrolls refer directly to the early Christian movement. This view, as I previously maintained, is impossible to accept on chronological grounds. In fact, the sources

allow us to say little more than that the teacher led the sect in its formative period after the initial schism and period of uncertainty, that he was probably a priest, that he had confrontations with the Man of Lies, and that he was persecuted by the Wicked Priest. But most important, the sect believed that his leadership derived from his God-given ability to interpret the words of the prophets and to formulate the beliefs and halakhic norms of the sect.

Although the Teacher of Righteousness died at some point during the life of the sect, the sect continued to adhere to its principles, expecting the End of Days and the coming of the messiah. The teachings of the sect's preeminent leader were still considered authoritative and determined the sect's pattern of behavior long after his death.

#### MEVAQQR

Most likely the various sectarian leadership roles did not all coexist at the same time, but rather represent different stages in the organizational history of the sectarian community. The role of the Teacher of Righteousness may have been inherited after his death by the *mevaqqr* (examiner), to whom we now turn our attention.

This important figure in the sectarian leadership appears in both the *Zadokite Fragments* and *Rule of the Community*. The term *mevaqqr* has been variously defined as "examiner," "overseer," or, in some anachronistic and confessional presentations, "bishop." Instead of seeking a literal translation of *mevaqqr*, we shall examine his function, hoping in this way to understand his role in the sect's life.

Almost all of the references to this official occur in the *Zadokite Fragments*. However, reference to this office in *Rule of the Community* as well suggests that it functioned in sectarian communities both at Qumran and elsewhere in the Land of Israel.

The examiner was considered sufficiently important to merit an entire halakhic section in the *Zadokite Fragments*:

This is the rule regarding the examiner of the camp: He shall instruct the community in the deeds of God and teach them His wondrous mighty acts. And he shall relate before them the events of eternity in its details. And he shall have mercy upon them, like a father to his sons, and heal their diseases. Like a shepherd to his flock, he shall loose all the fetters of their bonds, so that there shall not be (anyone) oppressed or downtrodden in his congregation. And anyone who joins his congregation, he shall examine him as regards his deeds, his wisdom, and his strength, his might, and his property. And he (the examiner) shall inscribe him in his place, according to his inheritance in the lot of truth. No one from the people of the camp shall decide to bring any

person into the congregation without the permission of the examiner who is (in charge of) the camp. . . . And let no one do anything in regard to buying or selling unless he has made (it) known to the examiner who is (in charge of) the camp, and does so with (his) counsel, lest they c[rr]. And thus] for a[ny]one who ma[r]ries a wo[man], i[t] (must be) [with] (his) counsel. And thus [also] for one who divorces (his wife). And he (the examiner) shall [instruct their sons and their daughters with a spirit of] of humility and with lovingkindness. He may not harbor a [grudge] against them. [He should forgive] their sins.

(ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS 13:7-19)

This long passage certainly places the examiner at center stage in sectarian life. In fact, it seems as if he must have been the inheritor of the duties, and perhaps the powers, of the Teacher of Righteousness, although such a claim cannot be proven.

What precisely were the examiner's responsibilities?

First and foremost, the examiner was a teacher and a guide to his followers, responsible for their spiritual and physical welfare. He tested new members and had to approve their entrance into the community. He supervised all members' business transactions, probably deriving the prerogative from the rights of communal use exercised by the sect over individuals' property. He was responsible for approving marriages and divorces (evidence that the sect was not celibate, a matter to which we will return later), and he was required to treat his people with love and kindness.

Apparently, a number of individuals fulfilled this office for smaller groups of sectarians and one was in charge of the entire sect. His age and qualifications are carefully specified:

The examiner who is in charge of all the camps shall be from thirty years old [and] up to fifty years old. [He must be] experienced in every secret (known) to men and in every language. . . . According to him shall the men of the congregation enter, each in his turn. And regarding every matter which any man should have to say, he should speak to the examiner regarding any dispute or judgment. (ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS 14:8-12)

This official, with his wisdom, understanding, and knowledge of languages, was to organize the sectarians in order of their ranks. The system of ranking served both for the mustering ceremony at the annual covenant renewal and for determining the order of speaking in the sectarian assembly, where senior members were given first opportunity to speak. (This same practice was followed in the Sanhedrin, according to rabbinic sources, except in capital matters, when junior judges voted first.)

As we have already seen, the examiner was heavily involved in the process of accepting new members, and he had an important function in the sectarian legal system as well. It appears from our study that the examiner occupied an office

that was to a great extent designed to serve as a substitute for the Teacher of Righteousness after the teacher's death. However, because other officials also carried on some of the teacher's tasks, the examiner alone did not wield exclusive power.

#### PAQID

*Rule of the Community* places an official known as the *paqid* (appointed one) at the head of the community. It was the job of the *paqid* to administer the initial test for those wishing to join the sect:

And whoever volunteers from Israel to join the council of the community, the one who is appointed (as *paqid*) at the head of the community shall investigate him as regards his understanding and his deeds . . .

(RULE OF THE COMMUNITY 6:14)

A passage in the *Zadokite Fragments*, which can now be correctly and definitely restored with the aid of the fragments from cave 4, mentions the same official, there called the "priest who musters at the head of the community":

And the priest who shall muster at the head of the community shall be from thirty to sixty years old, learned in the Book of Hagu/i and in all the regulations of the Torah to pronounce them according to their regulation.

(ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS 14:6-8 = D<sup>b</sup> 11 II 10-13)

The Book of Hagu is probably the *Torah*, and the regulations are the sectarian laws that emerged from the sect's interpretation of the *Torah*. This priest, whatever his functions—and we are not really certain what they were—had to be from thirty to sixty years old. Because the upper age limit differs from that of the examiner, it is not possible to suggest that they are the same official. It is also difficult to speculate further on the role of this priest, for our information is too scanty.

#### MASKIL

It is difficult to define precisely the role of another leadership type, the *maskil*. The word itself derives from a verb, meaning, "to enlighten," and it might be translated literally as "enlightener," that is, "instructor." No doubt the use of the term was influenced by Daniel 12—a chapter known to have been influential in Qumran sectarian texts—in which the term appears twice (verses 3 and 10). For reasons of convenience, and because of the dual usage of this term at Qumran to denote both the enlightened nature of the *maskil* and his role in enlightening others, we have chosen to leave the term untranslated.

A very general description of the role of this leader states:

It is for the *maskil* to explain and to teach all the Sons of Light the nature of all men: all the types of their spirits, their signs, according to their actions in their generations, and the visitation of their plagues, as well as their periods of peace. (RULE OF THE COMMUNITY 3:13-15)

According to sectarian teachings, humankind has been predestined to be divided into the Sons of Light, the sectarians, and the Sons of Darkness, the rest of the Jewish people and the other peoples of the world. The job of the *maskil* was to teach the sectarians the nature of the spirits of light and darkness, as well as the way these two spirits manifest themselves in human history. He was to explain how interaction between these two spirits could lead both to misfortune in the world and to peace as well. Presumably, the *maskil* was responsible for conveying the ideology and theology of the Qumran community to other members of the group.

Another passage emphasizes the *maskil* as possessor of legal knowledge:

These are the statutes for the *maskil* according to which he should conduct himself with every living being, according to the measure of each and every period, and according to the value of each and every person, to do the will of God according to everything that is revealed from time to time, and to learn all the knowledge which is derived according to the times, and the law of the time. (RULE OF THE COMMUNITY 9:12-14)

The *maskil* was expected to be a master of the sectarian legal tradition as it applied to the various periods of time. He was supposed to apply it properly in his dealings with others according to their status and level within the sect. Each member of the group had a particular status, determined by the order in which the sectarians were mustered.

This "legal" wisdom is also stressed in a very similar passage in the *Zadokite Fragments*, which serves as the conclusion to a list of laws:

These are the statutes for the *maskil* according to which he should conduct himself with every living being, according to the regulation for each and every time. And according to this regulation shall the descendants of Israel conduct themselves so that they not be cursed. (ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS 12:20-22)

Neither of these last two passages speaks about the teaching or leadership role of the *maskil*. It is therefore possible that, in time, a class of scholars became a class of leaders, although this theory cannot be proven. What is most interesting about the *maskil* is that this learned leader did not have to be a Zadokite or even a priest. He appears to have been a lay member of the sect—knowledgeable about its law, but not born into his status.

Another passage from the same text should be mentioned because it is now

possible, with the help of the newly released Qumran manuscripts of the *Zadokite Fragments*, to reconstruct it fully. It, too, serves as the conclusion for a list of laws:

And these are the statutes for the *maskil* according to which he should conduct himself [when God brings visitation (punishment) on] the earth, when [the] matter takes [place] about which He (God) said, "There will come [upon you] days the likes of which have not come [since] the day when E[ph]raim turned away from [Judah]" (approximately Isaiah 7:17). And all those who con]duct themselves according to these (statutes), the covenant of God is dependable [for them to save them from all sn]ares of the [p]it, "for the [fo]ols violated (these statutes) and were punished . . ." (Proverbs 27:12). (ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS D<sup>b</sup> 11 II 1-4 = 13:22-14:2).

Here again we see the *maskil* connected with knowledge about how to live correctly according to the Torah. Those who knew these laws were to be saved from the coming visitation, which would be the greatest catastrophe since the split of the kingdom after Solomon's death. But others—the "fools" who violated the Torah—would suffer greatly.

The *maskil* took the lead in reciting the blessings found in *Rule of Benedictions*. I maintain that these were to be recited in the eschatological mustering ceremony. The text begins with the blessing for those who fear the Lord (*Rule of Benedictions* 1:1). Further on, the text presents a blessing for the Zadokite priests (3:22-28) and the Prince of the Congregation (5:20-29).

The *maskil*, an expert in the law, was expected to share this knowledge with his fellow sectarians and to set an example by his own way of life. Yet nowhere do we find specific administrative functions assigned to this person or class.

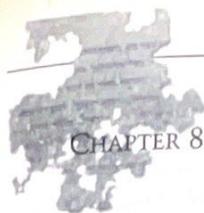
#### SECTARIAN OFFICIALS AND JEWISH LEADERSHIP

The various types of sectarian leaders and the roles they played tell us much about the basic transitions Judaism was undergoing at that time. Initially, the sect was led by Zadokite priests who started the breakaway group in protest over the Hasmonaean takeover of the high priesthood sometime after 152 B.C.E. But their leadership seems to have been augmented soon after by the Teacher of Righteousness as well as an examiner and by a priestly official known as the *paqid*. These other officials played an administrative role in the sect, which allowed legislative and judicial functions to pass into the hands of the entire community, called "the priests, the Sons of Zadok, and the men of their covenant." The last group consisted of the Levites and Israelites who made up the majority of the sect. Thus, just as the council of elders in Jerusalem, which served as the Hasmonaean council of state, included both priestly and lay elements, so lay leaders at Qumran shared authority with the sectarian priests.

In addition to giving us insight into the ways that lay officials and other Israelites entered into decision-making roles, the *maskil* closely resembles the lay Pharisaic sages who eventually became the teachers of the Mishnah. The *maskilim*, like the early Pharisaic lay sages, were experts in the law and its interpretation and, in some cases, involved themselves in its dissemination. Clearly, lay influence on communal and legal decision-making in Jewish life was already making inroads in Second Temple times, not only among the Pharisees but among other groups as well, even among so priestly a group as the Qumran sect.

When the Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E., the Jews of Palestine found themselves facing a vacuum of communal authority. As with so many other developments of that period, the nonpriestly rabbinic leadership that rose to fill that vacuum already had its antecedents not only among the Pharisees, but also among the wider Jewish community in the Land of Israel.

The texts we have discussed so far might leave the false impression that women had nothing to do with the life of the sect and were ignored in the documents collected at Qumran. Nothing could be further from the truth, as we will see in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 8

## Women in the Scrolls

Since the earliest years of Qumran research, most scholars have assumed that the Dead Sea sect was made up only of men who lived a celibate life, forswearing marriage and sexual relations. That view has been conditioned by certain ancient accounts of the Essenes, who were assumed to be identical to the Dead Sea sect. Furthermore, certain approaches to studying early Christianity led some scholars to import the monastic model and impose it upon the Qumran discoveries.

This issue needs to be discussed anew for a variety of reasons. First, even partial excavation of the cemeteries at Qumran has yielded the graves of some women and children. Second, though the conditioned view of the Qumran community might have been consonant with the information contained in *Rule of the Community*, it is flatly countermanded by numerous texts, including the *Zadokite Fragments* and *Rule of the Congregation*. Finally, if we take a new look at the account of Josephus, we find ourselves questioning the nature of even Essene celibacy.

## CELIBACY OF THE ESSENES

Assumptions that the Dead Sea sect was celibate and that women were not accepted into its ranks represent to a great extent the legacy of classical writers' descriptions of the Essenes. Based on that received tradition, most scholars in our own time have concluded that the Dead Sea sect is therefore identical with the Essenes. For that reason, it is useful to review ancient accounts describing Essene celibacy so that our investigation has a context.

We begin with the accounts that unquestioningly portray Essenes as celibate. Pliny the Elder (23–79 C.E.), who wrote soon after Destruction of the Temple and defeat of the Jews at the hands of the Romans, describes Essenes in his description of the Dead Sea region. There he says of the "tribe of the Essenes" that "it has no women and has renounced all sexual desire" (*Natural History* 5, 73). A number of



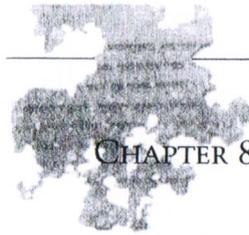
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passages in Greco-Jewish literature provide additional information. Philo the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher writes:

Furthermore, they abstain from marriage because they plainly perceive it to be the only or the primary danger to the maintenance of the communal life, as well as because they especially practice continence. For no Essene takes a wife, because a wife is a selfish creature, addicted to jealousy and skilled at beguiling the morals of her husband and seducing him by her continued deceptions. (*HYPOTHETICA* 11, 14)

This discussion presents several supposed reasons for Essene celibacy. First, marriage was perceived, Philo tells us, as a danger to the structure of the community. In other words, the Essenes set aside the Bible's command to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28) so that the sect could conduct its affairs in an orderly fashion, something impossible to do in the company of women. Second, Philo tells us that Essenes practiced abstinence from sexual relations. Finally, he presents a negative view of women that is familiar from some Hellenistic sources but not common in Palestinian Judaism. We cannot know how Philo got his ideas about Essene celibacy, but it is clear that they were to some extent influenced by the Hellenistic environment in which he lived.

The most important material on this subject comes from Josephus (37–100 C.E.), for he had firsthand acquaintance with the Judaeen sects, at least those of the latter part of the Second Temple period. Josephus writes of the Essenes:

They avoid pleasures as a vice and regard continence and the control of the desires as a special virtue. They disdain marriage. . . . They do not actually on principle reject wedlock and the propagation thereby of humanity, but they want to protect themselves from promiscuous women, since they are convinced that none of them preserves her fidelity to one man. (*WAR* 2, 120–121)

First, Josephus tells us that Essenes shunned sexual relations in order to control their passions. Then the text gives us yet another reason: they feared that a wife would engage in illicit relations with others. Thus, if they were to have relations with their wife after she had been unfaithful, they would in some way become defiled. This account echoes the same notion expressed by Philo and may not really involve direct knowledge of the group, because Josephus's account here seems to be influenced by that of Philo. Elsewhere, Josephus writes that Essenes do not "bring wives into the community" since it "opens the way to a source of dissension" (*Antiquities* 18, 21).

Josephus also writes of "another order of Essenes":

They believe that those who refuse to marry negate the chief purpose of life—the propagation of humanity—and that furthermore, if everyone were to adopt the same approach, the entire [human] race would very quickly become extinct. But they subject their wives to three years' probation and marry

them only after they have by three periods of ritual purification demonstrated proof of fertility. They do not have sexual relations with them during pregnancy, thus showing that their purpose in marriage is not pleasure but the assurance of posterity. (*WAR* 2, 160–161)

Various strange interpretations have been offered for this passage, even suggesting that Essenes lived together with their wife-to-be before marriage.

The most plausible explanation, however, is to understand the text as describing a three-year period of betrothal, designed to verify that the bride-to-be was appropriate, followed by a three-month investigation to confirm that the woman was at least on the surface able to give birth. The reason for these practices, the text goes on to say, is that this group regarded nonprocreative sexual relations as forbidden. Rabbinic sources give evidence of a similar idea held by some early Jewish pietists (B. Niddah 38a).

We cannot cite any parallels in the Qumran sectarian documents that echo the negative views toward women that are attributed to nonmarrying Essenes, although we encounter references to evil women in other Second Temple texts that are preserved at Qumran. Nor can we find parallels to the view that the only purpose in marriage is procreation. Furthermore, we cannot be sure that the Essenes described by Josephus, or even by Philo, held such negative views about women, because such ideas were commonplace in the Hellenistic milieu and may simply reflect the desire of these Greek writers to describe Jewish sectarian practices in terms understandable to non-Jewish readers.

All we can know for certain is that some Jews who were extremely vigilant about fidelity within the marriage relationship held views somewhat different from those of the mainstream regarding even sexual relations within marriage but nonetheless still married and had children. It is possible that Josephus's "marrying Essenes" are identical with our sect.

Indeed, in the passage, Josephus shows that the term "Essene" may have been an inclusive term encompassing a number of groups. It is then possible that our sect, which certainly does exhibit some valid parallels with the Essenes as described by Philo, Josephus, and Pliny the Elder, would fall under this wider heading.

#### EVIDENCE FROM THE ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS

Let us now turn to the internal evidence in the Qumran sectarian texts themselves. In regard to the identification of the sect with a specific group, we have already noted that these texts do not use the name "Essenes" or any other such name to refer to the sect. Neither do they list any regulations mandating celibacy for sect members.

On the contrary, the *Zadokite Fragments* contains many indications of a society in which marriage and family were the norm. This document constitutes a good starting point for investigation of the role of women in the sect, although it is generally believed that the text describes members who were scattered in camps throughout the Land of Israel rather than those at Qumran. (We take up the Qumran community later.) So the passages discussed here probe only that group within the larger Dead Sea sect (or perhaps the Essenes) who practiced marriage and family life.

The *Zadokite Fragments* wages a spirited attack on polygamy and other practices that the sect considered violations of Jewish marriage laws, but they never criticize, let alone negate, the institution of marriage itself.

The text attacks opponents of the sect for practicing polygamy:

They are caught . . . in fornication, by taking two wives in their lifetime. But the foundation of creation is "male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27) and those who entered the ark, "two of each, [male and female,] came [to Noah] into the ark" (Genesis 7:9). And regarding the king it is written, "He shall not have many wives" (Deuteronomy 17:17). (*ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS* 4:20-5:2)

This passage has given rise to many interpretations. Central to the dispute has been the question of whose lifetime is meant by "their lifetime"—the men's or the women's? I take the passage to categorically forbid polygamy and, furthermore, to forbid a man to take another wife during his current wife's lifetime. In defining marriage as a lifetime commitment, the text's author clearly interpreted the biblical right of divorce to permit separation but not remarriage. The man or woman had to wait until the other died before taking a new spouse. The passage also quotes the law of the king in Deuteronomy to show that the king serves as an example to his subjects. Just as he is not permitted to have more than one wife, so others are not. The *Temple Scroll* contains an especially strong prohibition against the king's having more than one wife.

Here is incontrovertible evidence that polygamy is prohibited but marriage is not. Yet the passage does not prove that marriage was actually the norm in the sectarian community. The text goes on to prohibit marriage with one's niece—a point of contention between the Pharisees and other Jewish groups in Second Temple times—and to complain about the observance of purity regulations by other Jews who apparently disagreed with the author's views:

And they also render impure the Temple since they do not separate according to the Torah, and they have sexual relations with one who experiences her blood flow. And they marry each [his niece] the daughter of his brother and the daughter of his sister. (*ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS* 5:7-8)

This passage goes on to reason that the marriage of a niece ought to be prohibited by logical deduction because the Torah explicitly prohibits a woman from marry-

ing her nephew (Leviticus 18:13). Although the text here protests the violation of the purity laws and the laws of consanguinity, it does not even hint that marriage itself is undesirable or proscribed.

Later on, a man is commanded "not to transgress against his wife and to abstain from fornication" (*Zadokite Fragments* 7:1). He is also commanded:

Let a man not have sexual relations with a woman in the city of the sanctuary so as to render the city of the sanctuary impure by their defilement. (*ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS* 12:1-2)

This prohibition surely proscribes relations in Temple precincts, although other scholars have suggested that it refers to the entire city of Jerusalem. In any case, the text does not imply total prohibition of sexual relations, only restrictions in a specific area surrounding and including the Temple itself. Parenthetically, it should be noted that despite the sect's abandonment of Temple worship, which it regarded as impure, it continued to legislate for the perfect society in which it would conduct Temple ritual in accord with its views.

Another passage, preserved only in the Qumran fragments of this text, specifically takes up the laws of ritual purity as they relate to women:

[And if a man has sexual relations with her {a menstrually impure woman}, the penalty (i.e., the impurity) of menstrual impurity will be upon him. (*ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS D<sup>a</sup> 9 II 1-2*)

The text goes on to explain how women could be purified: by waiting seven days and immersing in the ritual bath. Then, on the eighth day, women could enter the Temple. Again, laws concerning relations with women assume the legitimacy of sexual unions.

In another passage, the text addresses the issue of family life explicitly:

If they live in camps according to the custom of the land, and they have taken wives and had children, then they should live according to the Torah . . . (*ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS* 7:6-7)

The passage then addresses the issues of oaths and vows and the right of the father or husband to annul those of his daughter or wife:

[Regar]ding a (married) woman's oath: As to that which He (God) said to the effect that her husband may annul her oath, the husband may not annul an oath about which he does not know whether it ought to be carried out or annulled. (*ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS* 16:10-11 = *D<sup>a</sup> 2 II 10-11*)

The law of oaths and vows in the *Zadokite Fragments* expands upon that of Numbers 30:14-15, which states that a husband could cancel an oath that his wife had taken, or, if he had no objection to it, he could let it stand. For our purposes, this passage simply confirms that married women were a common feature of the society described in this text.

A similar text from the *Temple Scroll* repeats this law, but adds:

But as to any vow (made) by a widow or divorcee, whatever she has imposed upon herself shall be binding upon her, according to everything which comes forth from her mouth. (*TEMPLE SCROLL 54:4-5*)

Here we have evidence not only for marriage but for divorce as well. The widow or divorcee had complete control over her legal actions; her husband or father could not intervene on her behalf, and anything she swore was binding.

We have already mentioned that among the tasks of the examiner was approval of marriages and divorces among the members. The examiner was apparently expected to serve as counselor and guide in those matters.

Perhaps most interesting is a passage that speaks of making sure that a bride-to-be is appropriate. To this end a person is commanded to reveal any of her imperfections or blemishes to an unsuspecting groom:

... all of her blemishes he should relate to him. Why should he bring upon himself the punishment of the curse which He (God) said, "[Cursed be] he who misdirects a blind person on his way" (Deuteronomy 27:18)? And also, he should not give her to one who is not appropriate for her, for it is a forbidden mixture, [like (plowing with) "an ox and an ass" (Deuteronomy 22:10) and wearing "wool and linen together" (Deuteronomy 22:11)].  
(*ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS D' 1 1 8-10 = D' 5 14-16 = D' 9 1-3*)

In addition, this passage forbids the father from marrying off his daughter to one who was inappropriate to her, considering such a marriage a violation of the law of forbidden mixtures.

After a broken section that is difficult to interpret, the text resumes with a passage restricting members of the sect from marrying women of questionable moral standards:

And whoever had sexual [relations (literally, "knew to perform the act") in the house of] her father, or a widow who had sexual relations after she was widowed, or any (woman) about [whom] there was about her a bad name (i.e., a claim of nonvirginity) during her (period of) virginity in her father's house, let no man marry her. Except with the supervision of reliable women and definite facts according to the instruction of the examiner who is over [the assembly of the many, he may not] marry her.  
(*ZADOKITE FRAGMENTS D' 1 1 11-15 = D' 5 18-21 = D' 9 4-7*)

This text certainly legislates for a society in which marriage was acceptable, and it seeks to protect the male sectarian from contracting marriage with a woman who had engaged in illicit relations, that is, relations out of wedlock. In addition, women were considered reliable to certify the virginity of a prospective wife.

Therefore, these texts, and others that could be cited as well, demonstrate conclusively that the society described by the *Zadokite Fragments* was to be based on

marriage and family. If this document were our only source for the Qumran sect, no one would ever have suggested that women were not a part of the community. But as we will now see, it is not the only one.

#### RULE OF THE CONGREGATION

*Rule of the Community*, one of the first seven nearly complete scrolls to be recovered from cave 1, is generally accepted as the most important document describing the structure and organization of the community at Qumran. Significantly, this scroll does not itself contain any mention of women or children.

Among other texts recovered later from that same cave were two documents that we now know were definitely copied on the same scroll as *Rule of the Community*. The first of these associated documents, written immediately after *Rule of the Community*, is called *Rule of the Congregation*, or, sometimes, *Messianic Rule*. This second rule describes the messianic community embodying the perfect holiness of the End of Days. This same text, which provides an eschatological mirror image of *Rule of the Community*, anticipates that the life of the sectarians in the End of Days will involve children and family and, as explicitly stated, sexual relations.

In the introduction to this text, we read that in the End of Days

they shall assemble all those who join (the sect), women and children . . .  
(*RULE OF THE CONGREGATION 1:4*)

This description of the only true Israel of the End of Days, the perfect sectarian community, includes women and children, who, according to the text, will participate in the reenacting of the covenant renewal ceremony commanded by Deuteronomy from which this description derives its language (Deuteronomy 29:10). Other Qumran sources tell us that the pre-messianic sect at Qumran engaged in the very same covenant renewal ceremony on an annual basis (*Rule of the Community 1:1-3:12*). Many scholars believe it occurred on Shavuot, the Festival identified by the Pharisaic-rabbinic tradition as the time the Torah was given at Sinai.

Further on, the same text outlines the life stages of a sectarian in the messianic community. There we learn that marriage and sexual relations are the expected norm:

And at twenty year[s of age he shall pass among the mu]stered to enter into full status along with his fam[il]y, to join the holy congre[gation]. He shall not [approach] a woman to have sexual relations with her until he reaches the age of twe[n]ty, at which time he knows [good] and evil.  
(*RULE OF THE CONGREGATION 1:8-11*)

## Stages of Life for Men in the Sectarial Community

| AGE IN YEARS                  | ACTIVITIES AND OBLIGATIONS   |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Early childhood<br>(up to 10) | Studies Book of Hagu/i<br>Studies laws of covenant   |
| 20                            | Participates in mustering ceremony<br>Makes one-time payment of half-shekel<br>May marry and have sexual relations<br>May serve as witness |
| 25                            | Minimum age for military service<br>Minimum age for judicial service   |
| 30                            | May serve as official<br>May serve as <i>paqid</i> or <i>mevaqquer</i><br>Minimum age for skirmishing troops                               |
| 40                            | Minimum age for serving in battle array  |
| 45                            | Maximum age for skirmishing troops   |
| 50                            | Minimum age for camp prefect<br>Maximum age for serving as <i>mevaqquer</i><br>Maximum age for serving in battle array                     |
| 60                            | Maximum age for judicial service<br>Maximum age for serving as <i>paqid</i><br>Maximum age for camp prefect                                |

In the view of the sect and in wider circles in Palestinian Judaism in our period, twenty was the age of physical and legal maturity. It was also the age of sexual maturity, denoted by the phrase "knows good and evil." This, indeed, may be the meaning of the phrase in the recounting the story of the Garden of Eden, wherein the eating of the tree causes Adam and Eve to become sexually aware (Genesis 3:5, 8). In any case, here is explicit evidence that in the ideal messianic community of the sect, women were to be not only present but also wives and partners in sexual and family life.

A problematic excerpt from this same text has sometimes been interpreted as proving that women gave testimony according to the Qumran halakhic system, a practice for the most part forbidden in the Pharisaic-rabbinic system. Literally translated, the text would indeed seem to support such a reading:

And at that time she will be received to bear witness of him (concerning) the judgment of the law and to take (her) pl[a]ce in proclaiming the ordinances.

(RULE OF THE CONGREGATION 1:11)

It would be attractive for our argument to be able to claim that women even testified in the sectarian legal system. However, then we would have a text allowing

women to testify about one and only one thing: the conduct of their husbands. Imagine what marriages this would have made! Clearly, the text has been corrupted through scribal error and must be emended (substituting *yqbl* for *tqbl* and *'lpy* for *'lyw*) to read: "And at that time he shall be received to testify in accordance with the laws of the Torah and to take [his] place in hearing judgments." Those familiar with how limited women's roles were in ancient Jewish and general legal proceedings would understand why this emendation makes more sense.

If the sectarians anticipated in the End of Days a society based on marriage and family and if that society represented for them the perfection of what already existed in their own world and their own community, then it is hard to escape the conclusion that the Qumran sectarians lived in a normal society that included marriage and family. If such is the case, then we still need to explain why so many fewer women and children than men were buried in the graves excavated at Qumran.

We know that the Qumran settlement and building complex constituted the center of a larger group scattered throughout Israel. At the regional locations, it was possible to proceed only through the first two steps in the novitiate, and only by going to the Qumran center and completing the requisite studies could one enter fully into the sect. Since this stage required concentrated study, sectarians may have left their wives and families for periods of time to accomplish the goal. After completion of their novitiate, they were free to return home. Therefore, only permanent settlers at Qumran, probably few in number, would have had families living at the site—hence, the few women and children buried in the Qumran graves.

## MARRIAGE RITUAL

Cave 4 has yielded a document dubiously labeled *Ritual of Marriage*. Because its formulation seems to have little to do with matrimony, however, it is highly doubtful that this text actually was a marriage ritual. On the other hand, the alternative suggestion that the text is an old-age ritual for honoring the elders of the sect seems just as unlikely. The truth is that we do not really understand what purpose this text was designed to serve.

The surviving material is extremely fragmentary, consisting of about one hundred and fifty fragments, most of which bear little more than a few incomprehensible letters. But a few expressions found in the text are significant: "and his wife"; "to make seed"; "daughter of truth . . . his wife" (fragments 1–3). God is praised repeatedly for giving joy to the sect, or "joy together" (fragments 7–9). Also mentioned are "sons and daughters" (fragment 14); "seed of blessing, old men and old [women . . . young men] and virgins, boys and girls . . ." (fragment 19); and "for the fruit of the w[omb]" (fragment 20).

Whatever the overall contents and character of this text, it certainly involves families' rejoicing together. Far from describing a celibate community, these fragments convey a sense of the true joy of generations' celebrating the continuity of the Jewish family.

### WOMEN IN THE *TEMPLE SCROLL*

The *Temple Scroll* sketches out an ideal paradigm for holiness in the present, pre-messianic era. It is probable that this text was not composed entirely by the Qumran sect, for it depends heavily on sources derived from Sadducean circles and differs in many respects from the Qumran sectarian corpus. Nonetheless, it reflects a way of thinking quite close to that of the sectarians, who preserved it and most probably edited it. Certainly, this text assumes marriage, sexual relations, and childbirth as part of its ideal society. Because women are potentially agents for either sanctification or defilement, they are the focus of legislation in this scroll. The selected laws that follow demonstrate once again how basic the institution of marriage is to the social fabric of a document which was cherished by the sect.

Several laws deal with prohibited and permitted marriages. In the case of marriage between a man and his niece, the *Temple Scroll* is stricter even than the legislation of the Torah:

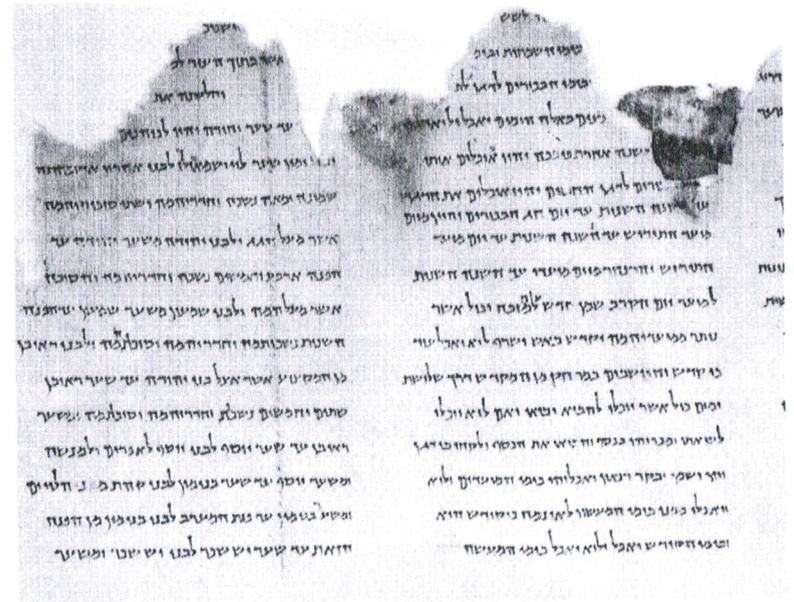
A man may not marry his brother's daughter or his sister's daughter, for it is an abomination. (*TEMPLE SCROLL* 66:15–17)

According to Leviticus 18:12–13, a man is prohibited from marrying his aunt; the *Temple Scroll* reasons that if a woman may not marry her nephew, then a man may not marry his niece. This very same ruling appears in the *Zadokite Fragments* [5:7–11], as previously mentioned. However, the Rabbis allowed a man to marry his niece and even encouraged it. But the *Temple Scroll* agrees with the Qumran sectarians, Samaritans, early Christians, and Karaites in forbidding such marriages.

The scroll also deals with the various ritual purity rules and their relevance to women. It is extremely strict in separating menstrually impure women from the community at large:

In each and every city you shall set aside places for . . . women when they are in their period of impurity and when they have given birth, so that they not defile in them (the cities) during their period of impurity.  
(*TEMPLE SCROLL* 48:14–17)

During a woman's "period of impurity," she was forbidden to enter cities. In order to enter the Temple City, she had to undergo purification rituals beforehand.



**Temple Scroll** This scroll was recovered by Yigael Yadin in the aftermath of the Six-Day War in 1967. It is almost completely preserved to a length of almost 9 meters. The text is a reworking of the laws of the Torah that advocate the author's approach to the Temple and its ritual, the government, the army, and the legal system of the Jewish people. The document as a whole calls for thoroughgoing reform of the existing religious and political order of the Hasmonaean period. *Photograph by Bruce and Kenneth Zuckerman, West Semitic Research. Courtesy of the Shrine of the Book of the Israel Museum.*

In the Second Temple, described by Josephus and the Mishnah, women were permitted to enter the outer of the two Temple courts. In the ideal Temple described in this scroll, the Temple would be surrounded by three courts instead of two; women who were ritually pure would be permitted into only the outer of the three courts. Thus, in the actual Second Temple, and later in rabbinic halakhah, women were permitted physically nearer the holy area where priestly ritual was performed than they were in the ideal sanctuary described in the *Temple Scroll*. As in the case of women, men too were moved one court outward, permitted to enter only into the middle court rather than into the closer inner court of the actual Second Temple.

Concern with female purity also expresses itself in another passage, which deals with captive women who have been acquired in war. Like Deuteronomy 21:1–9, the *Temple Scroll* allows a soldier to bring home a woman captured from the enemy and to marry her, but he must cut her hair, pare her nails, give her new clothes, and offer her the opportunity to mourn her parents. The *Temple Scroll* adds:

Afterward, you may have sexual relations with her, and she shall be your wife. But she may not touch your pure food for seven years. Nor shall she eat a whole-offering until seven years pass; then she shall eat [it].

(*TEMPLE SCROLL* 63:10–15)

Like the *Zadokite Fragments* and *Rule of the Community*, the *Temple Scroll* excludes from contact with the pure food a person who is regarded as impure. A non-Jewish wife is not allowed to partake of the pure foods for a period of seven years. Although this time frame is different from that which applied to a novice seeking admission into the sect, the concept is the same. Only those who were full members of the community had access to the pure food. Note, however, that there is no distinction made here between solid and liquid food, in contrast to the distinction made in the system of sectarian initiation.

The special section of the *Temple Scroll* known as Law of the King maintains especially strict marital regulations for the king: He may not marry more than one woman. She must be a Jewish woman of his own clan. He may not divorce her and remarry as long as she lives; however, he may remarry if she dies.

This scroll, then, certainly the largest halakhic text found in the scrolls corpus, assumes marriage and family, and it legislates on that assumption. In setting out an ideal plan for a future society, but not one that is messianic, the scroll expects that women and family will occupy their natural place. Whether this document was edited in the sectarian community or imported from a related but different group, it is obvious that its readers must have felt no discomfort about the society described here; it was, as the *Zadokite Fragments* said, “the custom of the land” (*Zadokite Fragments* 7:6).

#### IMAGE OF WOMEN IN QUMRAN POETRY

A few poetic texts found at Qumran portray women in erotic contexts. Even though those texts show no evidence of having been composed by the sectarians, and in some cases were definitely not, they are important to this discussion because their presence in the Qumran collection suggests that they were of interest to the group and constituted part of the literary and religious heritage the sect had received. Accordingly, they help to create a context for the material analyzed earlier, and they give us a sense of how women were portrayed and understood. We will encounter several basic archetypes here: woman as seductress, leading

men astray; woman as symbol of wisdom, the acquisition of which is described in erotic terms; woman as birth mother of the messiah and the messianic era; and woman as beautiful erotic partner. In fact, all these images of women derive directly from the Hebrew Bible but appear here greatly expanded and enriched.

A Qumran document in the wisdom text genre discusses the wicked woman who leads men astray. Some have interpreted this harsh condemnation as indicative of the sect’s negative view toward women. In reality, the poem simply rehearses an ancient biblical-wisdom trend that warned against the dangers of a wanton woman who entices even the best of men.

Preserved in a first century B.C.E. manuscript, this is a text that, in fact, need not have been authored within the Qumran community, for it evinces no particular sectarian features. Some scholars have read it as an allegory, depicting such ideas as the evils of false doctrine. I prefer to see it as a wisdom exhortation—in the style of Proverbs 7 and other passages in the Bible—that sets forth the timeless truths that some women use their feminine charms irresponsibly and that men need to guard against their own proclivities to fall into the traps laid for them.

The poem, known as *Wiles of the Wicked Woman*, is too long to quote in full, but following are some representative portions:

[From] her [mouth] she brings forth vanity,  
and on [her tongue she expresses nou]ght.  
Error shall remain always [on her lips],  
she shall [make] smooth [her] words with ridicule and flattery. . . .

Her hands have taken hold of the Pit,  
her legs have descended to do evil,  
and to go in [the way of] [guilty] transgressions,  
[and to probe] the foundations of darkness. . . .

For she is the beginning of all the ways of iniquity,  
trouble (and) misfortune to all who possess her. . . .

For her ways are the ways of death,  
and her paths are the paths of sin. . . .

Her [g]ates are ga[t]les of death,  
at the entrance to her house she steps [into] Sheo[!].  
[Those who enter it will not] return,  
and all who possess her have gone down to the Pit. . . .

[Her feet] hurry [always],  
her eyes search to and fro.

To se[e] a righteous [man] so that she can ensnare him,  
 and a man of [perfec]tion so that she can cause him to stumble.  
 The upright to turn (them) aside from the path,  
 and those chosen for righteousness from the observance  
 of the commandment . . . ,  
 so they not [wa]lk in the paths of uprightness.  
 To cause men to go astray in the ways of the Pit,  
 and to seduce with lies the sons of man.

A poem bearing certain similarities to this one appears in the Book of Ben Sira (c. 180 B.C.E.) and also appears as part of the additional, noncanonical material included in the *Psalms Scroll*. The presence of this poem in the Qumran *Psalms Scroll* suggests that it had attained a measure of status among the sectarians.

This poem is actually the converse of the one just previously examined: Here the erotic imagery dramatizes the pursuit of wisdom. The man's seduction results not from going astray after the vices of an evil woman, but rather expresses his deep, erotic attraction to the secrets of wisdom, symbolized as a beautiful and sensual woman. The man's consummation of the sexual act is not a transgression and fall as in the first poem, but is rather a symbol of the highest level of personal attainment. The following is the preserved portion of the poem in the translation of James A. Sanders [*Psalms Scroll* 21:11–17]:

I was a young man before I had erred when I looked for her.  
 She came to me in her beauty when I finally sought her out.  
 Even (as) a blossom drops in the ripening of grapes, making glad the heart,  
 (So) my foot trod in uprightness; for from my young manhood have  
 I known her.  
 I inclined my ear but a little and great was the persuasion I found.  
 And she became for me a nurse; to my teacher I give my ardor.  
 I purposed to make sport: I was zealous for pleasure, without pause.  
 I kindled my desire for her without distraction.  
 I bestirred my desire for her, and on her heights I do not waver.  
 I spread my hand(s) . . . and perceive her unseen parts.  
 I cleansed my hand(s) . . .

To understand this poem, we need some familiarity with the erotic language of ancient Israel. Both the "foot" and the "hand" are often euphemisms for the male sexual organ. The verb to "know" often connotes sexual relations, and to "make sport" means to make love. What we have here is the learning process pictured in totally erotic images. Wisdom, portrayed in the poem as a woman, is the greatest

of all acquisitions. Curiously, the Greek translator of this poem as it appears in the Septuagint was so pious that no trace of eroticism comes out in his rendering. He speaks only of the acquisition of wisdom.

The positive image of women and sexuality, used here to portray wisdom, is possible only in the context of a positive attitude both to male-female relationships and to sexuality. The same attitude underlies the portrayal of a woman as giving birth to the messiah, an image found in another beautiful poem in a clearly sectarian poetry collection.

The *Thanksgiving Hymns* (3:6–10) describe a woman in labor with her first child. This difficult birth represents the birth pangs of the messianic era:

They caused [me] to be like a ship on the deeps of the [sea],  
 and like a fortified city before the [enemy].  
 [And] I was in pain like a woman in travail with her firstborn child,  
 upon whom pangs have come and grievous pains in her throes,  
 to cause (her) to writhe with anguish in her womb.  
 For the children have come to the throes of death,  
 and she who gives birth to a man labors in her pains.  
 For amidst the throes of death she shall bring forth a male,  
 and amidst the pains of hell there shall spring from her womb  
 a Marvelous Counselor in his strength;  
 and a man shall be delivered from out of the throes.

This graphic poem depicts the birth of the messiah. This birth is not to be unnatural in any way, but rather, following certain biblical traditions, is to be preceded by tremendous suffering, here pictured as a difficult birth that endangers the very life of the child. In the end, the messianic era will dawn and the Marvelous Counselor will lead his people.

What interests us here is, again, a positive picture of woman. She herself gives birth to the End of Days. We are here shown not a world without women, but one that recognizes the difficult, indeed painful, role of women in the eschatological process. Though clearly we deal here with poetic imagery, it is imagery based on the assumption that birth is a positive and creative process.

Yet in this context we must note that some passages in *Thanksgiving Hymns* picture the female sexual and reproductive organs in a negative light. These passages place the origins of mortal man in the filth of the birth canal and may tend toward the notion found in early Christianity that sexuality is inherently sinful. However, despite the presence of such imagery, found occasionally in rabbinic tradition as well, we consider the vast majority of Qumran sectarian passages we have surveyed as affirming a positive view of women.

An idealized picture of women's beauty is found in the *Genesis Apocryphon*. In retelling the story of Abram and Sarai in Egypt (a passage to be discussed in a survey of the apocryphal texts), the king is told how beautiful Sarai is, and he sends for her and desires to wed her. The text goes to great lengths to describe Sarai's beauty, elaborating on the brief account in Genesis 12:14–15: "When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw how very beautiful the woman was. Pharaoh's courtiers saw her and praised her to Pharaoh, and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's palace."

The Aramaic text of the *Genesis Apocryphon* here turns poetic, borrowing images from the Song of Songs. Here is the courtiers' description of Sarai as told to Pharaoh (*Genesis Apocryphon* 20):

How splen[did] and beautiful is the appearance of her face!  
 How . . . fine are the hairs of her head!  
 How lovely are her eyes!  
 How desirable her nose and all the radiance of her countenance . . .  
 How fair are her breasts and how beautiful all her whiteness!  
 How beautiful are her arms and how perfect her hands,  
 and how [attractive] all the appearance of her hands!  
 How fair are her palms and how long and slender are her fingers!  
 How comely are her feet, how perfect her thighs!  
 No virgin or bride who enters the marriage chamber is more beautiful  
 than she;  
 she is fairer than all other women.  
 Truly her beauty is greater than theirs.  
 Yet together with all this grace she possesses abundant wisdom,  
 so that whatever she does is perfect.

As in rabbinic midrash, Sarai is here depicted as the most beautiful of women. In this idealized portrait of feminine beauty, the author of the poem not only describes Sarai's beautiful face and slender fingers but also praises parts of a woman's body usually covered, such as her breasts and thighs, and imagines her being led to the marriage chamber. After describing her physical appearance, he adds that she also possesses wisdom. Thus, a woman, provided she is suitably wise, is to be praised for her beauty and sensuality. Sarai, the archetype of the Jewish woman, is indeed endowed with such characteristics. The beauty of the matriarch is pictured in terms both feminine and erotic.

There is no question that this text was composed before the Qumran sect came into being. This is the case with all the Aramaic texts preserved at Qum-

ran. Some individual sectarian lovingly stored the text in a jar, wrapped in protective cloth. And clearly, the sect must have treasured its contents.

The Qumran scrolls envisioned women in many guises—as wives, mothers, temptresses, and beautiful captives—and as possessing purity or impurity, wisdom or guile. The texts portray women variously as the embodiment of sexuality, the desired bride, the woman in childbirth. They mandate laws regulating women's ritual purity. In all cases, we can see that women were very much a part of the lives of most Second Temple men, who indeed expected to marry and build families. In the same way, I would argue, they were part of the life of the Dead Sea sect. There simply is no evidence that the sectarians of Qumran were celibate.

Now that we have established the structure of the sect, its social framework, and its leadership, we turn to its theological views. We will see that the Qumran sectarians had distinctive ideas about the nature of God and his relationship to the world and the Jewish people.