

# A Day in the Life of Hananiah Nothos: A Story

By Magen Broshi

When **Hananiah Nothos**<sup>1</sup> woke up it was still dark outside. He and his companions who **shared the cave with him**<sup>2</sup> did not have to change--they wore the same clothes day and night. After **washing their hands**,<sup>3</sup> they hurried to the **morning prayer**.<sup>4</sup> On the plateau, near the **community center**,<sup>5</sup> stood a group of some hundred and twenty, most of them cave dwellers and a few old and infirm residents of the center. They stood facing east, toward the rising sun, dressed in **tattered sandals and ragged clothes, white garb** that had known better times.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **Hananiah Nothos.** A scroll published recently has preserved the names of some members of the Qumran community. This is the only one of the six hundred non-biblical scrolls, which contains such data. Here, the overseer wrote down the names of those he rebuked and the misdemeanors they committed. One of the rebuked was Hananiah Nothos. Cf. Esther Eshel, "4Q477: The Rebukes of the Overseer," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 45 (1994), pp.110-22.

<sup>2</sup> **Who shared the cave with him.** It seems that most of the inhabitants of Qumran (originally called Secacah, see below) lived in caves. Cf. M.Broshi, "The Archeology of Qumran-a Reconsideration," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls, Forty Years of Research*, edited by D. Dimant and U. Rappaport (Leiden and Jerusalem: Brill-Magnes, 1992), p. 104. Even if J. Patrich is correct in his contention that only one of the natural caves in the rocky escarpment was used for habitation, he cannot deny that at least six artificial caves below the marl plateau were used for this purpose. Cf. J. Patrich, "Kh. Qumran in Light of New Archaeological Explorations in the Qumran Area," in *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, vol. 722, ed. M. Wise et al. (New York, 1994), pp. 73-94. The marl cliffs south of the compound suffered badly from erosion, and it is quite plausible that some caves disappeared along with their contents. In the winter of 1995-96, some new artificial caves north of the compound were unearthed

<sup>3</sup> **Washing their hands.** Washing of the hands at rising is known to us as a Rabbinic (i.e. Pharisaic) law, but it is highly probable that the Essenes, always more stringent, practiced it, too.

<sup>4</sup> **Morning prayer.** And so writes Josephus "Before the sun is up they utter no word on mundane matters, but offer to him (the sun) certain prayers, which have been handed down from their forefathers, as though entreating him to rise" ( *War* , II, viii, 5). We agree with E. Fleischer that during the Second Temple period, the majority of the Jewish people (i.e. the Pharisees, M.B.) had not yet instituted public prayer: "The prayer was performed by the individual who prayed only when needed, and never in a synagogue." Fleischer suggests that the reason for that was "a deep respect for the sanctity and centrality of the Temple of the Jews ... only sectarians who regarded the Temple as a place of shame and disgrace felt the need of establishing another way of serving God. It was in their community that obligatory prayer was invented and established." Cf. E. Fleischer, "On the Beginning of Obligatory Jewish Prayer," *Tarbiz* 59 (1989-90), pp. 397- 441 (Hebrew, English abstract pp. III-V). On the morning liturgy see M. Weinfeld, "The Morning Prayers ( *Birkhot Hashschar* ) in the Qumran and the Conventional Jewish Liturgy," *Revue de Qumran* 13 (1988), pp. 481-94.

<sup>5</sup> **Community center.** This is the Kh. Qumran complex of buildings unearthed by R. de Vaux (cf. M. Broshi, "The Archeology of Qumran-a Reconsideration," above). No living quarters were found here, though there is some possibility that a few rooms were built on the second floor.

<sup>6</sup> **Tattered sandals and ragged clothes.** "They do not change their garments or shoes until they are torn to shreds or worn threadbare with age" (Josephus, *War* , II, viii, 4).

**White garb.** Josephus, *War* , II, viii, 3 and Philo, *On the Contemplative Life* , 66.



***Overview of Community Center known as Khirbet Qumran***

At the head of the congregation stood an elderly, dignified man, the **priest Yohanan**.<sup>7</sup> The rest were adults; **no children or teenagers**<sup>8</sup> were seen. And the Morning Prayer began as follows: "The living, the living shall praise you... Blessed be the Lord, maker of righteousness..."

After the dawn service each turned to pursue his daily work. Hananiah went to **the farm lying at the shore of the Dead Sea to pick dates**.<sup>9</sup> Though close to forty, he was still as

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<sup>7</sup> **The priest Yohanan.** On the status of priests see M. Weinfeld, "Prayer and Liturgical Practice in the Qumran Sect," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls, Forty Years of Research* (above), pp. 252-53. On the names Yohanan and Hananiah Cf. Tal Ilan, "The Names of the Hasmonians in the Second Temple Period," *Eretz Israel* 19 (1987), pp. 238-41 (Hebrew, English abstract p.79\*). Her study shows that 44.7% of the Jewish male population in Palestine between 330 BCE and 200 CE bore 2.3% of the names. The name Yohanan is the fifth in frequency and Hananiah the seventh. In the Scroll of Rebukes (above), three men are mentioned: two are called Hananiah and one Yohanan.

<sup>8</sup> **No children or teenagers.** Only at the age of twenty could one join the community, "At the age of twenty years (he shall be enrolled)" (Rule of the Congregation I, 8-9, 1QSa) and only "at the age of twenty-five years he may take his place among the foundations (i.e. the officials) of the holy congregation to work in the service of the congregation" (ibid., I, 12-13). In addition, "No boy or woman shall enter their camps, from the time they march out of Jerusalem to war until they return" (War Rule VII, 3-4). Cf. Y. Yadin, *The Scroll of War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 71. It stands to reason that this prohibition stems from the fear of sexual attraction toward women and even children. Cf. Ibid., pp. 290-91.

<sup>9</sup> **The farm lying at the shore of the Dead Sea.** The oasis of Ein Feshkha (modern-day Enot Tzukim) lies 2.5 km. south-southeast of Kh. Qumran. In 1958 de Vaux excavated there remains of a farm that must have

agile as a young man and able to climb effortlessly to the top of the palms. He was skilled in date picking, something he had learned as a child in his father's grove. In two months' time, after the end of the date season, he will start plowing **in a small plain in the Judaean Desert**,<sup>10</sup> preparing the soil for the **barley** sowing.<sup>11</sup> When not occupied in farming, he lends a hand to the shepherds, helping out with the butchering and preparing the skins for use as writing material.

He is sullen today. Yesterday he was rebuked by the **overseer**<sup>12</sup> and the rebuke was even put in writing. And this is how it all happened: A few days earlier a wayfarer made a short stop in the palm grove. He was an Essene from the tiny congregation of **Enot Qaneh**, some five walking hours to the south of **Secacah**.<sup>13</sup> He told a shocking story-- that **Herod Antipas had beheaded** John the Baptist.<sup>14</sup> The murder took place at

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supplied part of the food consumed at Qumran.

**To pick dates.** Dates most probably were the main crop at this site. Pliny the Elder writes that the Essenes living on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea "had only palm trees for company" (*Natural History*, 5, 17, 4 [73]). The water of Feshkha is brackish and very few plants can stand such salinity. Of all agricultural crops, the date palm is probably the most tolerant of salt. Today, as in antiquity, date palms are grown very close to the Dead Sea shores. Cf. M. Broshi, "Agriculture and Economy in Roman Palestine: Seven Notes on the Babatha Archive," *Israel Exploration Journal* 42 (1992), pp. 232-34. Dates are picked in the autumn.

<sup>10</sup> **In a small plain in the Judaean Desert**. This plain, known by its Arabic name el-Buqei'a (which means "the small plain"), lies west of the cliffs bordering Qumran and west of the fortress Hyrcania (Kh. Mird). The plain was inhabited in the Iron Age, but it is almost certain that it was cultivated in the Roman and Byzantine periods as well, when every cultivable piece of land was tilled. Cf. F. M. Cross in *The New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Carta, 1993), pp. 267-69.

<sup>11</sup> **Barley.** In the arid regions of the country, barley was preferred to wheat. Cf. M. Broshi, "The Diet of Palestine in the Roman Period-Introductory Notes," *Israel Museum Journal* 5 (1986) pp. 43-44.

<sup>12</sup> **Overseer.** The person occupying this position was in charge of all organizational and social aspects of the community, including the acceptance of new members and their instruction.

<sup>13</sup> **Enot Qaneh.** The oasis Enot Qaneh (modern-day En el-Ghuweir) lies 15 km south of Qumran. There, Bar Adon unearthed a building of Qumranic nature. The pottery as well as the tombs are very similar to those of Kh. Qumran and it is highly likely that the site was occupied by an Essene community. Cf. P. Bar Adon, "Another Settlement of the Judean Desert Sect at En el-Ghuweir on the Shores of the Dead Sea," *BASOR* 227 (1977), pp. 1-25.

**Secacah.** This was probably the ancient name of Qumran. Cf. H. Eshel, "A Note on Joshua 15:61-62 and the Identification of the City of Salt," *Israel Exploration Journal* 45 (1995), pp. 37-40.

<sup>14</sup> **Herod Antipas had beheaded** There are two versions of the murder of John the Baptist, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The Gospels blame Herodias, Herod's wife, for the assassination, explaining that John was arrested by Herod because he condemned his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife, a union forbidden by Jewish law. Herodias, through her daughter Salome, asked for his murder and her request was granted. According to Josephus, Herod killed John because he feared that the religious movement he created might turn into a revolt. Many scholars believe that John was, for a short time, a member of the Essene community at Qumran. Our hunch is that he left because he could not come to terms with the Essene predestinarian theology. His preaching of a 'baptism of repentance for the remission of sins' is in polar opposition to the Essene teachings, which do not allow for repentance. The Essenes believed that one is born either into the camp of the Children of Light or the camp of the Children of Darkness, and that there is no crossing of camps. Cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, *Responses to 101 Questions on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York/Mahwa: Paulist Press, 1992), pp. 106-108. John was killed c. 29 CE, about a year before the crucifixion of Jesus. Thus, Hananiah, who was forty at the time, would have been born around 11 BCE.

**Machaerus**,<sup>15</sup> a palace-fortress across the Dead Sea, opposite Enot Qaneh. The news was brought by sailors who carried wheat from Moab to Judaea. The name of John was familiar to the people of Secacah. As a young man, he had "pledged himself," in other words, offered to join the congregation, and his status was that of a postulant. But almost two years after joining, shortly before he was to be admitted as a member, he recanted. This was a rare occurrence: many more were rejected than changed their minds, especially at such a late stage. The community viewed it as a grave offense, since John had taken an oath to obey the rules of the sect when he was accepted as a candidate. From time to time rumors reached Secacah--in this isolated community news from the outside world was quite rare--about the multitudes that followed him and about the baptism he had introduced for the forgiveness of sins. Yet the people of this place remained hostile to John, the way renegades everywhere are detested.

The night before last, during an **Assembly of the Congregation**,<sup>16</sup> **Hananiah stood up** and proclaimed: "I have something to say to the congregation."<sup>17</sup> When he was given permission to speak, he asked his companions they also thought that John's end was a punishment for his ill conduct. **His speech was interrupted** by an angry hiss; it was apparent that all were angry for his bringing up such a disagreeable topic.<sup>18</sup> The next day he was rebuked for "disturbing the spirit of the Yahad." No wonder Hananiah was sulking today.

After a few hours of diligent work, the group sat down for a short rest. Hananiah went **off to relieve himself** at the far end of the palm grove.<sup>19</sup> He dug with a small mattock he

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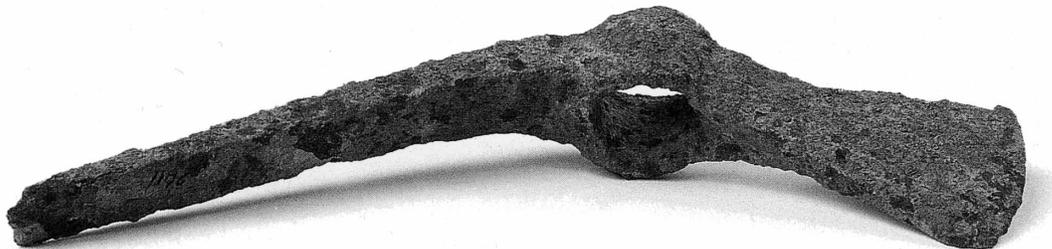
<sup>15</sup> **Machaerus.** A Herodian palace-fortress similar to Masada that was built in Moab, east of the Jordan River.

<sup>16</sup> **Assembly of the Congregation.** The general assembly of the community, a body with legal authority.

<sup>17</sup> **Hananiah stood up.** "Should any man wish to speak to the Congregation ... let him rise to his feet and say: 'I have something to say to the congregation.' If they command him to speak, he shall speak" (Community Rule VI, 12-13).

<sup>18</sup> **His speech was interrupted.** "And in an Assembly of the Congregation no man shall speak without the consent of the congregation" (Community Rule VI, 11).

<sup>19</sup> **Went off to relieve himself .** "On other days (i.e. weekdays, for on the Sabbath the Essenes did not relieve themselves) they dig a trench with a mattock--such is the nature of the hatchet which they present to the neophytes--and wrapping their mantle about them, that they may not offend the rays of the deity, sit above it. They then replace the excavated soil in the trench. For this purpose they select the more retired spots" (Josephus, *War*, II, viii, 9). In the Temple City, and it stands to reason in other cities as well, where "retired spots" were hard to find, regular lavatories were erected (Temple Scroll XLVI, 13-16). Cf. Y. Yadin, *The Temple Scroll* (Israel Exploration Society, 1983), Vol. 1, pp. 294-304, Vol. 2, 199-200.



*A Mattock (or, hand axe) excavated at Kh. Qumran*

always carried with him a pit about a foot deep. Squatting, he took care to cover his lower body with his mantle, which, like the other members of the congregation, he had with him at all times, even on hot days, when he brought it along expressly for this purpose. After that he **washed himself** in a nearby aqueduct,<sup>20</sup> which carried water from a spring to the grove.



*Ritual Bath (damaged by an earthquake) at Kh. Qumran*

**In the fifth hour**<sup>21</sup> the morning work session came to an end and everybody gathered for the midday meal in the community center. First they went **to immerse themselves in the ritual baths**.<sup>22</sup> These were plaster-lined cisterns into which a staircase, occupying the whole width of a cistern side, descended.

**The staircase was divided by a low partition wall,**<sup>23</sup> symbolic rather than functional--to

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<sup>20</sup> **Washed himself.** "And though the discharge of the excrements is a natural function, they make it a rule to wash themselves after it, as if defiled" (Josephus, *War*, II, viii, 9).

<sup>21</sup> **In the fifth hour.** The hours were reckoned from dawn onward, a system still used by certain ultra-orthodox groups in Israel. Thus the fifth hour in the winter is not the same as it is in the summer.

<sup>22</sup> **To immerse themselves in the ritual baths.** "They again assemble in one place and, after girding their loins with linen cloths, bathe their bodies in cold water. (Josephus, *War*, II, viii, 5). "And when his flesh is sprinkled with purifying water and sanctified by cleansing water...." (Community Rule III, 8-9).

<sup>23</sup> **The staircase was divided by a low partition wall.** Of the sixteen cisterns in Qumran, ten are ritual baths. These baths are characterized by a low partition wall, some 5-10 cm. in height. On one side the "unclean" bathers descended, while on the other the "clean" ascended, with the wall symbolically dividing between them. Cf. R. Reich, "Mishnah, Sheqalim 8:2 and the Archaeological Evidence," in *Jerusalem in*

separate those descending from those ascending. After bathing, naked except for loincloths, they changed into **neat, white dress**<sup>24</sup> and went meekly to the assembly hall, which also served as a refectory.



*Assembly Hall at Kh. Qumran*

They all sat in rows in their regular seats, arranged according to rank. The **baker** distributed the loaves of bread and the **cook** set before each a plate with a single course.<sup>25</sup> In the goblets wine was poured. The wine was **mixed with water**.<sup>26</sup> Before the meal,

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*the Second Temple Period*, Abraham Schalit Memorial Volume, edited by A. Oppenheimer, U. Rappaport, and M. Stern Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi (Ministry of Defence, 1980), pp. 225-56 (Hebrew, English abstract p. XIV).

<sup>24</sup> **Neat, white dress.** These clothes were worn only during the meal, and were taken off at its end, as they were “holy vestments” (Josephus, *War*, II, viii, 5).

<sup>25</sup> **The baker ... the cook.** See Josephus' detailed description (*War*, II, viii, 5).

<sup>26</sup> **Mixed with water.** In antiquity wine was consumed only when mixed with water. “Where it is customary to mix wine with water to the amount of one half, a third, or a quarter, one should mix. One

**the priest said grace.**<sup>27</sup> Only after that did they break their bread, eating **in utmost silence.**<sup>28</sup> When they had finished, the priest said another grace: "And you shall eat and be satisfied and bless the Lord your God for the good land he has bestowed upon you." After the meal, everyone changed back into shabby dress and returned to work.

On his way to the grove, about a half-hour walk, Hananiah saw some of his companions **digging a grave** for an old man,<sup>29</sup> Simeon of Beisan, who had died that morning. It was rumored that he was **a hundred years old.**<sup>30</sup> No one doubted that he was very old indeed. He once told Hananiah that the year he married (years later he would leave home and join the Secacah community) the country was overrun by **Parthian hordes,**<sup>31</sup> and that he still remembered their fine horses

Hananiah was born in **Pelusium,**<sup>32</sup> in northern Sinai. His father, whom nobody remembered, died before he was born. His mother also passed away while he was still a young child, and he was **adopted by an Essene family** with six natural children.<sup>33</sup> His

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should not deviate from the local custom" (Tosefta, Baba Mezi'ah 3, 27). Cf. M. Broshi, "Wine in Ancient Palestine-Introductory Notes," *The Israel Museum Journal* 3 (1984), pp. 32-33. Some scholars believe that the Essenes abstained from wine, but most probably they did not. It is difficult to imagine that people who celebrated the "Festival of the New Wine," and seem even to have instituted it, abstained completely.

<sup>27</sup> **The priest said grace.** "And when the table has been prepared for eating, and the new wine for drinking, the Priest shall be the first to stretch out his hand to bless the first-fruits of the bread and new wine" (Community Rule VI, 4-5, and Rule of the Congregation II, 17-21) On the grace before and after the meal see also Josephus, *War*, II, viii, 5. Cf. M. Weinfeld, "Grace after Meals in Qumran," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111 (1992), pp. 427-40.

<sup>28</sup> **In utmost silence.** In accordance with Josephus, "No clamour or disturbance ever pollutes their dwelling; they speak in turn" (*War*, II, viii). In general, the assemblies of the Essenes were orderly and quiet: "No man shall interrupt a companion before his speech has ended ... each man shall speak in his turn" (Community Rule VI, 10-11). A member who interrupted his companion was required to do penance for ten days; penance involved exclusion and reduction of food rations by one-quarter (Community Rule VII 9-10). On sectarian offences and punishment Cf. L. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, (Philadelphia and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1994), p. 109.

<sup>29</sup> **Digging a grave.** To the east of the community center lie three cemeteries: a large one with 1,100 well-aligned graves and on its outskirts two small ones with some 100 graves. In the main cemetery only male skeletons were found, but in the peripheral one there were some skeletons of women and children. Remains of wooden coffins and heaps of bones in some burials--both signs of secondary burial--suggest that some of the interred were brought from afar and were not part of the Qumran community. Cf. M. Broshi, "The Archeology of Qumran--a Reconsideration" (above), pp. 111-13; R. Hachlili, "Burial Practices in Qumran," *Revue de Qumran* 16 (1993), pp. 247-64.

<sup>30</sup> **A hundred years old.** "They live to a great age--most of them to upwards of a century--in consequence, I imagine, of the simplicity and regularity of their mode of life" (Josephus, *War*, II, viii, 10).

<sup>31</sup> **Parthian hordes.** The Parthian invasion took place in the year 40 BCE. At that time, Simeon would have been at least twenty years old (the minimum age for bridegrooms, Cf. Rule of the Congregation I, 10). Since the story takes place in 29 CE, Simeon would have been at least eighty-nine.

<sup>32</sup> **Pelusium.** A prosperous harbor city in northwestern Sinai, famous for its textiles. A Jewish garrison guarding the Egyptian border was stationed there at least since the first century BCE (Josephus, *War*, I, viii, 7; *Antiquities*, 14, 99). Most probably, the main language of the Jewish community was Greek.

<sup>33</sup> **Adopted by an Essene family.** "Marriage they disdain, but they adopt other men's children, while yet pliable and docile, and regard them as their kin and mould them in accordance with their own principles" (Josephus, *War*, II, viii, 2). It should be remembered that while some of the Essenes practiced celibacy, others (probably most) led a more or less regular family life. The celibacy of the Essenes is discussed by

adoptive father, Hyrcanus, was a weaver, and Hananiah, like the rest of the family, lent a hand. Hyrcanus also owned a small palm grove where Hananiah enjoyed working. He naturally preferred the breezy grove to the stuffy, dark textile workshop. The anonymity of his father was well-known, and the street urchins used to taunt him with the nickname **Nothos**, meaning bastard.<sup>34</sup>

One day, when Hananiah was about twenty years of age, an elderly Essene came to Pelusium from Jerusalem. In spite of his tattered clothes, he looked quite distinguished. The Jerusalemite carried **very few belongings**—a tiny bundle, a water flask, the habitual mattock, and something most unusual for a man of his age and bearing—a **sword**.<sup>35</sup> He was known for his **ability to interpret dreams**,<sup>36</sup> and Hananiah came to the house of the Essene family hosting him to ask his advice. Lately, he had been troubled by a strange recurring dream. In the dream, he saw himself standing on top of a palm tree, near the coast, watching the sun rising over the sea. What made it so strange is that in Pelusium, the sun never rises or sets over the sea, and Hananiah did not realize that such a thing was possible. But the old man knew. He told him that the dream meant that Hananiah was destined to join the Essene community on the shores of the Dead Sea. He proceeded to tell him exactly what he needed to do—where to go and what he should expect there. Hananiah informed his adoptive parents of all that had transpired. His father's face fell, and his mother wept, for she knew that she would never see him again. The next day, Hananiah set out upon his journey, which would take two weeks. He found hospitality **in Essene homes**;<sup>37</sup> in each home, he also received advice on where to stop next.

When he reached Secacah, Hananiah understood the meaning of his dream, for here the sun rose above the sea. He was accosted by an unsmiling man, about forty years old, who asked him what he wanted. “**I wish to join the community**.”<sup>38</sup> said Hananiah. This man, the overseer, asked him to sit, and then **sat down himself in front of him at a**

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Philo ( *Apologia* , 14-15), Josephus ( *War* , II, viii, 2), and Pliny the Elder ( *Natural History* , 5, 17, 4). It is also implicit in the Community Rule, in which women and children are not mentioned at all. On marriage and the Essenes, see Josephus ( *War* , II, viii, 13) and the Damascus Document (VII, 6-7): "And if they live in camps according to the rule of the Land, marrying and begetting children ..."

<sup>34</sup> **Nothos**. The Greek word for bastard. Cf. M. Broshi, *Biblical Archaeologist* 57/1(1990), pp. 62-63. This meaning is to be preferred to the one suggested by Eshel, "4Q477: The Rebukes of the Overseer" (above), p.116—"southern." "Southern' would have been written Notos, not Nothos.

<sup>35</sup> **Very few belongings ... a sword**. "They carry nothing whatever with them on their journeys, except arms as a protection against brigands" (Josephus, *War* , II, viii, 4).

<sup>36</sup> **Ability to interpret dreams**. "There are some among them who profess to foretell the future, being versed from their early years in holy books, various forms of purification and apophthegms of the prophets; and seldom, if ever, do they err in their predictions" (Josephus, *War* , II, viii, 12). Josephus relates three such cases: 1. Judas the Essene accurately predicted both the place and date of the assassination of Antigonus (*War* , I, iii, 1; *Antiquities* , XIII, 311). 2. An Essene called Manaemus (Menahem) addressed Herod, still a boy, as "King of the Jews," and for this reason Herod always treated the Essenes with respect (*Antiquities* , 15, 373). 3. Simon the Essene successfully interpreted the dream of Archelaus, Herod's son (*War* , II, vii, 3; *Antiquities* , XVII, 345-48).

<sup>37</sup> **In Essene homes**. "And they enter into the houses of men whom they have never seen before as though they were their most intimate friends...In every city there is one of the order expressly appointed to attend to strangers, who provides them with raiment and other necessities" (Josephus, *War* , II, viii, 4).

<sup>38</sup> **I wish to join the community**. Anyone wishing to join the community had to be examined by the overseer.

**greater distance than is usual** between two men conversing.<sup>39</sup> After a long conversation, which was in fact an undisguised examination, a slight smile appeared on the overseer's face. He told Hananiah that he was admitted as a postulant for a period of study. That very evening, Hananiah was permitted to join the Assembly of the Congregation, where he was asked to **take an oath**:<sup>40</sup> "To return with all his heart and soul to every commandment of the Law of Moses ... and to separate from all the men of falsehood." After some months and several tests, he was admitted for probation.

First he was brought before a committee of three, who **examined his body carefully**,<sup>41</sup> being mindful not to touch him (for physical contact with a non-member would defile them). They looked very closely at each part of his body, as they believed that a man's nature can be inferred from his physiognomy, along with his date of birth. As it was found that "his thighs are long and lean and his toes are thin and long," and that he was born under the sign of Taurus, they concluded that he was a humble person, and that "his spirit consists of **six parts in the House of Light** and three in the House of Darkness."<sup>42</sup> The youngster who was examined after him, however, had "saw-like teeth, thick fingers, thick and very hairy thighs, ... and thick and short toes," and it was deemed that his spirit consisted of eight parts from the House of Darkness and one from the House of Light.

After being presented before the Congregation, and after a deliberation over **whether he would "enter or depart"**, he was admitted for the first year of novitiate.<sup>43</sup> He was permitted to keep his personal belongings, but was not yet allowed to touch the food of the congregants. A year later, he appeared again before the assembly, which examined "his case with regard to his understanding and observance of the Law." He was then admitted to his second, and final, year of novitiate. He handed over his property (though it was not yet merged with the general property) to the bursar, and was allowed to touch the food, but not the drinks, of the Community. At the end of this year, he was accepted

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<sup>39</sup> **Sat down...than is usual.** "And so far are the junior members inferior to the seniors, that a senior, if but touched by a junior, must take a bath, as after contact with an alien" (Josephus, *War*, II, viii, 10). If this was the case regarding a junior, all the more so with strangers such as Hananiah.

<sup>40</sup> **To take an oath.** "Whoever approaches the Council of the Community shall enter the Covenant of God in the presence of all who have freely pledged themselves. He shall undertake by a binding oath to return with all his heart and soul to every commandment of the Law of Moses. . ." (Community Rule V, 7-9).

<sup>41</sup> **Examined his body carefully.** The most important principle in the Essene teachings was their belief in predestination. Unlike normative Judaism, which has upheld, for the last three thousand years, a belief in free will, the Essenes believed that decisions are taken by the Lord. According to their world view, a person is born either into the camp of the Children of Light or into the camp of the Children of Darkness, with no possibility of crossing camps. One's character can only be judged by astrological and physiognomical means. This and the following quotes are based on a scroll (4QI 86), published in J. M. Allegro, *Discoveries in the Judean Desert 5* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 88-91.

<sup>42</sup> **Six parts in the House of Light.** The people of Qumran believed that every person is composed of nine parts, some of light and some of darkness; since nine is an odd number, and cannot be evenly divided, a person must belong to one camp or the other.

<sup>43</sup> **Whether he would "enter or depart".** Both the Community Rule and Josephus elaborate on the procedure for inducting new members into the community. The information provided by both sources is quite similar, except that Josephus writes that the novitiate lasts three years (*War*, 11, viii, 7), while according to the Community Rule it takes only two (VI, 16-23). This inconsistency can be explained by assuming that the probationary period was preceded by a year's study.

as a full member. His property was merged with that of the Community; he was permitted to take part in meals, ritual immersion, and the Assembly of the Congregation; and he was " **inscribed among his brethren** in the order of his rank for the Law, for justice, and for the Pure Meal."<sup>44</sup>

Twenty years had already passed since Hananiah joined the community, during which time he never ventured more than a few miles out of Secacah. He led an uneventful life, except for **a severe head wound** he suffered in his eighth year as a full member.<sup>45</sup> It occurred while he was trying to chase away Edumean shepherds, who had led their flocks into the farm. A stone hurled from a sling hit him above his left eye, breaking his skull, and while he was lying unconscious on the ground, he was struck again with a club. Hananiah lay bedridden for many days. Eventually he recovered, but severe headaches and nosebleeds plagued him to his last day.

In the evening, Hananiah and his mates returned from the farm to Secacah. They immersed themselves once again, changed into white garments, and sat down for the evening meal. Owing to the death of Simeon of Beisan that morning, they concluded their supper with **a mourner's grace**.<sup>46</sup> "As one whose mother comforts him, so shall He comfort them in Jerusalem, and their hearts shall rejoice like the groom with his bride..."

**The following third of the night** Hananiah will spend with some of his companions in the study of holy books.<sup>47</sup>

Hananiah will live another twenty-five years in this congregation, the first monastic community in the western world, of which it was written "**they shall eat in common** and pray in common and deliberate in common."<sup>48</sup>

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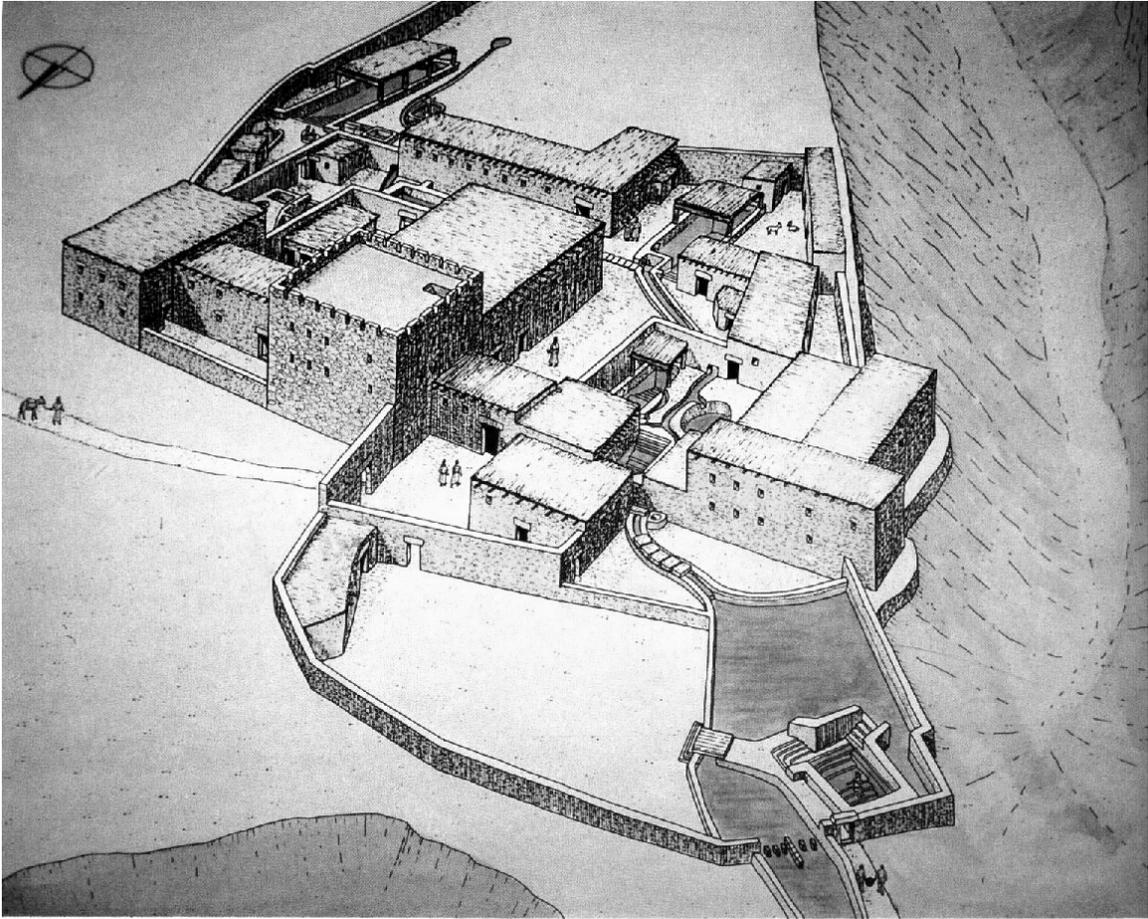
<sup>44</sup> **Inscribed among his brethren.** See *Community Rule VI*, 22.

<sup>45</sup> **A severe head wound.** Over fifty skeletons were unearthed at Qumran, but only one has been studied properly by physical anthropologists. We have chosen, arbitrarily of course, this skeleton to represent our Hananiah. In the skull there are signs of two healed wounds, the most severe of which, in the left forehead, left a depression that is 1 cm. deep. Despite the severity of the wound, his mental capacities were presumably not impaired. The man lived over 65 years. Cf. N. Haas and H. Nathan, "Anthropological Survey on the Human Skeletal Remains from Qumran," *Revue de Qumran* 6 (1967-69), pp. 345-62.

<sup>46</sup> **A mourner's grace.** Cf. M. Weinfeld, "Grace after Meals in Qumran," (above).

<sup>47</sup> **The following third of the night.** "And the Congregation shall watch in community for a third of every night of the year, to read the Book and to study Law and to bless together" (*Community Rule VI*, 7-8).

<sup>48</sup> **They shall eat in common.** See *Community Rule VI*, 2-3.



*Ancient Community Center of Qumranites Reconstructed*