VIII. The Communal Meal

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CHAPTER EIGHT
THE COMMUNAL MEAL

1. The Non-Sacral Nature of the Communal Meals

Those who committed offenses against the sectarian law and way of life were in many cases punished by being excluded from the pure food of the sect. Exclusion from the pure food of the community meant that offenders were unable to eat everyday meals with their fellows at the same table, since violators of the law were regarded as sources of ritual impurity. Several passages in the scrolls mention the banquets of the sectarians. Ritual impurity was also cause for exclusion from these formal, communal meals. Mistraken impressions of the meaning of these meals and of their character have, in turn, led to a mistaken view of the sectarian Penal Code.

It is possible to grasp the importance to the sectarian of exclusion from the communal meals and the gravity of this penalty by establishing the links between these meals and the eschatological aspirations of the sect. Indeed, this penalty meant that the offender was now unable to participate in a central eschatological ritual of the sect. While deprived of the pure food, he was deprived of the right to prepare for the coming end of days.

Initial evidence of the banquet comes from the Manual of Discipline. DSD 6:2f. requires that wherever members of the group reside:

ירוח יאכלו ירוב לברך ירח ינטע
Together they shall eat; together they shall bless; and together/1/ they shall take counsel./2/

While this passage clearly indicates that communal meals were to be a part of the activities of the sect, it gives no specific information regarding them. There is no mention here of how often such meals should occur or whether all or only some meals were to be taken communally./3/

Further, the actions described here—eating, blessing, and taking counsel—are independent of one another. The community had various gatherings to fulfill each purpose. Blessing was apparently part of a fixed regimen of daily prayers as has been demonstrated by S. Talmon./4/ The blessing in the passage under consideration does not refer to the blessings recited for eating food, but rather to the liturgical worship of the group./5/ Taking counsel occurred in the moshav ha-rabbim, the Qumran legislative and judicial assembly./6/ What, then, was the particular nature of the gathering at which the sectarians partook of a communal meal?
The text continues (ll. 3-4) by requiring that wherever there are ten members of the group, there must always be a priest. Members shall sit before him according to rank, and in this order shall they be asked for their counsel. At this point comes the only direct mention of a meal in the *Manual of Discipline* (6:4-5):

Whenever they arrange the table to eat or the wine to drink, the priest shall extend his hand first to bless the first (portion) of the bread or the wine.

Several details may be noted. First, the passage indicates no obligation that all meals be communal. Second, the priest receives this honored status because of his position, not because the meal is cultic. The Qumranites gave special status to the Zadokite priests among them. Third, the mention of bread and wine does not indicate that the meal was of sacral character. Rather, the normal drink was a weak, diluted, and often unfermented grape wine, similar to modern grape juice. Bread was the staple food, and so it is represented in literary materials.

It must be emphasized that according to the reading of 1QS this passage does not refer to a meal or banquet at which both bread and wine are to be served, but rather to an occasion at which the table is set for bread or wine. What these occasions were is not specified, but they involved either food or drink.

Dominant scholarly opinion has tended to see these meals, on analogy with the Christian Eucharist, as sacral in character. This view is summarized well by B. Gärtner. He sees the sacral meal of bread and wine as central to Qumran fellowship, tracing its origins to the Temple and priestly traditions regarding the eating of sacrifices. Parallels may also be drawn, he notes, between the bread of the presence (*lehem ha-panim*) and the Qumran “sacral meal.” He goes so far as to suggest, following M. Black, that the meeting hall of the Qumran “monastery” “may have contained a table reminiscent of that on which the ‘bread of Presence’ was exhibited in the Temple.” In this connection he also states that only those ritually pure could partake of the meals in the “Meeting hall.” He correctly notes that not all of the meals of the community were eaten in this fashion. Nonetheless, he sees “the community’s sacral meal” as being “an anticipation of the perfected ritual of the heavenly temple.” Parallels from the meals of the Therapeutae and the Essenes, as described by Philo and Josephus respectively, are seen likewise to point “to the temple as the place of origin of their cultic meal.”

Gärtner interprets in this context the purification rituals which, he claims, are in evidence in the water supply provided at one end of the “Meeting hall.” Finally he concludes:
The Qumran sacral meal may have been intended to replace the custom of the temple priests' eating the flesh of the sacrificial animals: the holy oblation must be eaten by the sanctified in a consecrated room—a situation emphasized by the rites of purification in connection with the meal. These rites may also have included the taking of a ritual bath, a condition likewise imposed on the temple priests./22/

Additional support for the view that the Qumran communal meal was sacral in character has been derived from comparison with the meals of the Therapeutae./23/ While this group, according to the description of Philo, is indeed in many ways similar to the Essenes as described in Philo and Josephus as well as to the sect whose literature was found at Qumran, there are also many differences./24/

In a recent paper, B. Bokser argues that Philo's account of the meals of the Therapeutae is conditioned by his "religio-sociological situation as well as his philosophical stance." In particular, the meals of the Therapeutae are seen as embodying characteristics which result from the "non-Jerusalem" setting./25/ In other words, the meal of the Therapeutae, according to Bokser, serves as a replacement for the Temple cult in which the Therapeutae did not participate. While Bokser does not discuss the reason for their nonparticipation, it can be presumed that it resulted from distance, as there is no evidence that the Therapeutae objected to the practices of the Jerusalem priesthood, as did the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In confirmation of his hypothesis, Bokser refers to the communal meals of the Qumran sectarians./26/ Bokser assumes that the purpose of the communal meals at Qumran was somehow sacral and that they were intended as a substitute for the sacrificial cult.

It is true that Philo's Therapeutae did celebrate their meals as a substitute for the Jerusalem cult. Yet this fact cannot be taken as evidence for the same phenomenon in the Qumran sect. Whereas the Therapeutae saw their meals as a substitute for the sacrificial service, it will be shown that no such point of view can be found in Qumran literature.

Y. Yadin has supported the claim that the communal meals at Qumran served as substitutes for the sacrifices in which the community did not participate by citing DSW 2:5-6. There, in sacrificial context, occur the words 'rk, "to set out," and shulhan, "table," used in the sense of "altar." These terms, as Yadin notes, also occur in the description of the communal meals at Qumran./27/ These linguistic parallels, however, do not prove Yadin's view. The use of eating and meal terminology in relation to sacrifices results from the concept found in the Bible and throughout the ancient Near East that sacrifices are a sort of meal, for or with the god(s)./28/ Hence, the cultic use of these terms. A glance at the lexica will reveal that these exact usages are common in the Bible, and no one would maintain that there took place communal meals as a substitute for the Temple cult in biblical times.

In actuality, none of the various aspects of the communal meals at Qumran necessitates understanding them as sacral meals. All the motifs—
purity, benedictions, bread and wine, and the role of the priest—can be explained against the background of contemporary Jewish ceremonial and ritual practice.

J. van der Ploeg has defined the sacral meal and discussed it in detail:/29/

Since the essential act of a meal is the eating of the food, a meal can only be called sacred when the eating is a sacred act. This is normally the case when the food is sacred or when a sacred meaning is attached to it. In an article in the encyclopedia, Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (2nd ed.),/30/ F. Pfister knows of four kinds of “cultural meals” (kultische Mahlzeiten): meals in which holy food is eaten; covenant meals; the meal of the sacrifice of communion; the meal offered exclusively to a god.

There simply is no evidence that the “meal” described in the Qumran passage cited above is a cultic or sacral meal. The purity of food and drink and the rituals associated with grace before and after meals were certainly widespread by this time, and in no way can it be said that every meal was sacral./31/

First and foremost among the so-called “sacral” ingredients in this meal is the aspect of the role of the priest./32/ It should therefore be explained that a tannaitic tradition of the House of Rabbi Ishmael contains a *baraita*’ outlining privileges of this nature granted to the priests in recognition of their cultic status. The *baraita*, basing itself in Lev. 21:8, states/33/ that a priest should be given the opportunity to be called to read the first portion of the Torah/34/ (which includes the recitation of the initial benediction), to pronounce the grace after meals first,/35/ and to receive first the best portion of food./36/ These procedures were probably ancient customs which showed no more than the deep reverence in which priest, Temple, and cult were held by the people. The demonstration of this respect in no way transformed the meal into a sacral occasion. On the contrary, if the meal were a sacral occasion, the privileges of the priest would be confined to areas in which only he might function. Rather, he is simply granted the opportunity to perform first rituals which each and every Jew present may fulfill.

The second motif usually seen as “sacral” is ritual purity. There is, of course, no question that the members of the sect ate their communal meals in a state of ritual purity. This concern is reflected in the process by which a person may join the sect.

DSD 6:13–23 contains prescriptions regarding the entrance of new members. These regulations, which have previously been discussed in detail,/37/ explain how the new recruit is progressively brought closer to complete membership. Part of this process relates to his coming into contact with the food and drink of the community. He is first allowed contact, after more than a year, with the pure solid food of the community (*tohorat ha-rabbim*). After a second year he is allowed contact with the liquid food (*mashqeh ha-rabbim*). This distinction between liquid and solid foods is
similar to that of the tannaitic sources. Because liquids render foods susceptible to impurity, the regulations regarding the drink are stricter.

These purity laws, however, should not be confused with sacred meals. First, the laws of purity were to be observed by members at all times, whether they ate alone or communally. After all, these laws were the ancient heritage of the priesthood, and the Qumran sect, like the Pharisees, extended them to a wider circle of initiates. Second, purity of the food was an obligation which did not impart any sacral character to the act of eating. One might say that these purity laws were, from a functional point of view, similar to the laws of *kashrut*, although it must be emphasized that according to Jewish law they are two distinct entities.

Nor do the benedictions recited by the priest render the meal sacral. The tannaitic tradition mentioned above has been variously interpreted to indicate that the priest was entitled to the honor of reciting grace before and after the meal before the other participants. In fact, such benedictions are a regular part of tannaitic tradition and are meant to emphasize man’s dependence on the Creator for daily sustenance. By early tannaitic times, blessings both before and after meals were most probably part of the *havurah*. Indeed, the so-called *seder ha-se’udah*, the order of procedure for the formal dinner embedded in the Tosefta, is probably a reflection of the general dining patterns of Greco-Roman Palestine, somewhat refined by the tannaitic tradition. While there is no actual proof, it is extremely tempting to say that such procedures would have been followed by the members of the *havurah*, at least in the last years of the Second Temple period.

In the tannaitic traditions such benedictions were part of all meals, whether formal or informal. In fact, they had to be recited for anything eaten, and they bear no sacral connotations. In the same spirit are to be understood the benedictions mentioned in Josephus’s description of the Essenes. There the priest says grace before and after the meal. Josephus correctly interprets this practice in light of Palestinian Jewish custom of his day when he says that “at the beginning and at the close they do homage to God as the bountiful giver of life.”

Here again the non-sacral aspect of this grace must be emphasized. Indeed, despite the many assertions to the contrary, the entire description of the meal of the Essenes contains no sacral elements. Nowhere is it stated or even hinted that this meal was a replacement for the sacrificial cult or an imitation of Temple practice. On the contrary, the rules of purity and benedictions followed in it had a character and importance of their own. By this time they were totally divorced from the Temple context and part of the daily life of many pious Palestinian Jews of the time, whether Essenes, Pharisees, or members of the group whose texts were deposited at Qumran.

The passage before us refers to the eating of bread and the drinking of wine. The order in which these foods appear has caused some difficulty to scholars seeking to draw parallels with the Rabbinic tradition. Because of the
prominence of the *qiddush* ("sanctification") prayer said over wine before the Sabbath evening/46/ and morning/47/ meals, questions have been raised regarding the order of the menu in our passage— with the bread preceding the wine. No such problem need be raised. The tannaitic passages regarding the procedure for the formal dinner, apparently concerning dinners not held on the Sabbath, describe as normal procedure the drinking of wine which was served during the meal. Such wine was brought to the table after the grace before meals had been said and the accompanying bread had been eaten./48/ This is no doubt the case in our text. The bread is that over which the grace before meals is said./49/ The wine is the wine served during the meal, and certainly not that used for the *qiddush* on Sabbath and festivals.

The meal discussed in the *Manual of Discipline* appears in the context of a discussion of the obligations of a group consisting of ten sectarians. It is certain from this passage and from the parallel to be discussed below that the procedure envisaged in the communal meal of Qumran requires a quorum of ten. Apparently, less than ten members (including among them a priest) did not constitute a quorum for such meals. Extremely important here is the parallel with the sectarian courts./50/ Ten judges constituted the court as described in CDC 10:4–10. Since the *Zadokite Fragments* legislate for groups of sectarians scattered in different places, termed "camps,"/51/ it seems that these courts would have been substitutes or agents of the *moshav ha-rabbim*, the full sectarian legislative and judicial assembly, which met regularly at Qumran. Whereas at Qumran cases would be tried before the *moshav ha-rabbim*, in the outlying sectarian communities the court of ten would try the case as a substitute for the assembly. Apparently, the same logic applied in the case of the communal meals. When there was a quorum of ten, the group could participate in the very same communal meals as those in the Qumran center./52/ Without such a quorum, the communal meals could not take place.

In an effort to find a parallel to this quorum of ten for the formal meal, Licht has drawn attention to a tannaitic tradition in T. Berakhot 5:23/53/ which provides that a group of ten men travelling along the road, even if eating from one loaf, should each recite the benedictions (meaning both before and after) individually. If this group reclines to eat in formal fashion, even if each individual eats from his own loaf, one recites the benedictions (and in this way the others fulfill their obligations). While the use of ten in this passage is interesting, it is doubtful if it has any relevance to the Qumran meal under consideration. The reference to ten in the Tosefta passage is probably to heighten the effect of the formulation. It says that even if there are as many as ten walking together (a ritual quorum), they still bless separately, so long as the formal act of reclining together is lacking. This is because only in such formal meals was the recital of benedictions delegated to one person.

A better parallel may be cited from M. Berakhot 7:3. This *mishnah* prescribes the various forms of the invitation to say grace (*zimmun*) recited
when at least three adult males eat together. The text prescribes a version for three and one for ten. It then states that the law is the same for ten or ten myriads. In other words, ten is the dividing point. If there are more than ten, no matter how many people are actually present, the version for ten or more is employed. Paradoxically, the mishnah goes on to prescribe the versions for one hundred, one thousand, and ten thousand. The amoraim clearly understood the textual and halakhic problem posed by this mishnah and resolved it by attributing the first and second parts of the mishnah to two different tannaim. From a literary point of view it is certain that the statement declaring the law to be the same for ten or ten myriads is an interpolation inserted into a previously existing tradition. If so, whoever formulated that insertion, either as a gloss or originally as an independent statement, saw ten, the ritual quorum, as the crucial matter here. According to his view, only when ten were present, did the meal attain the true status of a formal, “public” meal requiring the expanded invitation to grace (zimmun). This tannaitic view, eventually adopted as the halakhah, shares its emphasis on the quorum of ten with the Qumran meal under discussion.

According to the parallel passage, 1QSa 2:11–22 (to be discussed below), after the benedictions on the bread are recited by the priest (and the Messiah of Israel at the eschatological banquet) each of the other guests, the members of the sect, is to recite his own benediction. Licht correctly notes that this is in direct opposition to the pattern found in the early tannaitic texts describing formal meals at which the grace is recited by one, thereby fulfilling the obligation of all.

In any case, it must be reemphasized that the recitation of benedictions before the meal and at its conclusion by a priest and the required ritual purity at the meal in no way rendered the meal sacral. Rather, these traditions were part of everyday life for the Jews of Palestine by this time and were observed by all the “sects” at every formal dinner or banquet regardless of its context. It can be expected that meals of groups, including family celebrations, the Passover Seder, and the meals of the Sabbaths and festivals, all followed these patterns in the Hasmonean and Herodian periods.

2. The Messianic Banquet

The key to understanding the function of the meal at Qumran is found in the Serekh Ha-'Edah (Rule of the Community). This text is a description of the days to come (‘aharit ha-yamim), particularly of the Messianic banquet which will inaugurate this period. The Dead Sea community believed that it was living on the verge of the days to come. The sectarians constituted their community as they believed Israel was to be constituted in the soon-to-dawn Messianic era. We might say that they lived with one foot in this world and one foot in the next. The Messianic banquet has so many features in common with the communal meal of the sect that one can only
conclude that the function of the Qumran communal meals was to be what the Rabbis termed “a sample of the world to come.”/59/ In other words, the significance of the communal meals was not sacral but rather related to Messianic expectations. The Qumranites did not act out a ritual as a substitute for a cult which they no longer practiced. Rather, they anticipated the great banquet to occur in the days to come./60/

1QSa 2:11-22 describes this banquet:/61/

[The session/62/ of the men of renown, [invited to] the feast/63/ for the council of the community when [at the end]/64/ (of days) the Messiah/65/ [shall assemble]/66/ with them. [The priest]/67/ shall enter [at] the head of all the congregation of Israel, and [all his brethren the sons of]/68/ Aaron, the priests, [who are invited] to the feast, the men of renown,/69/ and they shall sit before him, each]/70/ according to his importance. Afterwards,/71/ [the Messiah] of Israel [shall enter]/72/ and the heads/73/ of the [thousands of Israel]/74/ shall sit before him [each according to his importance, according to [his station] in their encampments and their journeys.]/75/ And all of the heads of the [households of the congregation,]/76/ [their] sages and wise men]/77/ shall sit before them, each according to his importance. [When they] meet/78/ at the communal/79/ [table,]/80/ [to set out bread and wine,]/81/ and the communal table is arranged [to eat and]/82/ to drink[wine, no one [shall extend] his hand to the first (portion) of the bread and [the wine] before]/83/ the priest. For he shall bless/84/ the first (portion) of bread and [the wine] and shall extend]/85/ his hand to the bread first,/86/ Afterwards, the Messiah of Israel [shall extend] his hands to the bread. [ Afterwards, all of the congregation of the community [shall bless, each according to] his importance./88/ [They] shall act/89/ according to this statute whenever (the meal) is arranged]/90/ when as many as ten/91/ [meet] together.

From this passage the Messianic overtones of the Qumran communal meal are apparent. The Dead Sea community structured its life in “the present” in consonance with its view of the days to come. Accordingly, in such anticipation, they ate communal meals on some kind of regular basis, thus acting out the future Messianic banquet. While the Messianic banquet of Rabbinic sources was to be a one-time affair inaugurating the Messianic era,/92/ the Dead Sea community looked forward to a regular series of such banquets to be held in the days to come./93/

The banquet described in our text is presided over by the two Messianic figures expected by the Dead Sea community./94/ These were the priest, under whose administration and direction the cult would be restored in the
"New Jerusalem," and the Davidic Messiah who would serve as the temporal and military leader. In keeping with the importance of the priesthood at Qumran, and the emphasis placed upon the restoration of a purified cult in the days to come, the priestly "Messiah" is given the higher position.

What does this description of the banquet add to that outlined in DSD 6:4-5? First, both appear to be preceded by a meeting of the *moshav ha-rabbim*. Although not explicitly stated, it can be suggested that the communal meals of the sect normally took place in connection with meetings of the *moshav ha-rabbim*. The one priest of the former passage has here been augmented by the full complement of priestly members of the sect as well as the Davidic Messiah. The Messiah appears here as temporal leader, alongside the chief priest, clearly identical with the priestly "Messiah" expected by the sect. The Davidic Messiah is accompanied by the chiefs of the clans of Israel. Both priestly and temporal leaders sit in order of their rank. While this detail does not appear in the first description, it should be assumed that seating was also in accord with rank at the communal meals of the sect.

Note that the eschatological banquet is to be eaten seated, as opposed to the tannaitic usage of reclining at formal meals. Indeed, reclining was the Greco-Roman pattern, whereas the biblical tradition was one of sitting. The Messianic banquet, in keeping with the approach of the sect, would embody the traditions of Israel, not those of the Hellenistic pagans.

In both passages the two foods mentioned are bread and wine. While these probably do not constitute the entire menu, they are singled out since the benediction over the bread exempted the other foods as well, with the exception of the wine brought during the meal which required its own benediction. Whereas the communal meal of the sect in the manuscripts before us required *either* bread or wine, the Messianic banquet would involve both. In both passages the priest would recite the benediction first, and receive the first portion of the bread and wine. Regarding the Messianic banquet, it is stated that all others present would recite the benedictions in order of their rank after the priest (priestly Messiah). While this detail is omitted in the passage regarding the regular meal of the sect, it must have been the practice. Finally, both meals require the quorum of at least ten.

It is known from the *Manual of Discipline* that only full members of the sect not under any penalty could participate in these meals. Those outside the sect or those who suffered temporary demotion as a consequence of their transgressions were seen as ritually impure. After all, to the sectarian ritual impurity was a direct consequence of transgression of the divine law or its sectarian interpretation./95/

Needless to say, such a requirement of absolute ritual purity would have been expected for the Messianic banquet as well. Further, 1QS 2:3–9 indicates that those with physical imperfections were to be excluded from the "congregation" in the end of days. This attitude regarding ritual purity at the communal meals reveals the link between these meals and the Messianic
expectations of the sect. The ultimate perfection of the Messianic era would be the realization of the sect’s constant striving for total ritual purity. Thus, the communal meals establish a link between the sectarian observance in this world and those observances in the age to come through the crucial element of ritual purity. Total ritual purity may be seen as a catalyst which turns the ordinary communal meal into a foretaste of the great Messianic banquet at the end of days.

That the meal before us is not sacral, even while Messianic, is proven beyond a doubt. Its rituals in no way attempt to imitate or substitute for the Temple cult. On the contrary, they are simply those ritual aspects of the laws pertaining to meals observed by many Jews of the time. In the sectarian view these rituals would certainly continue in the end of days when they would be observed in complete perfection.

Simultaneously, the Jerusalem cult would be reconstituted in the Temple and conducted in accord with sectarian teachings under control of Zadokite priests. Thus, it cannot be maintained that the eschatological meal was intended as a substitute for the Temple, as the sect would certainly return to the mainstream of Temple worship in the end of days. The communal meals were not sacral substitutes for the Jerusalem-centered cult but a form of preparation for the soon-to-dawn eschaton and for the Messianic banquet to occur in the end of days. This banquet itself, arranged according to the customs of the communal meal of the present age, would not replace the Temple cult but would complement it in the age of Messianic perfection.

3. Archaeological Evidence of the Communal Meal

For the Dead Sea group we are fortunate in having not only the written remains in the form of the scrolls, but also the archaeological materials which shed so much light on life at Qumran. Archaeologists have established beyond a doubt that those who hid the scrolls in the caves are the same as those who inhabited the ruins at Qumran. It can, therefore, be established that here existed facilities for communal meals, and that remains of such meals may be found, whereas there is no evidence for a sacrificial cult.

Already during period 1b of Qumran’s occupation, extending approximately from the reign of John Hyrcanus (135–104 B.C.)/96/ until the earthquake of 31 B.C./97/ the largest room of the Qumran buildings was a hall 22 m. long and 4.5 m. wide. The existence of a system for washing and draining the floor of this room has led scholars to the conclusion that it served as a dining facility and was used for the eating of communal meals. In an adjoining room were found some one thousand pottery vessels. These had been stacked according to type./98/ R. de Vaux has concluded that this was a storage room for the vessels used in the dining room./99/

In addition, one kitchen with several fireplaces was unearthed./100/ The kitchen, pottery storeroom, and dining hall continued in use during
period II./101/ which, according to de Vaux, lasted from the outset of the reign of Herod Archelaus (between 4 and 1 B.C.)/102/ to the Great Revolt against Rome. R. de Vaux has taken the view that Qumran was destroyed in June of 68 A.D. by the Romans./103/ He estimates that the group using these facilities "would not have numbered many more than two hundred members."/104/

Connected with the problem of meals at Qumran is the finding (primarily from period Ia) of deposits of animal bones buried between or around the buildings, placed in large sherds of pitchers or pots or in intact jars with their lids on./105/ These deposits are usually flush with the ground level. Examination of the bones shows that no deposit contained an entire skeleton. The bones had been taken apart and the flesh had been removed before burial. Many contain bones from a single animal, and the remainder represent two, three, or four animals. Animals included are: adult sheep, adult goats, lambs or kids, calves, cows, or oxen./106/

Many scholars have sought to explain these bones as either the remains of sacrifices or sacrificial meals. Without question they are bones of animals used for food. It has been determined that the meat was generally boiled and less often roasted. R. de Vaux states that the careful burials indicate a "religious preoccupation."/107/ He is hesitant to conclude that these animals are the remains of sacrificial rites. First, he says, no altar or cult place has been found at Qumran./108/ Second, we may add, the texts from Qumran make plain the community's view regarding sacrifice. They abstained from Temple offerings because of what they saw as the impurity of the cult as it was conducted by the Jerusalem establishment./109/ In the Messianic era the Qumranites would return victoriously to the "New Jerusalem" where they would reconstitute the cult according to their views and with their own priestly Messiah at its head./110/ There is no room in such a schema for sacrifice at Qumran./111/

Numerous attempts have been made to explain the reason for the burial of these bones./112/ None of these is satisfactory inasmuch as there is no literary evidence for the burial of bones in any Jewish sacrificial or religious rite./113/ Further, the archaeological parallels which have been cited are of questionable relevance. While it is possible that these bones are the remains of communal meals, their burial in the dining hall cannot be explained. There is no choice but to admit that until further discoveries, no satisfactory explanation can be offered. At all events, archaeological evidence shows that the facilities for communal meals were present at Qumran and that for some reason the remains of these meals were buried beneath the dining room.

4. Summary

The communal meal of the Dead Sea community was related to Messianic yearnings and expectations. In no way was it an attempt to replace
the cult from which the group had withdrawn. As a matter of fact, the restored cult of the days to come is not mentioned in connection with the Messianic banquet. Both were to occur in the future age, but were separate motifs. Communal meals occurred, but there is no way of knowing how often. Archaeological evidence leads to the conclusion that the Qumran buildings were the site of these gatherings, and one can conjecture that the final Messianic banquet was to occur in the “New Jerusalem.” The meals at Qumran, then, are not to be considered along with the meals of the Therapeutae and the Passover Seder. The latter two were replacements for the sacrificial cult and the result of the socio-religious framework in which these groups lived. The communal meals at Qumran were rather connected with the future expectations of the community and stemmed from the deep Messianic consciousness of this group.

The punishment of separation from the pure food of the sect meant that the offender could not partake of the communal meals. He was deprived of the opportunity to enact in the present age the Messianic banquet which would occur at the end of days. His offense had rendered him ritually impure, and his impurity had, in turn, led to his being considered unworthy of sharing in the coming age. Only repentance and the completion of his period of punishment would allow him to return to the full regimen of sectarian life and its attendant preparation for the soon-to-dawn eschaton.

NOTES

/1/ Licht and Carmignac, *ad loc.*, note that the scribe first began to write *lh*, erased it, and wrote *wyhd*.

/2/ A reference to the holding of sessions similar to those of the *moshav ha-rabbim*, the sectarian legislative and judicial assembly.

/3/ Note that according to Philo and Josephus, the Essenes ate communal meals twice daily. See J. van der Ploeg, “The Meals of the Essenes,” *JSS* 2 (1957), 167f. According to the texts now available, the Dead Sea communal meals do not include silence or require special clothing as do the Essene meals. The requirement of ritual purity, however, is common to both the Essenes of Philo and Josephus and to the sect of Qumran. See van der Ploeg, 168f.

/4/ See above, 143f. and 153 nn. 121–123.

/5/ Licht, *ad loc*.

/6/ For a thorough analysis, see *HAQ*, 68–75.

/7/ On this passage, see *HAQ*, 71.

/8/ We omit the dittography in this passage with the various editors. For commentary, see the notes of Licht and Wernberg-Møller, *ad loc*. Cf. also H. Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran* (1963), 217–220.

/9/ On this form of *kt*, see above, 107 n. 65.

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11/ Cf. Is. 65:11; Prov. 9:2 (Licht). Note the mention of wine in the latter passage and its implicit reference in the former. The space in the middle of ha-shulhan in 1QS is the result of an imperfection in the parchment (Licht).

12/ Licht cites P. Nedarim 7:1 (40b bottom), which discusses the definition of tirosh. The text states that tirosh in biblical Hebrew meant wine, while it implies that it means grape juice (unfermented) in Rabbinic Hebrew. Licht assumes that the text of DSD is in biblical Hebrew and understands tirosh here as wine.

13/ That this root refers simply to drinking, and has no banqueting connotation, is shown above, 163.

14/ Perhaps “hands,” assuming a defective spelling. For such spellings, cf. Qimron, p. 231f. and Licht, Serakhim, 47f. Cf. T. Berakhot 5:7 according to ed. princ. and parallels cited by Lieberman, TK, ad loc. in which poshet yado is used in the same sense of taking food.

15/ Phonetic spelling. Cf. Licht, Serakhim, 47 and Qimron, p. 56.

16/ Hifil usage in this meaning is unattested (Licht). Much less likely is the assumption that this is a nifal which would require the translation, “to be blessed with . . .”

17/ The word bereshit may be taken as either an adverb modifying the verb yishlah (he should take his bread or wine first) or a noun meaning the first portion, as translated here. Cf. Wernberg-Møller.

18/ The translation “food” would obscure the fact that bread, as the staple of the diet, was always blessed at the beginning of meals according to Jewish practice. This blessing exempted all other foods.

19/ 1QS continues with a repetition of the last clause, li-shetot ha-kohen . . . we-ha-tirosh. The note of Milik, “(Review of) Manual,” 413 on the reading of MS d is ambiguous, hence the confusion between P. Guilbert, “Le plan,” 323–344 and Licht, ad loc.

20/ Cf. HAQ, 71–75.

21/ Licht to DSD 6:4–6.


23/ Gartner, 11f.

24/ Schürer II (1979), 593–597. Cf. J. M. Baumgarten, “4Q Halakah and the Pentecostal Calendar,” JJS 27 (1976), 39–41 who suggests a calendric parallel between the Therapeutae and the Qumran community. Some differences regarding the meals are as follows: The Therapeutae did not serve wine or grape juice, but water (Contemplative Life, 73). They prohibited the drinking of wine (74) or eating of meat (73) (contrast also the Essenes of Josephus). The Scriptural study practiced by the Therapeutae (76–78) was not part of the Qumran meal, nor were the hymns (80). There is no mention of grace in the account of the Therapeutae.
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/26/ Bokser also refers to the Passover Seder. There can be no question that the Passover Seder, as it occurred after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 A.D., served as a replacement for the paschal sacrifice and the attendant ritual. It seems probable, however, that the break caused by the destruction was not as sudden as Bokser would have us believe. The shift from sacrifice to prayer had been the result of a long process which was only completed by the destruction. This is not to say that the Jews would have abandoned their ancestral cult had the Temple not been destroyed by the Romans, only that the destruction hastened and intensified a process already occurring in the history of Judaism. Those who, like the Therapeutae, were separated by distance from the Temple in Jerusalem, must have celebrated the Passover before 70 A.D. in much the same manner as it was celebrated after 70 A.D. They gathered to eat of the unleavened bread and bitter herbs as well as to retell the story of the exodus and to recite hymns of praise to God. Cf. J. Neusner, "Emergent Rabbinic Judaism in a Time of Crisis," *Judaism* 21 (1979), 313-327, reprinted in his *Early Rabbinic Judaism* (1975), 34-49.


/28/ This theme is discussed repeatedly in W. R. Smith, *The Religion of the Semites* (1972). Although the lectures making up this book were delivered in 1888-91, this observation remains valid.

/29/ "The Meals of the Essenes," 164-166. The quotation is from p. 165.

/30/ III (1929), cols. 854f.

/31/ Note van der Ploeg's conclusion, "that the writings of Philo and Josephus... do not give us sufficient arguments to say that the Essenes had sacred meals. They only speak of their common, communal meals, and it would have been very strange indeed if all of these had been sacred; this would have been an exception to the rule observed everywhere, that true meals are only sacred in certain circumstances" (171). A similar view is espoused by M. Smith, "God's Begetting the Messiah in 1 Q Sa," *NTS* 5 (1958/9), 219.

/32/ For the role of the priest in the Hellenistic cultic banquets (thiases), cf. Delcor, "Repas," 410-412.

/33/ B. Giṭṭin 59b; B. Nedārim 62a-b; B. Horayot 12b; B. Mo'ed Qatan 28b. The *baraita*, according to its attribution, should be dated to the latter half of the second century A.D. Tosafot to B. Hullin 87a asserts that Lev. 21:8 serves here only as an 'asmakhta', meaning that the precedence of the priest is only a Rabbinical ordinance. On the other hand, Abraham Abele ben Ḥayyim Ha-Levi Gombiner, *Magen 'Araham* to Shulhan 'Arukh 'Orah 'Ḥayyim* 201, paragraph 4 says that it is a biblical ordinance (de-ora'ya'ta') and notes that it appears in Maimonides' *Sefer Ha-Miṣvot* ('Aseh no. 32, ed. H. Heller [1979/80], 45).

/34/ So pseudo-Rashi to B. Mo'ed Qatan 28b; pseudo-Rashi and Ran to B. Nedārim 62b; and pseudo-Rashi to B. Horayot 12b. Rashi to B. Giṭṭin 59b, however, takes *li-fetoah rishon* in a wider sense and sees it as indicating that the priest should take precedence in regard to any honor. Whether it is the reading of the Torah or the study session (yeshitah), he should be called upon first. Cf. the statement of the
amora Rabbi Joshua ben Levi in P. Berakhot 5:4 (ed. Krot. 5:5, 9d) and P. Gitín 5:9 (47b) the context of which shows that it refers to the priest’s precedence in the reading of the Torah.

/35/ Hebrew u-levarekh rishon. So pseudo-Rashi to B. Mo’ed Qaṭan 28b. Pseudo-Rashi to B. Horayot 12b understands this as referring to recitation of the zimmun, the invitation to say grace after meals, recited when at least three males have eaten together. Pseudo-Rashi to B. Nedarim 62a, however, sees the reference here as being to the grace both before and after the meal, giving precedence to the priest in both.

/36/ So Rashi to B. Gitín 59b, and Ran to B. Nedarim 62b. (Pseudo-Rashi’s interpretation to B. Nedarim 62b would make sense only if the baraita applied to the high priest.) Among the examples of the application of this principle, Tosafot to B. Gitín 59b, s.v. we-liṭṭol, mentions haverim eating a meal (se’udah) together.

/37/ Above, 161–165.

/38/ See above, n. 35.


/41/ So Lieberman, TK, ad loc.

/42/ J. M. Baumgarten, “Qumran Studies,” JBL 77 (1958), 251, notes that there is no evidence that the haṭurah had communal meals.


/44/ Thackeray’s translation of προφύς as “meat” is too narrow. A better translation would be “food” or “meal” (cf. Liddell and Scott, s.v.).

/45/ War 2, 8, 5 (131), trans. Thackeray.

/46/ Already presumed in a dispute of the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai recorded in M. Berakhot 8:1.

/47/ Mekhīltā De-Rabbi Ishmael Yitro 7 (ed. Horovitz–Rabin, p. 229); Mekhīltā De-Rabbi Shim’on ben Yoḥai to Ex. 20:8 (ed. Epstein-Melammed, p. 149); baraita and amorai discussion in B. Pesahim 106a.

/48/ M. Berakhot 6:6; T. Berakhot 4:8 (seder ha-se’udah), 10.

/49/ Loaves were specifically provided for that purpose in the Essene meal. See Josephus, War 2, 8, 5 (130).

/50/ Above, 24–26.


/52/ Delcor, “Repas,” 412, notes the absence of this meal in the Zadokite Fragments. As noted in the introduction, the contrast between CDC and DSD is one of emphasis and balance. There is no reason to doubt the relevance of the material in DSD to both the main center at Qumran and the outlying settlements of sectarians.

/53/ Lieberman, TK, ad loc. follows P. Berakhot 7:4 (ed. Krot. 7:5, 11c) and explains the passage as referring only to zimmun. It must be remembered that when zimmun was recited, only the mezammen recited the blessings which followed, while the others responded ‘amen.”
/54/ B. Berakhot 50a; P. Berakhot 7:3 (11c).

/55/ At least this is the explanation of Rabbi Akiva in the latter part of M. Berakhot 7:3. If Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yose the Galilean were really the originators of the points of view described in the anonymous first part of the mishnah, we would have expected a clear statement of the opposing points of view. Rather, the anonymous section should here be seen as being an earlier tradition to which the explanations were appended. Cf. also M. Megillah 4:3. Epstein, Mavo' Le-Nusah Ha-Mishnah I, 430f. notes that “the law is the same for ten or ten myriads” is an addition to the mishnah which was not present in the Palestinian Talmud and in the She'iltot. He sees this line as having been added to the Babylonian Talmud’s mishnah text some time before its final redaction. Cf. Epstein’s “Seride She’iltot,” Tarbiz 8 (1936/7), 24. On the other hand, Ch. Albeck, HWT, ad loc., sees this line as an ancient halakhah and claims that the statement applies only to the use of nevarekh (rather than barekh) which is used for all groups from ten up. Cf. also B. Bokser, “A Minor for Zimmun (Y. Ber. 7:2, 11c) and Recensions of Yerushalmi,” AJSR 4 (1979), 1–25; G. Porton, The Traditions of Rabbi Ishmael I (1976), 13–15; and J. N. Lightstone, Yose the Galilean, I (1979), 11–13.

/56/ Decided by the Babylonian amora Rava’, B. Berakhot 50a, and P. Berakhot 7:3 (11c).

/57/ For grace before meals, see M. Berakhot 6:6 which specifically states that in informal meals (at which the guests sit) the grace before meals is recited individually, whereas at formal meals (at which the guests recline) the grace before meals is recited by one on behalf of all. According to Tosafot to B. Berakhot 42a this mishnah applies as well to grace after meals.

/58/ M. Smith ingeniously theorizes, “God’s Begetting the Messiah,” 221–223, that 1QSa 2:11f. represents a judicial session at which priestly instruction regarding the laws of blemishes was given but which is not Messianic. His suggestion cannot be accepted as the continuation of the text seems to militate against Smith’s approach.

/59/ The phrase appears in B. Bava’ Batra’ 16a, 17a.

/60/ L. F. Hartman, “Eschatology,” EJ 6, 879 has recognized that the communal meals of Qumran prefigured the Messianic banquet, but he termed these meals “cultic” nonetheless. We emphasize again that the adherence to laws of ritual purity and the recitation of grace do not make the meal itself “cultic” in any way. Cf. also M. Burrows, The Dead Sea Scrolls (1968), 237, 265.


/62/ Barthélémy and Sutcliffe restore [zh múλb (zeh mosha'eb)] which, as Licht notes, is too large for the space. J. Carmignac, “Quelques détails de lecture,” RQ 4
(1963–64), 85 and commentary, *ad loc.*, also notes that the space is too small. He restores *lm\[sb]*, taking the first sentence of our text as belonging to the previous paragraph. He begins our passage with 'im (l. 11). Nonetheless, Licht has shown that it is still preferable to take this clause as the heading for what follows.

/63/ Translating with Cross, *Ancient Library*, 87 and n. 65. *Qer'ie mo'ed 'anshe shem* appears in Num. 16:2 as a description of the princes of the congregation who joined Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On in their rebellion against Moses and Aaron.

/64/ On the significance of *qeş* at Qumran, see Yalon, *MMY*, 77.

/65/ Here referring to the Messiah of Israel. On the two Messiahs, see below n. 94.

/66/ Accepting the restoration of Licht. For the proposed restorations, see Licht, 267–269 and Cross, 87–88, n. 67. The numerous textual problems and restorations in this entire passage in no way affect the basic conclusions reached below. Note, however, that P. Skehan, “Two Books on Qumran Studies,” *CBQ* 21 (1959), 74 calls “on the testimony of a half-dozen witnesses, including Allegro, Cross, Strugnell, and the writer [Skehan], as of the summer of 1955,” to the effect that the text “contains yôlid.” Even if this is correct, however, we would suggest emendation in accord with Licht’s reading.

/67/ Barthélemy, *DJD* I, restored 'a[vot bene]. See Licht, *Serakhim*, 267 for other restorations. To be added to his list is the suggestion of Sutcliffe, *[gm hw* *byw*], which is rendered unlikely by the continuation of the passage.

/68/ Restored with Licht (following traces) who compares DSW 15:4. Licht also suggests restoring *we-no'adu 'elaw*, but it is difficult to see how this would connect with the continuation of the text. Perhaps he meant to suggest *we-no'adu 'elaw bene*. While such a restoration would make sense, it would be too long for the space available. Barthélemy restored 'avot bene. Carmignac, “*Quelques détails,*” 85 f., and commentary, *ad loc.*, apparently prefers 'ehaw bene (*[byw bny]*) and compares 1 Chron. 16:39; Neh. 3:1; and DSW 13:1, 15:4.

/69/ The form *enoshe* (also in 1:28) is a construct of *enosh*, here substituted for the biblical 'anshe encountered in 1. 11. The *waw* is serving for Masoretic *qames qatan*. 'Anshe ha-shem (with the definite article) occurs in Gen. 6:4. Rashi’s comment to this verse raises the possibility that our passage here may refer to those whose names appear in the official roster of the members of the sect. Cf. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Num. 16:2, *mefarshin bi-shemahan*. On the sectarian rosters, see *HAQ*, 66 f.

/70/ For the restoration, cf. ll. 15–17 and 1:18.

/71/ The adverbial usage is noted by Licht.

/72/ Barthélemy restored *yešhev mashjiqah*. The *yod* is suspended above the line.

/73/ The *yod* is suspended above the line.

/74/ Part of the *'alef of 'alefe* is visible. Cf. 1:14 (Licht). Carmignac restores *šbyt ysr'î* with 1 Sam. 15:17.

Therapeuta e also sat in order of importance according to Philo, *Contemplative Life* 67. Cf. also Matt. 23:6 and Luke 14:7-11 on the "place of honor" at the table (Carmignac).

/76/ Traces of the first and last letters are visible. Cf. 1:24f. which is also partly restored.

/77/ Restored with Licht who notes that half of the first mem is visible and compares 1:28. Barthélemy restored hakhem[ė 'adat ha-qodesh]. On Licht's restoration, cf. Deut. 1:13 which requires that our text as restored be vocalized wi-yeduʿim. While Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Ramban all take yeduʿim to refer to men of reputation, we have translated here in accord with Targum Pseudo-Jonathan *mare mandde'ā*, men of knowledge.

/78/ Nifal of יָדַ, "to meet at an appointed place" (BDB, s.v.).

/79/ Taking yahad here as a designation of the sect. Alternately, one can translate, "[at the table] together."

/80/ Part of the het is visible.

/81/ Barthélemy restored [o li-shetot ha-тиrosh.]


/83/ Written over an erasure.

/84/ Barthélemy restores ky'[hו' m]brk.

/85/ Cf. above, n. 17.

/86/ Barthélemy restores wšlḥ.

/87/ Cf. Ruth 4:7. Licht notes that in this and other biblical texts the word does not make reference to any specific time. A usage closer to that of our text is found in Ben Sira 4:17; 11:8; 37:8. DSD 6:5 (above, 192) uses la-rishonah in the same sense.

/88/ Licht observes that each would recite his own benediction, a practice in opposition to that of the tannaim.

/89/ Barthélemy and Licht suggest that the waw may have been suspended above the line.

/90/ Barthélemy compares DSD 10:14.

/91/ For the spelling with final 'alef, cf. tora' in 1:11 (above, 62), and Licht's note, *ad loc.*

/92/ On this banquet, see Ginzberg, *Legends* I, 27-28; V, 43-46, n. 127, and G. F. Moore, *Judaism* (1971) II, 363f. Note that most of the sources cited are considerably later than the Qumran corpus. The numerous Apocryphal and pseudo-epigraphical references to this banquet are conveniently listed in Charles, *APOT* II, 859, s.v. "Messianic banquet." There can be no question that this idea was widespread when the Qumran texts were composed.

/93/ Priest, 97.

/ 95/ See above, 164f.
/ 96/ R. de Vaux, *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 19. E. M. Laperrousaz, *Qoumrián, l’établissement Essénien des bords de la Mer Morte* (1976), 29–33 has discussed in detail de Vaux’s dating of the end of period Ia and the beginning of period Ib. He shows that de Vaux has vacillated through the years as to the exact dates and criticizes his evaluation of the numismatic evidence. Laperrousaz concludes (33) that it is impossible on archaeological grounds precisely to place period Ia within the last century of the Hellenistic period of Palestine. By this he means (cf. 33, n. 2) that period Ia might be fixed anywhere from 163–63 B.C. Hence, he is unable to suggest an exact date within the Hasmonean period for the onset of period Ib (38).

/ 97/ R. de Vaux, 20–21. Laperrousaz, basing himself on detailed numismatic study, would date the end of period Ib to between 67 and 63 B.C. It is quite clear from the discussion (Laperrousaz, 38–45) that the evidence is susceptible to various interpretations. There can be no question, however, that this period ceased at least by the earthquake of 31 B.C.

/ 98/ See de Vaux’s Plates Xa and Xb.

/ 99/ Pp. 11–12. Cf. Laperrousaz, 35–36. He notes that the pottery in question has been attributed to period II by J. T. Milik on the basis of palaeographic evidence.

/100/ R. de Vaux, 7, 10.

/101/ Laperrousaz, 47.

/102/ Laperrousaz, 50–56, fixes the beginning of period IIa during the reign of Herod the Great (37–4 B.C.). He suggests a second abandonment of the site which would, according to him, have resulted probably from the transformation of Judea into a procuratorial province in 6 A.D. This second abandonment is purely hypothetical and rests on insufficient evidence.


/104/ P. 86. Laperrousaz, 99–109 makes a detailed study of this question. He concludes that 300–350 people would have lived at Qumran during period Ib, and perhaps 350–400 would have occupied Qumran and Ein Feshka during periods IIa and IIb of Qumran (109). R. de Vaux’s figure is not far removed from those of Milik (150–200) and Farmer (“a few hundred regular members”) (de Vaux, 86 n. 1). We must also bear in mind that Laperrousaz is the first to take so seriously the facilities at Ein Feshka, as evidenced by his devoting pp. 63–90 of his study to this site.

/105/ See de Vaux’s Plates XIa and XIb.


/107/ P. 14.


The "New Jerusalem" is the theme of several Aramaic texts from Qumran on which see DJD I, 134–35; III, 84–89, 184–193. Cultic ceremonies would form part of the final battle described in the War Scroll. For a thorough analysis, see Yadin, War Scroll, 198–228. On the Temple Scroll, see above, 13f.

Cross reaches the opposite conclusion, though with some hesitation (Ancient Library, 102). He bases his opinion on the animal bones, but does not deal with the objections raised here. J. van der Ploeg, "The Meals of the Essenes," 170 discusses the attitude to sacrifice of the Essenes of Philo and Josephus. He takes the view that while the Essenes did not sacrifice in the Temple, they replaced the sacrificial cult with nonsacrificial ceremonies of their own. See also J. Bowman, "Did the Qumran Sect Burn the Red Heifer?" RQ 1 (1958), 73–84 and G. Klinzing, Die Umdeutung des Kultus in der Qumrangemeinde und im Neuen Testament (1971), 20–49.

A thorough survey is given in de Vaux, 14–16, n. 3. See also Laperrousaz, 211–215; L.-Duhaime, 249–251; and most recently, E. M. Laperrousaz, "A propos des dépôts d'ossements d'animaux trouvés à Qoumrân," RQ (1978), 569–573.

The Temple Scroll contains no reference to this or any similar practice among its detailed prescriptions for the sacrificial offerings.