

The Eschatological Spirituality of “the Sons of Light” in Qumran

MIROSŁAW S. WRÓBEL

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

miwrobel@kul.pl, ORCID: 0000-0003-3424-7127

Abstract: One of the most important features of the members of the Qumran community, who referred to themselves by the name “the sons of light,” was aspiration to holiness by observing the Law, purity and cult. The spirituality of the Qumran community was founded on the New Covenant which would be fulfilled “at the end of the days”. This eschatological reality was stressed in the practical spirituality of the members of the Qumran community. In the present article, the spirituality of the Qumran community will be presented via three points: (1) The origin of the Qumran community; (2) The community of a New Covenant with God; and (3) Eschatological beliefs. Our accumulated knowledge about the spirituality of the Qumran community and its beliefs enables us to better understand many eschatological texts of the Old Testament and Intertestamental Literature. It also indicates to us certain similarities and differences with the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.

Keywords: Qumran Community, Spirituality, Eschatology

The members of the Qumran community, when calling themselves “the sons of light,” wanted to distinguish themselves from their sinful opponents referred to as “the sons of darkness.” An interesting feature of the eschatological spirituality of the Qumran community was the effort to achieve holiness through observance of the Law, ritual purification practices and the cult of expiation. In contemporary studies on Qumran community more and more attention is paid to its spiritual aspect.¹ The spirituality was firmly rooted in the reality of the New Covenant, which was in force “at the end of days.”²

¹ Kimbrough, “The Ethic,” 483-498; Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran*; Stachowiak, “The Ethics,” 63-82; Milik, *Dziesięć lat odkryć*, 104-135; Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space*; Lawrence, “Men of Perfect Holiness,” 83-100; Baumgarten, “The Law and Spirit,” 93-105; Tso, *Ethics*; Bockmuehl, “Grace,” 229-261; Hempel, “Reflections,” 69-82; Regev, “Community,” 604-631.

² Collins, *Apocalypticism*.

1. The Origin of the Qumran Community

The Qumran community was established in the II century B.C. as a result of the protest against Jonathan, a Hasmonean ruler, who unlawfully assumed the High Priesthood.³ A strong opposition against violating God's Law, both in the temple cult and in social life, lies in the very genesis of the community.⁴ This implies that a belief was born in the consciousness of the community, that its existence was an answer to the sinful attitude of Judaism concentrated around the Jerusalem Temple. *The Damascus Document* (CD I,3.13-18) refers to the fact that the priests in Jerusalem Temple sinned against the covenant by breaking God's laws. They rejected the way to perfection by avoiding the laws of ritual purity and persecuting the righteous, including the Teacher of Righteousness.⁵ The immoral conduct of the Wicked Priest (hebr. *ha-kohen ha-rasza*) was presented in the peshar to the prophet Habakkuk:

“(8) This refers to the Wicked Priest, who (9) had a reputation for reliability at the beginning of his term of service; but when he became ruler (10) over Israel, he became proud and forsook God and betrayed the commandments for the sake of (11) riches. He amassed by force the riches of the lawless who had rebelled against God, (12) seizing the riches of the people, thus adding to the guilt of his crimes, (13) and he committed abhorrent deeds in every defiling impurity” (1QpHab VIII,8-13).⁶

The Wicked Priest wanted to kill the Teacher of Righteousness in the Day of Atonement:

“(4) This refers to the Wicked Priest, who (5) pursued the Teacher of Righteousness to destroy him in (6) the heat of his anger at his place of exile. At the time set aside for the repose of (7) the Day of Atonement he appeared to them to destroy them (8) and to bring them to ruin on the fast day, the Sabbath intended for their repose” (1QpHab XI,4-8).⁷

As a sign of its opposition against the priesthood in Jerusalem, the Qumran community wished for its spiritual formation to be a new altar, and for the worship of

³ See the discussion on genesis of the Qumran Community in: VanderKam – Flint, *The Meaning*, 289-292; Dimant, “The History,” 221-246.

⁴ 4QMMT C,7-9: “(7) [But you know that] we have separated from the majority of the people and from all their uncleanness] (8) [and] from being party to these matters or going along w[ith them] in these things. And you k[now that no] (9) unfaithfulness, deception, or evil are found in our hands, for we give [some thought] to [these issues]. English translation in: Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 461. See also: 1QpHab I,11-15; V,10-12; VIII,8-16; IX,9-12.

⁵ See Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran*; Eshel, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*.

⁶ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 85.

⁷ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 87.

God to be a new sacrifice.⁸ The members of Qumran community, when heading for the Judaean Desert, wished to represent an “ideal community” of Israel at “the end of days,” under the leadership of the Teacher of Righteousness.⁹ As “the sons of light,” they wished to fulfil God’s Law and to prepare the way for the coming of two messiahs (the messiah - priest from the house of Aaron and messiah - king from the house of David).¹⁰ Their attitude was clearly characterized by particularism and separatism. Only members of the community were known as “the sons of light” treading the path of holiness. All those outside the community were identified with “the sons of darkness” doing unrighteousness. The members of the Qumran community lived a life based on *The Rule of the Community* (1QS) and *The Rule of the Congregation* (1QSa).¹¹ The writings constituted an interpretation of the Torah made by the Teacher of Righteousness and the leaders of the community. Explanations of the Torah were not conceived as purely human reflections, but they were considered as a revelation given to the community by God Himself:

“(7) When they hear everything that is to c[ome upon] the latter generation that will be spoken by (8) the Priest in whose [heart] God has put [the ability] to explain all (9) the words of his servants the prophets, through [whom] God has foretold (10) everything that is to come upon his people and [the Gentiles]” (1QpHab II,7-10).¹²

The way of moral perfection consisted in breaking with the sin, converting the heart to God and following the path of fulfilling the Torah and the rules of the community. The members of Qumran community believed that after their stay in the desert they would be able to come back to Jerusalem in order to establish a community of the truth (1QS VIII,1-9). In its structure the Qumran community (*Yahad*) wished to make references to Israel from the time of the *Exodus*, following – in particular – the biblical description contained in the Book of Numbers. The community was divided into the laymen and the sons of Aaron. It was headed by “the Congregation Council,” which was composed of twelve laymen and three priests (1QS VIII,1).¹³ The division symbolized the twelve tribes of Israel and three priestly families descended from the three sons of Levi – Gershon, Kohath and Merari (Gen 46:11). Candidates to the *Yahad* had to undergo a year of probation first, and then two years of “novitiate.” People with physical and moral defects were not admitted to the community. It is clearly formulated in *The Damascus Document* found in cave 4:

⁸ Eyal, “Abominated Temple,” 243-278; Regev, “Community,” 604-631.

⁹ Tso, “The Giving of the Torah,” 117-127.

¹⁰ Collins, “What was Distinctive,” 71-92.

¹¹ See translation in: Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 112-140.

¹² Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 81.

¹³ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 128.

“(15) But no one who is a fool or insane may enter; and no simpleton or ignoramus (16) or one with eyes too weak to see or lame or crippled or deaf or minor child, (17) none of these shall enter the congregation, for the holy angels are in your midst” (CD XV,15-17).¹⁴

When becoming a full member of the community, a “novice” rejected private property. If the candidates provided fraudulent information about their wealth, then they would be subject to the penalty of expulsion from “the purity” of the community for one year (1QS VI,24-25; CD XIV,20). The actual life of the community consisted in praying, studying the law, worshipping and working. For their prayers and cult gatherings they wore white garments which emphasized the priestly character of the community. The prayer to the sun, said at dawn and dusk, was particularly well-developed. In *The Rule of the Community* there is a record saying that

“(7) the general membership will be diligent together for the first third of every night of the year reading aloud from the Book, interpreting Scripture, and (8) praying together” (1QS VI,7-8).¹⁵

This description corresponds well with the so-called peshers, the form of commenting on and updating writings which was well-developed in Qumran. The members of the Qumran community studied the Law as they saw its implementation in the actual life of the community. The practice of ritual purification was also very well-developed in the community. In many writings of the community attention is paid to observing the laws of purification. They constituted an important contribution to treading the path of holiness.¹⁶ The effectiveness of ritual purification depended on the ethical attitude of the community members:

“(8) Through an upright and humble attitude his sin may be covered, and by humbling himself before all God’s laws his flesh (9) can be made clean. Only thus can he really receive the purifying waters and be purged by the cleansing flow” (1QS III,8-9).¹⁷

Without the internal disposition, ritual purification was of no value at all to the community members:

“(3) Yet he cannot be justified by what his wilful heart declares lawful, preferring to gaze on darkness rather than the ways of light. With such an eye (4) he cannot be reckoned faultless. Ceremonies of atonement cannot restore his innocence, neither cultic waters his

¹⁴ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 68.

¹⁵ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 124-125.

¹⁶ Baumgarten, “The Law and Spirit,” 93-105; Malina, “Chrzczyciele na pustyni,” 259-269.

¹⁷ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 119.

purity. He cannot be sanctified by baptism in oceans (5) and rivers, nor purified by mere ritual bathing. Unclean, unclean shall he be all the days that he rejects the laws (6) of God, refusing to be disciplined in the *Yahad* of His society” (1QS III,3-6).¹⁸

Since the Qumran community members wished, as “the sons of light,” to tread the path of holiness, they had a deep sense of communion with God, which was based on the idea of a Covenant.

2. The Community of a New Covenant With God

The community was aware that it had been specially chosen by God to live in covenant with Him and to tread the path of perfection. The members of the Qumran community understood their relationship with God in the context of “the New Covenant.”¹⁹ Prophetic texts proclaiming the idea of “the New Covenant” were alive in their minds (Jer 31:31-34; Eze 36:22-28). The Hebrew expression *habberit hahadashah* repeatedly appears in Qumran texts. The main purpose of the life and activities of the community was to bring all of its members into complete communion with God on the basis of the covenant.²⁰ The rite of initiation to the community was held once a year on the holiday of the Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot*) and it was referred to as “entering to the Covenant.” It was accompanied by a ceremony of taking vows and reciting liturgical formulas of blessing “the sons of light” and cursing “the sons of darkness” (1QS I,7 – III,12). The person who was admitted to the community undertook to rigorously follow God’s regulations:

“(7) He is to induct all who volunteer to live by the laws of God (8) into the Covenant of Mercy, so as to be joined to God’s society and walk faultless before Him” (1QS I,7-8).²¹

The rite of initiation to the covenant was renewed by the community every year. The sense of covenant was based specifically on creating a living communion with Him:

“(9) With knowledge shall I sing out my music, only for the glory of God, my harp, my lyre for His holiness established; the flute of my lips will I lift, His law its tuning fork. (10) At break of day and darkling sky shall I enter the covenant of God, and when they depart I shall recite His laws” (1QS X,9-10).²²

¹⁸ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 119.

¹⁹ Kimbrough, “The Ethic,” 490-491; Milik, *Dziesięć lat odkryć*, 119-124.

²⁰ Tso, “The Giving of the Torah,” 117-127.

²¹ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 117.

²² See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 132.

The spirituality of the Qumran community was based on the authority of God and of the Teacher of Righteousness chosen by God. God was the Revealer of the Law and the Lord who made it possible to tread the path of perfection into eternity. In the awareness of the members of the Qumran community, God appeared to be the highest ethical principle, the Creator and the Almighty Lord who gave man power over the earth:

“(15) All that is now and ever shall be originates with the God of knowledge. Before things come to be, He has ordered all their designs, (16) so that when they do come to exist – at their appointed times as ordained by His glorious plan – they fulfil their destiny, a destiny impossible to change. He controls (17) the laws governing all things, and He provides for all their pursuits. He created humankind to rule over (18) the world” (1QS III,15-18).²³

Man’s attitude totally depends on God, who guarantees the order of all things:

“(17) Surely apart from You the way cannot be perfected, nor can anything be done unless it please You. You teach (18) all knowledge and all that shall be, by Your will shall it come to pass” (1QS XI,17-18).²⁴

The Teacher of Righteousness, who received special divine revelation, was very helpful for the community members interpreting God’s will. He was chosen by God to teach people about the path of the law, the truth and the justice. He demanded that the community members constantly study and fulfil the Law. He was a moral guide of the community who showed the eternity. His authority was anchored in God Himself.²⁵ In *The Damascus Document* one can find a statement saying that God “raised up for them a Teacher of Righteousness to guide them in the way of His heart” (CD I,11).²⁶ In the peshar to the prophet Habakkuk, it is stated that

“(1) God told Habakkuk to write down what is going to happen to (2) the generation to come; but when that period would be complete He did not make known to him. (3) When it says, ‘so that with ease someone can read it,’ (4) this refers to the Teacher of Righteousness to whom God made known (5) all the mysterious revelations of his servants the prophets” (1QpHab VII,1-5).²⁷

²³ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 120. See also 1QH IV,26-28; 1QH V,7-18; VII,17-18; VIII,16-20; IX,13-15; XII,31-40.

²⁴ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 135. See also Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran*, 94-103.

²⁵ Puech, “Manuskrypty,” 194-196.

²⁶ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 118.

²⁷ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 84.

Both in the Torah and in prophetic writings, God revealed His will, as to what is good and just, through Moses and other prophets. The main purpose of the community was to seek

"(2) God with all their heart and with all their soul, to do that which is good and upright before Him, just as (3) He commanded through Moses and all His servants the prophets. He is to teach them to love everything (4) He chose and hate everything He rejected, to distance themselves from all evil (5) and to hold fast to all good deeds; to practice truth, justice, and righteousness (6) in the land, and to walk no longer in a guilty, willful heart and lustful desires, (7) wherein they did every evil thing. He is to induct all who volunteer to live by the laws of God (8) into the Covenant of Mercy, so as to be joined to God's society and walk faultless before Him" (1QS I,2-8).²⁸

For the Qumran community, the Law of God was considered the most important guide on the path to perfection. In doing so, a dualistic conception of the world and moral life was adopted.²⁹ The members of the Qumran community believed that in the heart of any man, there is a battle going on between the spirit of the truth and the spirit of falsehood:

"(17) He created humankind to rule over (18) the world, appointing for them two spirits in which to walk until the time ordained for His visitation, These are the spirits (19) of truth and falsehood" (1QS III,17-19).³⁰

The history of humanity emerges as a fight between the forces of good and evil. The spirit of the truth guides the community members along the path of holiness, whereas the spirit of falsehood guides sinners along the path of unrighteousness. The Prince of Light stands at the head of saints who are attacked by the spirits of darkness led by Belial. A member of the community, on the one hand, is related to sinful humanity through his inclination for evil, and on the other hand, through God's choice he is invited to tread the path of perfection as "the son of light."³¹ When embarking on the path of Covenant with God, he has a sense of weakness and sinfulness. It is well illustrated by the text of *The Rule of Community*:

"(24) All the initiates into the Covenant are to respond by confessing, 'We have been wicked, (25) transgressed, and [sin]ned. We have been wicked – we and our fathers before us

²⁸ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 117.

²⁹ Tso, "The Giving of the Torah," 117-127; Leonhardt-Balzer, "Evil," 121-147.

³⁰ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 120. See 1QS IV,23: "Until now the spirits of truth and perversity have contended within the human heart". See translation in Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 122.

³¹ Kimbrough, "The Ethic," 488-489; Witczyk, "Opozycja 'światłość-ciemność'" 241-257.

– walking (26) [in rebellion to the laws] of truth and righteousness, [wherefore God] has judged us, both we and our fathers” (1QS I,24-26).³²

The text specifically mentions further on a catalogue of misdeeds committed by a man possessed by the spirit of falsehood. They include the following:

“(9) greed, neglect of righteous deeds, wickedness, lying, pride, haughtiness, cruel deceit and fraud, (10) massive hypocrisy, a want of self-control, abundant foolishness, zeal for arrogance, abominable deeds fashioned by whorish desire, lechery in its filthy manifestation, (11) a reviling tongue, blind eyes, deaf ears, stiff neck, hard heart, walking in all the ways of darkness and evil cunning” (1QS IV,9-11).³³

A man open to the spirit of the truth is characterized by

“humility, patience, abundant compassion, perpetual goodness, insight, understanding and powerful wisdom” (1QS IV,3).³⁴

Members of the community, as “the sons of light” and “the sons of grace” opened themselves up to the working of God’s grace which made it possible for them to tread the path of justice. Joining the community itself did not provide a complete protection from the influences of the spirit of falsehood, however, its actions were significantly constrained. Even though the community members saw most people being deceived by the spirit of falsehood, they were aware that the fight would end in the final triumph of God and “the sons of light” chosen by Him.³⁵ The members of the Qumran community believed they had received the spirit of God and they were influenced by Him. The term *ruah* appears more than 200 times in Qumran writings in the sense of “wind, waft, breath” and in the plural form it means “good and evil spirits, angels and demons.” Based on Gen 2:7, the community members were convinced that every human being has in himself the divine breath which is the foundation for all the existence and action.³⁶ The members of *Yahad* believed that the spirit of God made it possible for man to cleanse himself from evil and undergo transformation:

“(20) By His truth God shall then purify all human deeds, and refine some of humanity so as to extinguish every perverse spirit from the inward parts (21) of the flesh, cleansing from every wicked deed by a holy spirit. Like purifying waters, He shall sprinkle each with

32 See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 118.

33 See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 121.

34 See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 120.

35 Parchem, *Ostateczne zwycięstwo Boga*.

36 Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran*, 112-114.

a spirit of truth, effectual against all the abominations of lying and sullyng by an (22) unclean spirit" (1QS IV,20-22).³⁷

A full understanding of the Torah, wisdom, persistence, membership in the community and the ability to pray were the actual result of the spirit of God pouring into the community. Life in the New Covenant was understood by the community as a fight for "the end of days,"³⁸ The Qumran community strongly believed that God would finally bring about the victory of Good over Evil. The members of the Qumran community emphasized that mercy is the foundation of human interaction. The spiritual attitude of the community members was characterized by a deep hope for the coming of eschatological victory of God over Belial, the truth over falsehood, the light over darkness.

3. Eschatological Beliefs

Members of the Qumran community deeply believed they were living at "the end of days" and they constituted the "Remnant of Israel" *par excellence*. The Hebrew phrase *aharit hajjamim* ("the end of days") often appears in the Qumran texts to signify the final period of history.³⁹ In many manuscripts the phrase refers to the life of the community which emerges as the fulfillment of prophetic predictions of the last days' events.⁴⁰

In 4Q174 there is a reference made to the future messianic era and salvation at "the end of days." The community organizes its life according to the eschatological expectations. "The sons of light," through fulfilling God's Law, participate in the final victory of God at "the end of days," when the eternal period of good and justice is to come (1QpHab VII,1-14).⁴¹ The expression "the end of days" seems to be hermeneutical principle of the eschatological perspective in which the past and the presence of the community is open to the future hope. In *The Instruction on the Two Spirits* (1QS III,13 – IV,26) one can find the idea that "the sons of light" will receive the crown of glory and eternal life (1QS IV,6-8).⁴² They will inherit the whole glory of Adam and together with angels they will praise the Lord for all eternity:

³⁷ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 121-122.

³⁸ Milik, *Dziesięć lat odkryć*, 119-124.

³⁹ Steudel, "Aharit hajjamim," 225-246; Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran*, 152-155; Collins, *Apocalypticism*, 52-58.

⁴⁰ See 1QpHab VIII,1-3; CD VI,7-11; 4Q174 III,1-10.

⁴¹ Parchem, *Ostateczne zwycięstwo Boga*, 191-193.

⁴² Hempel, "The Treatise," 102-120.

“(24) May you (25) [abide forever] as an Angel of the Presence in the holy habitation, to the glory of the God of host[s. May you] serve in the temple of (26) the kingdom of God, ordering destiny with the Angels of the Presence, a party of the *Yahad* [with the Holy Ones] forever, for all the ages of eternity!” (1Q28b IV,24-26).⁴³

At “the end of days” God will come in all His mighty power to destroy those who have submitted to evil. “The sons of darkness” will be destined for punishment and eternal destruction in fire. The awareness of the near end of days intensified the growing rigorism and pursuit of perfection among the members of *Yahad*. They believed the prophetic promises referred to them and so they considered the community as the place of their fulfillment at “the end of days.”⁴⁴ Right after settling on the desert, the members of the Qumran community predicted they would stay there for the period of 40 years, which corresponded to how long the Israelites after *Exodus* lived in the desert. A fragment of the prophecy by Isaiah 40:3, which constituted a sort of the program text, was very important for them:

“(12) When such men as these come to be in Israel, (13) conforming to these doctrines, they shall separate from the session of perverse men to go to the wilderness, there to prepare the way of truth, (14) as it is written: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God’” (1 QS VIII, 12-14).⁴⁵

After they had been living in the desert for 40 years, there was developed a conception of the Final War which was to last for 40 years, during which the members of the Qumran community were to be actively engaged on the side of God and His angels.⁴⁶ The war was to lead to the end of the world and end in a complete triumph of “the sons of light” over “the sons of darkness”. A detailed description of the course of the war was provided in the documents included in the so-called “war cycle,” the best preserved of which is the text *Rule of War* (1QM).⁴⁷ In 11QMelchizedek we can find the detailed description of the final battle and the victory of Melchizedek, heavenly savior over Belial and his angels at “the end of days”:

“(12) The interpretation applies to Belial and the spirits predestined to him, because [se] all of them have rebelled, turn[ing] from God’s precepts [and so becoming utterly wicked.] (13) Therefore Melchizedek will thoroughly prosecute the vengeance required by Go[d’s]

43 See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 142-143.

44 Collins, *Apocalypticism*, 130.

45 See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 129. See also 1 QS VIII, 19-20.

46 Milik, *Dziesięć lat odkryć*, 44.

47 Parchem, *Ostateczne zwycięstwo Boga*, 29.

statues. [in that day he will de]liv[er them from the power] of Belial, and from the power of all the sp[irits predestined to him]” (11QMelchizedek II,12-13).⁴⁸

The terminology included in these documents has a clear theological dimension. God’s winning intervention occurs in a situation where “the sons of light” are put in danger by the forces of evil. It has the character of God’s judgement during which the forces of good win over the forces of evil. Both heavenly beings and people take part in the war. The heavenly beings taking part in the war are referred to as Michael, a Prince of Light, angels, divine beings, saints, the chosen of heaven. The earthly warriors are referred to as “the sons of light,” “the sons of the truth,” “the sons of justice.” The final victory of “the sons of light” is guaranteed thanks to God’s intervention and the participation of the heavenly beings in the fight. Pagan nations are mentioned among the forces of “the sons of darkness”: Edom, Moab, Ammon, the Philistines, and Kittim. The eschatological war has a threefold nature: cosmic (it takes place both in the celestial sphere and in the earthly sphere); ethical (between the forces of good and the forces of evil) and nationalistic (it takes place between Israel and other nations). The Qumran texts strongly emphasize the dualistic nature of the war, clearly identifying the sides of the conflict. On one side there is God, Michael / Prince of Light, heavenly beings, “the sons of light,” while on the other side there are Belial, spirits of the darkness, “the sons of darkness”).⁴⁹ The eschatological war is made up of seven stages. The climax is stage seven in which there is direct intervention by God. It is followed by the definitive victory of “the sons of light” and the final destruction of all enemies.

The sense of “the end of days” was associated with a strong anticipation of two messiahs – of a priestly family and of a royal family.⁵⁰ The messiah of the priestly family is referred to as the “Interpreter of the Law,” the “Highest Priest of the House of Aaron.” According to *Words of Levi* this messiah will redeem the sins of his generation and will serve as a teacher:

“(3) His command is like the command of Heaven, and his teaching is like the will of God. The Sun everlasting will shine (4) and its fire will give warmth to all the ends of the earth. It will shine on darkness; then will darkness vanish (5) [fr]om the earth, and mist from the land” (4Q 541 fr. 9, I,3-5).⁵¹

⁴⁸ Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 592.

⁴⁹ Steudel, “Der Teufel,” 191-200.

⁵⁰ Milik, *Dziesięć lat odkryć*, 130-135; Collins, “What was Distinctive,” 71-92; U. Dahmen, “Davidisierung und Messianismus,” 169-189.

⁵¹ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 313.

The messiah of the royal family is known as the “Branch of David,” the “Prince of the Congregation.”⁵² The role of the royal messiah is well characterised in text entitled *Priestly Blessing for the Last Days*:

“(20) Words of blessing belonging to the Instructor, by which to bless the Prince of Congregation who [...]. (21) And He shall renew for him the Covenant of the [Ya]had, so as to establish the kingdom of His people forev[er, that ‘with righteousness He may judge the poor’;] [...] (24) Thus may you ‘be r[ighteous] by the might of your [mouth,] lay waste the earth with your rod! With the breath of your lips (25) may you kill the wicked’. May He give [you ‘the spirit of coun]sel and may eternal might [rest upon you], the spirit of knowledge and the fear of God’. May ‘righteousness (26) be the belt [around your waist and faithfulness the belt around your loins’. May He ‘make your horns iron and your hoofs bronze!’[...] (27) For God has established you as ‘the sceptre’ (28) over the rulers; before you peoples shall bow down, and all nations shall serve you. He shall make you mighty by His holy name]” (1Q28b V,20-21.24-28).⁵³

On the one hand, the text refers to the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa 11:2-5), on the other hand, it presents the royal messiah as a warrior establishing the messianic kingdom and punishing the ungodly. In *The Rule of the Congregation* we find a description of the eschatological feast during which the figure of the priestly and royal messiah makes the scene. This eschatological banquet with messiahs has the connection with the daily meal which the members of the Qumran community practiced in the context of prayers and rituals:

(11) “The procedure for the [mee]ting of the men of reputation [when they are called] to the banquet held by the party of *Yahad* when (12) the Messiah has been revealed among them [...] (14) Then the [Mess]iah of Israel may en[ter] and the heads (15) of the th[ou]sands of Israel are to sit before him by rank [...] (17) [When] they gather [at the] communal [tab]le, [having set out bread and w]ine so the communal table is set (18) [for eating] and [the] wine (poured) for drinking, none [may re]ach for the first portion (19) of the bread or [the wine] before the Priest. For [he] shall [bl]ess the first portion of the bread (20) and the wine, [reac]hing for the bread first. Afterw[ard] the Messiah of Israel [shall re]ach (21) for the bread. [Finally,] ea[ch] member of the whole congregation of the *Yahad* [shall give a bl]essing, [in descending order of] rank” (1QSa II, 11-12.14-15.17-21).⁵⁴

⁵² See also 1QS IX,9-11; CD XII,23 – XIII,1; CD XIV,18-19; CD XIX,10-11; CD XIX,33 – XX,1.

⁵³ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 143.

⁵⁴ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 140.

Manuscript 4Q174 emphasizes that both of the messiahs were to appear in the war at the end of days. Their arrival was to inaugurate the age of the victory of Israel over the ungodly (4Q174 III,10-19).⁵⁵

The Qumran writings often emphasize the eschatological reality of the eternal happiness for “the sons of light.”⁵⁶ The glory to be gained by the chosen emerges as a continuation of the path which “the sons of light” embarked on in their earthly community by the Dead Sea. This thought is clearly expressed in the *Thanksgiving Hymns (Hodayot)*:

“(20) I give thanks to You, o Lord, for You have redeemed my soul from the pit. From Sheol and Abaddon (21) You have raised me up to an eternal height, so that I might walk about on a limitless plain, and know that there is hope for whom (22) You created from the dust for the eternal council. The perverse spirit You have cleansed from great transgression, that he might take his stand with (23) the host of the holy ones, and enter together with the congregation of the sons of heaven” (1QH XI,20-23).⁵⁷

In the burial ground found in Qumran, it was discovered that most of the tombs were oriented south-north (the head of the deceased was oriented south and the feet were oriented north). According to J.T. Milik, the reason for this was the fact that the Garden of Eden was located in the north. In this way, the members of *Yahad* could believe that after rising from their graves, they would be able to go straight to Paradise.⁵⁸ The realization of the eschatological expectations was to take place along with the “visitation” of the Lord, which meant the day of the judgement and the final victory of good over evil. In the *Rule of Community* we find a text saying that “the sons of the truth” will gain the abundance of peace, the fruit of the seed with all eternal blessings, eternal happiness in infinite life, as well as a crown of glory with a wonderful robe of eternal light:

“(6) Through a gracious visitation all who walk in this spirit will know healing, (7) bountiful peace, long life, and multiple progeny, followed by eternal blessings and perpetual joy through life everlasting. They will receive a crown of glory (8) with robe of honor, resplendent forever and ever” (1QS IV,6-8).⁵⁹

⁵⁵ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 257.

⁵⁶ Collins, *Apocalypticism*, 110.

⁵⁷ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 182.

⁵⁸ Milik, “Henoch,” 77.

⁵⁹ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 121.

The members of the Qumran Community try to strictly observe rules of purification in order to achieve the community with the angels.⁶⁰ Those chosen by God enter to the heavenly reality in order to create a community together with angels:

“(5) Upon the eternal (6) has my eye gazed – even that wisdom hidden from men, the knowledge, wise prudence from humanity concealed. The source of righteousness, gathering (7) of power, and abode of glory are from fleshly counsel hidden. To them He has chosen all these has He given – an eternal possession. He has made them heirs in the legacy (8) of the Holy Ones; with the Angels has He united their assembly, a *Yahad* party. They are an assembly built up for holiness, an eternal Planting for all (9) ages to come” (1QS XI,5-9).⁶¹

The names of the chosen will be written down in the heavenly book and “the sons of light” will shine with the glow of glory like angels:

“(1) For You have a multitude of holy ones in the heavens and hosts of angels in Your holy abode to pr[aise] Your [truth]. The chosen ones of the holy people (2) You have established for Yourself in a [community. The nu]mber (or The b)ook) of the names of all their hosts is with You in Your holy dwelling, and the n[umber of the holy one]s is in the abode of Your glory” (1QM XII,1-2).⁶²

In conclusion, we can say that the spirituality of the Qumran community was based on the foundation revealed by God in the Torah of Moses. The laws and indications included in the Torah were applied to the current situation by the community, based on the revelation received by the Teacher of Righteousness. “The sons of light” pursued moral perfection through strict observance of the rules of Law, study of the Word of God, ritual ablutions and cult. In practical terms this involved breaking with sin, converting the heart to God and treading the path of fulfilling the commandments of God and laws of the community. This attitude guaranteed life in covenant with God.

The texts found in Qumran are religious in their nature and they express in different forms spirituality of the members of community (inner attitude toward God, external forms of piety, liturgical actions). The spiritual dimension of the *Yahad* should be viewed in its social context in which legal and scriptural piety was practiced.

The theme of expiation for the sins and offences of the members of Qumran community breaking the Law of God was visible in the spiritual attitude of the members of *Yahad*. As “the sons of light” they wanted to create an ideal community of Israel, thus preparing the earth for “the visitation of the Lord.” The spirituality of

⁶⁰ Lawrence, “Men of Perfect Holiness,” 83-100; Baumgarten, “The Law and Spirit,” 93-105.

⁶¹ See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 134.

⁶² See Wise – Abegg – Cook, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 158.

the members of the Qumran community was clearly separatist in its nature. This was reflected in isolation from the world, in passiveness towards acquisition of new members, as well as in identifying all non-members of the community with “the sons of darkness.”

All activities of the members of Qumran community like work, prayers, studies of holy texts, blessings, purification baths and ritual meals were rooted in the eschatological hope and God’s victory over Belial and all iniquities.

The spirituality of the Qumran community was based on dualistic cosmology in which there was a clear opposition between God and Belial, the spirit of the truth and the spirit of falsehood, “the sons of light” and “the sons of darkness.” The members of *Yahad* identified themselves with the forces of good which fought against the forces of evil for power over the world, in the belief that, in this regard, God would triumph over the Evil One.

The spiritual attitude of the community members is based on their eschatological expectations fulfilled at “the end of days.” They perceived their participation in the Final War on the side of God and His angels as the final victory in both an earthly and heavenly dimension. They believed, at the same time, in the coming of two messiahs – of a priestly family and of a royal family. Their arrival was to inaugurate the age of the victory of Israel over the ungodly. The heavenly glory, to be gained by the chosen, was understood as a continuation of the path which “the sons of light” started on earth in Qumran.

The manuscripts found in Qumran shed light on many eschatological texts of the Old Testament and Intertestamental Literature. The eschatological beliefs of the members of community living in the desert in the time of the emergence of Christianity enable us to see the parallels and differences to the teaching of Jesus and ancient Church.

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