

A Table Prepared in Wilderness: Pantries and Tables, Pure Food and Sacred Space at Qumran

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<i>Khirbet Qumran: A Farm for a Religious Community</i> .....	1
<i>Khirbet Qumran's Connection to the Dead Sea Scrolls</i> .....	3
<i>The Connection of Qumran and its Scrolls with the Essene Movement</i> .....	5
<i>Loci 89 and 114: Pantries at Khirbet Qumran</i> .....	7
<i>The Period <b>Ib and Period II</b> Dining Rooms and their Furnishings</i> .....	18
<i>Defining Sacred Space and Pure Space at Qumran</i> .....	35
<i>Food in the Sacred Space of Kh. Qumran</i> .....	41

*Khirbet Qumran: A Farm for a Religious Community*

All people need to eat, even Essenes. It has been emphasized by several participants in this conference that the site of Qumran was a farm, with no connection to a religious society.

However, the fact that there is sufficient archaeological evidence to show that the inhabitants of the sites of Khirbet Qumran and Ein Feshkha raised crops or tended sheep does not preclude the fact that the inhabitants were members of a Jewish, religious sect, such as the Essenes. On the contrary, the cultivation of date palms, grapevines, wheat and barley fields, and even the collection and processing of indigo or balsam, should be seen as an integral part of the daily tasks of such a group, as is also indicated by the ancient writers. Pliny describes the Essenes as living “among the date groves” (*Natural History* V.17.4). Josephus states that they arose in the morning and said “certain ancestral prayers ... and after these prayers their superiors dismiss them so that each man may attend to the work with which he is familiar” (*Wars* II.8.129). Whatever commodities the group produced, depended largely upon the local natural environment or their ability to import the raw food stuffs for processing within their own facilities. These agricultural products could be produced for their own consumption or used to barter for other commodities unavailable to them. The constant or occasional use of certain industrial facilities for processing

various seasonal crops including grapes and dates, barley, wheat and mustard is known from antiquity and should be included as part of the overall picture.

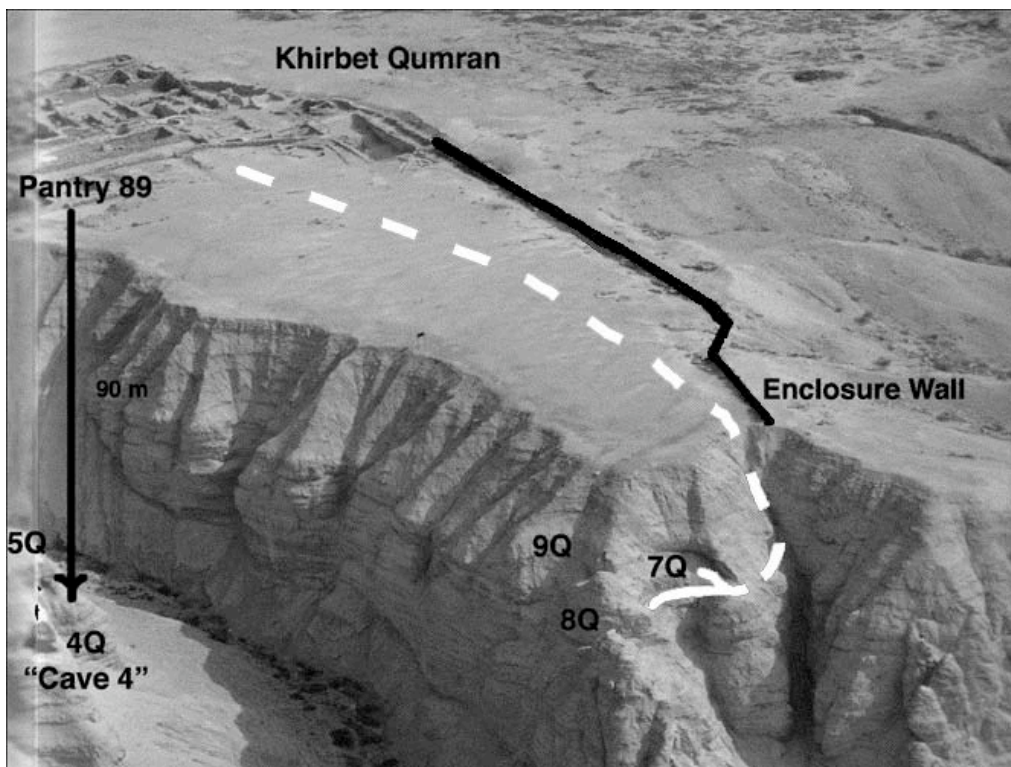
The archaeological data, limited in scope by the rare and chance survival of ancient materials at a site, contributes only a few pieces to the overall puzzle. Specialties such as paleobotany, geology, and ethnography on their own cannot fully reconstruct the life practices of ancient societies. Each specialist must have sufficient material from the site to arrive at a tentative conclusion, and in the end they must judge for themselves the degree of certainty they should apply to their overall conclusions. This is often best done by crosschecking their results against those of colleagues in their own field or of researchers in other specialties. Khirbet Qumran is a rare site in the ancient world where most remains have survived in a relatively superb state of preservation. For the natural scientist, the environment has undergone little change in the past two thousand years. For the archaeologist, the ruins of Qumran have survived with walls often standing above one's head and with a rich volume of material remains from all around the site. For the historian, the surviving literature about the beliefs and daily life of the Essenes is greater than that of other contemporary groups. For all of these specialists, some of the most important sources for understanding life at Qumran must be the nearly one thousand fragmentary manuscripts that were found in the caves connected with the site.

Temporarily focusing on one's own specialization by isolating one's research from other sources of data available from a site, whether literary, archaeological or other, can and, perhaps, should be done. However, this should be done only as a momentary task in order to scrutinize and crosscheck one's own against another's methods and conclusions. This form of reductionism should never be practiced as either a general or exclusive method, since it isolates and reduces what is perceived as valid data to one source while remaining ignorant of any other source.

Excluding other sources of information should only be done if it can be conclusively proven that they are unconnected or are irrelevant to the study.

### *Khirbet Qumran's Connection to the Dead Sea Scrolls*

Several times we have heard in this conference that not one of the scrolls, nor even a fragment of a scroll, was found at the site of Qumran itself. This was used as evidence that the scrolls were not to be seen as being connected with the site of Qumran. However absurd this suggestion might seem to most scholars, nevertheless, this challenge should not go unanswered. First of all, I would like to point out that scrolls were, in fact, discovered at the site of Qumran within the enclosure walls of the site itself. These scrolls were found in caves 7, 8 and 9, access to which was limited and protected by the enclosure walls of the original settlement. To gain access to these caves, one would have had to enter into the site or climb over the enclosure from outside.



I would like to add that if these caves, with their scrolls, are now included within the custody of Qumran's enclosure, then also all other caves within the marl terrace and certain of the caves in the cliffs should also be included as property of the Community (whether any number of these scrolls were brought in from other locations or not). Secondly, we should not expect to find any scrolls or scroll fragments within the main buildings of the site itself. All sacred scrolls in use at the main building would have been taken and responsibly hidden from an enemy incursion (and so they were in Cave 1 and other caves). Even worn out scrolls and scroll fragments would have been carefully interred in a *geniza*, as more than 17,000 scroll fragments from Caves 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 likely indicate. It would have been totally out of character for this group to leave even the tiniest fragment of a sacred scroll behind at an abandoned settlement. Thus, the ancient library from the Qumran caves should indeed be used as both a primary and secondary source for crosschecking research results and for integrating scientific work on the settlement and plateau, into a viable overall picture, and vice-versa.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The proposal made by N. Golb and others that the Dead Sea Scrolls, being nearly one thousand in number, were actually the last remnants of the great Temple library rescued from Jerusalem is not particularly helpful. To support this suggestion they would first need to provide a sensible explanation as to why such a large portion of the library was represented by documents which clearly condemn the present Temple leadership, the Pharisees and the Sadducees as being "Sons of Darkness" and of "the lot of Belial." At the same time they would have to explain the absence in the caves of Qumran of scrolls originating from the Pharisees and Sadducees. This thesis would lead one to believe that the Temple leadership appreciated reading the literature of their enemies and not their own literature!

### *The Connection of Qumran and its Scrolls with the Essene Movement*

The sectarian scrolls of the caves along with the archaeology of Qumran and other similar sites and cemeteries (e.g., Ein Feshkha, Ein Ghuweir, Beit Safafa and other sites near Jerusalem) bear witness to a pious group of Jews who: (1) lived during the period spanning the second century BCE until the first century CE; (2) lived in camps and towns headed by an overseer throughout Judea, including the area from Jerusalem and its surroundings down to the Dead Sea Coast; (3) had four divisions of participants which included both priests and laity; (4) were excellent farmers; (5) studied and kept scrolls; (6) were particularly concerned about issues of purity including food; and (7) linked ritual purification with the purity of one's actions and motivations. The ancient writers Philo of Alexandria, Flavius Josephus, Pliny the Elder, Hippolytus and Dio Chrysostom together provide a highly detailed account of approximately 145 paragraphs (of 8,485 words) on a group called (by outsiders) the "Essenes." Together, they say, that this group (1) lived during the period spanning the second century BCE until the first century CE; (2) lived in camps and towns headed by an overseer throughout Judea, including the area from Jerusalem and its surroundings down to the Dead Sea Coast; (3) had four divisions of participants which included both priests and laity; (4) were excellent farmers; (5) studied and kept scrolls; (6) were particularly concerned about issues of purity including food; and (7) linked ritual purification with the purity of one's actions and motivations.

The list of similarities can be elaborated at far greater length. In fact, there is estimated to be a 95%, item-for-item agreement on habitation, lifestyle and beliefs between the accounts of the ancient writers concerning the Essenes and the evidence derived from the Dead Sea Scrolls and the archaeology of the site of Qumran for the community that lived there.<sup>2</sup> The minor

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. T. Beall, *Josephus' Description of the Essenes Illustrated by the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Cambridge, 1988.

discrepancies are easily explainable.<sup>3</sup> That any ancient (or even modern) historian would be so detailed and still be so accurate should make the critic stand in awe.

Yet, despite this overwhelming agreement between the ancient writers, the sectarian scrolls and the archaeological data, there is a contemporary skeptical and almost cynical cadre who hold that no justifiable connection can be drawn between the Essenes and the contemporary population that lived at Qumran and produced the sectarian scrolls. They hold that there were two peoples—one being the more than four thousand Essenes, of whom we have extensive historical descriptions (and who just happened to have similar beliefs and customs to those of the community of Qumran and the scrolls, and who also just happened to live at the same time and in the same region and thus in the same “towns” as that community). The skeptics further assert that the existence of the other group (that is, the pious Community represented in the Dead Sea Scrolls and at Qumran with substantial, widespread and well-documented remains from the same period of time and region inhabited by Essenes), was unknown to, or overlooked by, all of the ancient writers.

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<sup>3</sup> The few minor differences between the historical sources and the Qumran evidence can be explained as historical errors or scribal errors. The small number of surprising finds including cosmetic, spindle whorls and other finds that have recently been excavated in unstratified deposits, most likely came from one of the five or six non-Essene phases of occupation at the site. The few differences in doctrine or practice observed between the ancient writers and the Qumran Community’s literature or material culture at the site, are in most cases also observable between the writers and even between the various sections written by the writer himself. These differences become understandable once one takes into account the differences among the varied sectors of Essene society and the fact that practices among religious groups tend to evolve over centuries and even decades of history. Cf. J. Collins, “Dead Sea Scrolls: J. History of the Community” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Doubleday, 1999.

The result of this hypothesis would mean that, if the community at Qumran was not Essene in character, then not a single stone, manuscript or artifact has been excavated that actually derives from them. In fact, outside of the descriptions by the ancient writers, there is no physical evidence for the existence of the Essenes!

The burden of proof for the unfortunate separation of the Essenes from the Community at Qumran lies with the skeptics. They must explain the vast incongruities in their argument with more compelling evidence than has heretofore been proposed. And accordingly, it is not incumbent upon the vast majority of scholarship to continue its research as though the identity of the group is totally unknown, due to the amazingly few apparent, and yet explainable, incongruities that exist when witnesses are compared.

For the sake of our study we will explore the question at hand with the admitted assumption or acceptance of the argument that the community that lived at Qumran, and produced the sectarian documents, also represented at least one facet of the movement known as “the Essenes.”

#### *Loci 89 and 114: Pantries at Khirbet Qumran*

All people need to eat. However, an understanding of ritual and practice in community meals can only be arrived at by carefully interrelating all the data that is available to us. This includes natural history, archaeology, the ancient histories, ethnography and the scrolls of Qumran themselves.

Toward the end of the third season of excavation at the site of Khirbet Qumran, on March 21, 1954, Roland de Vaux and his team had excavated approximately three-fifths of the site and had already unearthed and registered 869 pottery vessels. On the next day, de Vaux refocused his attention on a room adjoining what was then the largest room at the site (locus 77). The southern

half of that room (**locus 89**) was partitioned by a thick wall. That day, the total number of vessels excavated from the site would more than double. De Vaux recorded in his field notes:

22/3/54. The entire room was full of pottery: at least 1,000 pieces grouped according to category and stacked: to the east, bowls; close to the pillar, plates; to the west, terrines, jars and jugs. The small wall that separates loci 87 and 89 was also resting on the plastered floor. We could enter into loci 89 and 87 by a door at the western end of the wall. There were certainly two levels in the locus: that of the plastered floor and small wall, which contained the pottery items, and that which is higher, with a door towards the south at the southeast corner.<sup>4</sup>

The locus and its pottery took more than nine days to excavate, define, clean and photograph. De

Vaux recorded:

30/3/54. We began removal of the goblets: then, in the days following, the progressive removal of the other groups of ceramics.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> R. de Vaux, *The Excavations of Khirbet Qumran and Ain Feshkha, English Edition*, Vol. 1B (hereafter *EKQAF 1B*), translated and revised by S. J. Pfann, Göttingen, 2003: 41.

<sup>5</sup> De Vaux 2003: 38.



Locus 89; Photo 339 in R. de Vaux, J.-B. Humbert and A. Chambon, *Fouilles de Khirbet Qumran and Ain Feshkha*, Vol. 1

The discovery of a “pantry” in locus 89 at Khirbet Qumran provided archaeologists with a first-hand look at the meal vessels (or tableware) of the community from Period 1b.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. R. de Vaux, “Fouilles de Khirbet Qumrân: Rapport préliminaire sur les 3e, 4e, et 5e campagnes,” *RB* 63, 1956: 533-77, 554-5 and fig 2.

The English term “pantry” seems to have been first applied to the locus by John Strugnell who used the term in his English translation of J. T. Milik’s, *Dix ans de découvertes dans le désert de Juda*; see, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judea*, London: 1959: 49.

The English term “pantry” means, according to the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*: (1) A room or closet in which food, groceries, and other provisions, silverware, dishes, etc., is kept. (2) A room between the kitchen and dining room in which food is arranged for serving, glassware and dishes are stored etc. (3) A shelter or other place where food is dispensed to the needy either as groceries or as meals. It is questionable whether any of these definitions applies precisely here. Food, at least wine, was stored here, and tableware, serving vessels and certain storage vessels were kept here, all of which were intended for dispensing food (to the “poor” no less!).

Whatever the case, as anachronistic or lacking precision as the word might be, nonetheless for our present purposes,

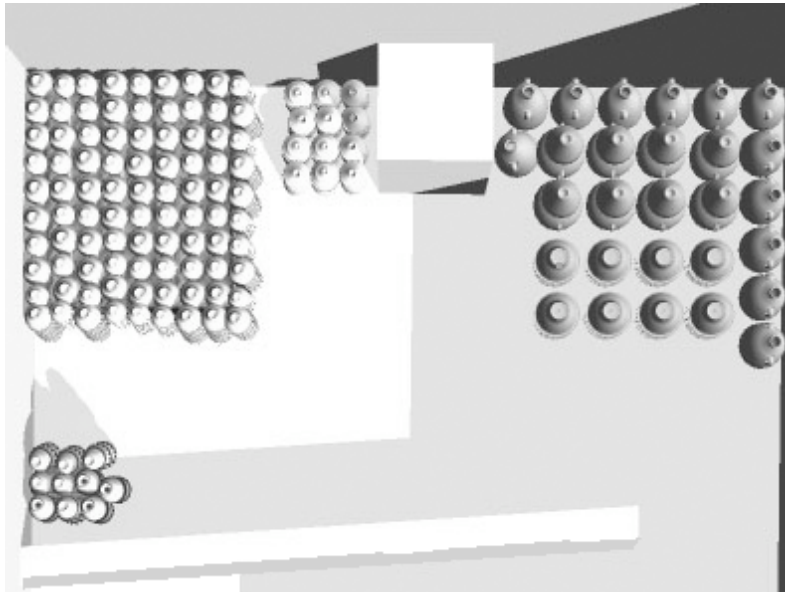
As stressed by de Vaux, in his description of locus 89, the locus should not be viewed as a storage room for general pottery since several pottery forms (including **cooking pots**, various storage jars and lids) are missing from the locus.<sup>7</sup> The fact that the vast majority of the vessels are classified as tableware and serving vessels for meals, coupled with the fact that extraordinary quantities of each pottery form were found, led him to believe that this assemblage served the needs of a large community (and not that of a family or even an expanded family). The assemblage of more than 1,000 pottery items was made up of bowls, plates, cups, terrines, jugs, ovoid storage jars and bag shaped storage jars.

Since the vessels were found segregated by form and set in neatly stacked rows, it would lead one to believe that the arrangement of this repertoire might in some way reflect the key elements used in the community meals, including what de Vaux termed the “table service” and serving vessels.

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the term “pantry” is more useful than a term like “pottery store” which would include several other pottery items not directly related to the meal service. The term “pantry” will be used here but with these reservations.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. R. de Vaux, *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Oxford, 1973: 12. There he also stated that the tableware were likely used in connection with the meal room for regular meals as well as for pilgrimage feasts (e.g., at the Yearly Renewal Ceremony).



Locus 89; artist's reconstruction of pottery in situ, viewed from above. Illustration credit: Stephen Pfann, Jr.

The contents of Pantry 89 included:

Tableware. These comprise the vast majority of the vessels and were represented by bowls, plates and cups. It is each of these forms that was uniformly stacked upside down in rows within neatly segregated areas as follows:<sup>8</sup>

**Bowls (SE corner of locus): 90 stacks of 8 each (720 bowls)<sup>9</sup>**

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<sup>8</sup> The practice of stacking vessels upside down may have been done in order to avoid the danger of dead vermin falling into them, which would have rendered any ceramic vessel unclean according to Lev. 11:32-34, esp. vs. 33, "And if any of them [i.e., dead vermin] falls into any earthen vessel, all that is in it shall be unclean, and you shall break it."

<sup>9</sup> De Vaux 1956: 542, where de Vaux's states that the bowls were found "étaient disposés en carré par piles d'une douzaine" which could be translated literally "stacked upside down in stacks by the dozen." This number is still far from exact. With the final count of 720 bowls, the ninety stacks of bowls (visible in Photo 339 above and Photo 338 below) should actually be understood to be in stacks of eight. If the bowls had been in stacks of twelve, on their own, the ninety stacks would have contained 900 to 1,080 bowls (in addition to the rest of the pottery forms from that locus)! De Vaux's field notes and typed notes do not specify any given number per stack.

Plates or dipping dishes (along S wall of locus between pilaster and bowls): 12 stacks of 17 or 13 stacks of 16 (ca. 208 plates—actually 209).

Cups (NE corner of locus): 10 stacks of 8 (ca. 80 cups—actually 81)

Serving vessels:

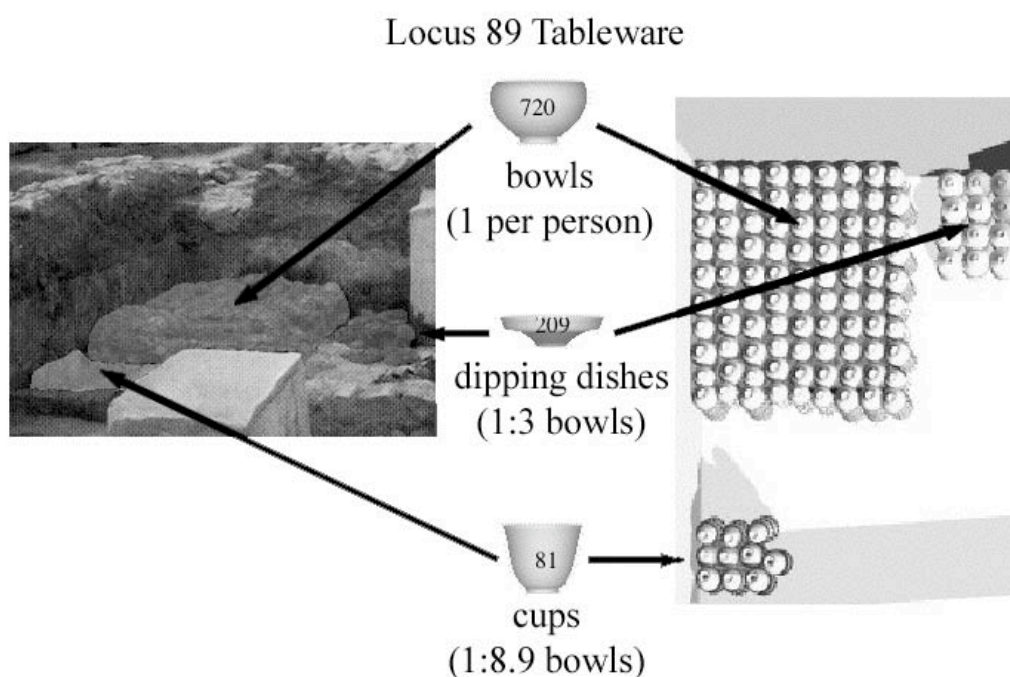
Terrines (W sector of locus set in two E-W rows): 10 stacks of ca. 4 (actually 38)<sup>10</sup>

Jugs (W sector of locus): 11<sup>11</sup>

Storage vessels:

Ovoid jars (W sector of locus, N of a row of bag-shaped storage jars against the south wall): 8

Bag-shaped jars (W sector of locus, likely leaning against the S and W walls): 13



The enumeration of tableware from Locus 89.

<sup>10</sup> The capacity of the terrines from locus 89 (volume = ca. 612.8 cc) is approximately 10 bowls full (at ca. 61.0 cc each).

<sup>11</sup> The average volume of the jugs from locus 89 (ca. 473.7 cc) is the equivalent of approximately 10 cups full (at ca. 45.7 cc each).

The numbers and percentages of vessels within locus 89 might be understood to be random and dependent, to a large extent, upon the survival rate of the various vessels. However, it is the present researcher's conclusion that a second, similar but distinct "pantry" can now be identified at Qumran in locus 114. The pottery types and the ratios and percentages of each type in this locus are similar, in almost all respects, to those of locus 89.

De Vaux's field notes contain the following description of locus 114:

*22/3/55.* We descended in the fill. The upper rim of the cistern appeared. In the northwest corner several pottery forms and many potsherds appeared.

*23/3/55.* In the northwest corner, under the potsherds from yesterday, we discovered a deposit of pottery: stacks of plates, etc. We must decide if the deposit is contemporary with the first circular cistern or with our major Period 1b.

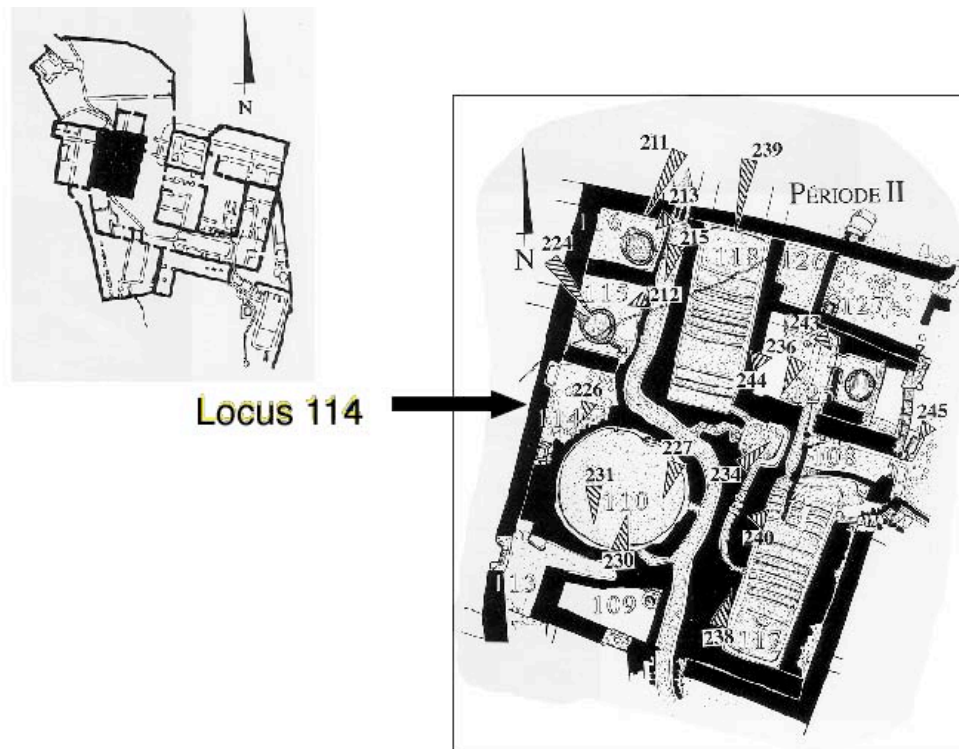
*24/3/55.* We cleaned the deposit of pottery. The forms fit Period 1b, but are more varied than that of the large deposit of 1954 in locus 89.

*27/3/55.* We removed the pottery.

*28/3/55.* We completed removal of the pottery. Beneath was an iron pick with the remains of its wooden handle. Leaving a part of the floor as evidence, we quickly reached the virgin soil.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *EKQAFIB*, 2003: 50.



The location of locus 114.

De Vaux ultimately concluded that the pottery of locus 114 was later than that of locus 89 and should be associated with the Period 2 community. This was due to the fact that the repertoire from locus 114 included certain vessel types which exhibited formal developments typical of the later period including, in particular, three first-century C.E. “Herodian” bow-spouted lamps collected from the same locus.<sup>13</sup>

The following is a summary of the pottery forms of loc. 114:

Tableware. Each form was segregated in upside-down stacks:<sup>14</sup>

Bowls (east and center of locus): 127

<sup>13</sup> Catalog no. KhQ2579; cf. *RB* 63, 554-5 and fig. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. R. de Vaux, J.-B. Humbert and A. Chambon, *Fouilles de Khirbet Qumran et de Ain Feshkhah*, Vol. 1 (hereafter *FKQAF I*) Göttingen, 1994: photos 222 (note bowls stacked upside down at top of photo) and 223 (note plates stacked upside down at top of photo with toppled stack of cups immediately in front of them).

Plates or dipping dishes (stacked along western wall): 38

Cups (stacked just to the east of plates): 13

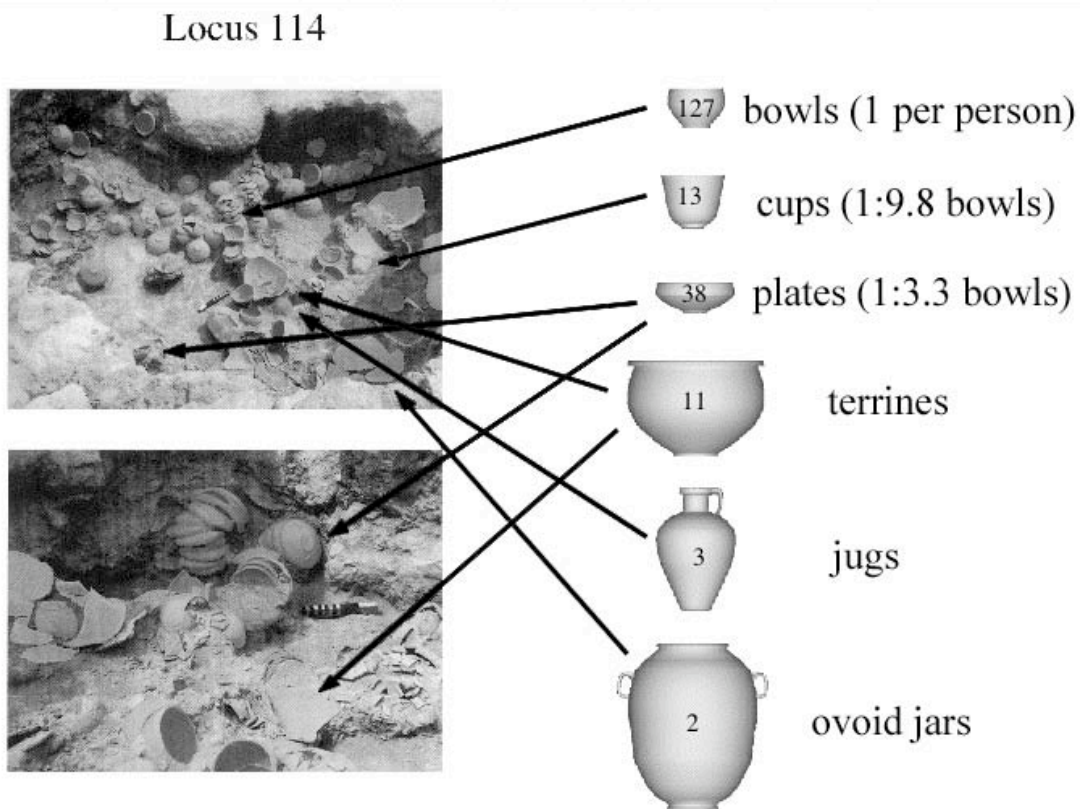
Serving vessels:

Terrines: 11

Jugs: 3

Storage vessels:

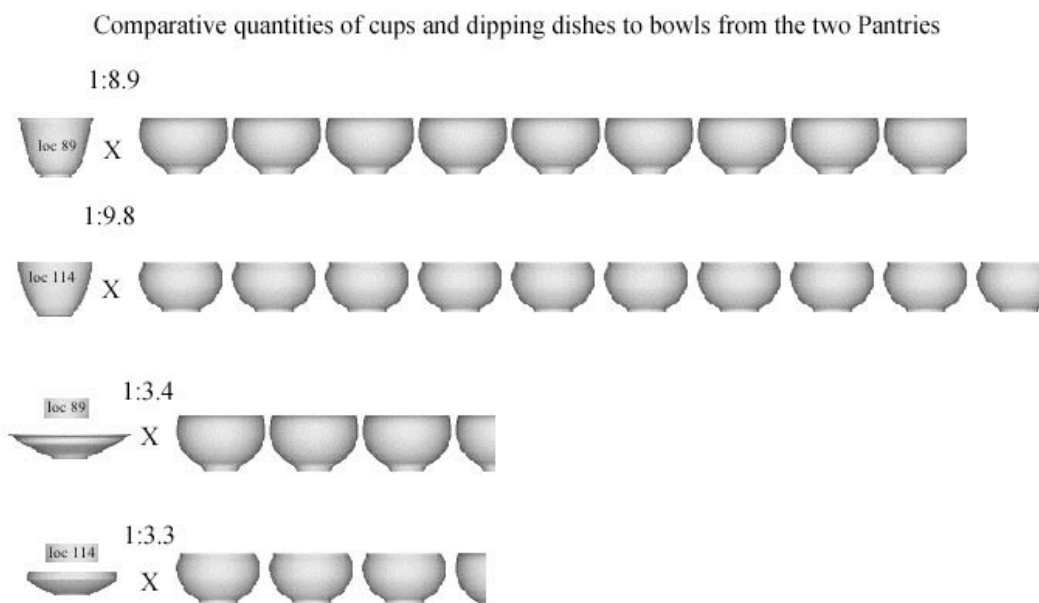
Ovoid jars: 2



The enumeration of tableware from Locus 114.

The comparison of the two loci or “pantries” must be carried out on the basis of the frequency (or ratio) of each vessel type within each locus and not of the actual quantities. (The actual quantities

of pottery in each pantry differ by a factor of about 6 to 1).<sup>15</sup> The vessel chosen as the basis for comparison in each locus is the bowl since (1) it is the most abundant and (2) each bowl likely represents one participant.<sup>16</sup>



One eating bowl for each participant

Period 1b (loc. 89): hemispherical, white-slipped. 720 bowls.<sup>17</sup> Ratio = 1:1

Period 2 (loc. 114): hemispherical, white-slipped.<sup>18</sup> 127 bowls. Ratio = 1:1

<sup>15</sup> The reason for the drop in numbers of vessels between Periods **I and II** may have to do with a change in the demographics during these two periods.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Josephus, *Wars* II.8.130: “When they are quietly seated, the baker serves out the loaves of bread in order, and the cook serves a single bowl of only one course to each participant.”

<sup>17</sup> Cf. de Vaux 1956: 554-5 and figs. 2:3, 11 and 12, and more precisely according to the Objects Catalogs, KhQ1545-1555 (11 pieces) and 1587 (709 pieces).

The frequencies are as follows:

One cup for every 9 or 10 participants

Period 1b: ring base, white-slipped. 81 cups.<sup>19</sup> Ratio (cups to bowls) = 1:8.9

Period 2: generally with a disc base. 13 cups.<sup>20</sup> Ratio = 1:9.8

One dipping dish for every 3 or 4 participants

Period 1b: shallow, everted rim, white-slipped. 209 dishes.<sup>21</sup> Ratio (dishes to bowls) = 1:3.4

Period 2: shallow, upturned or slightly inverted rim, white-slipped. 38 dishes.<sup>22</sup> Ratio = 1:3.3

The above statistics seem to imply that, at least at meal times, the community was subdivided into groups of ten. This is implied by the limit of one communal cup for each group of 9 or 10 participants (as indicated by the bowls). This is also supported by the literary evidence treated below.

The fact that 85% of the vessels from both pantries sported whitened surfaces (whether achieved by a slip or by firing) may indicate that generally, at least for this community, the color was intended to indicate the special use or purity of such vessels at the site (more than 71% of the pottery census within the entire main building<sup>23</sup> had whitened surfaces). It should also be noted

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. de Vaux 1956: 558-9 and figs. 4:1, 4, 6, 9 and 12, and in the Objects Catalogs, KhQ2591 (11 pieces), 2583 (57 pieces), 2582 (21 pieces), 2600 (4 pieces) and 2581 (28 pieces). Add to these KhQ2513, 2514, 2516, 2601, 2602 and 2652 (one piece each).

<sup>19</sup> De Vaux 1956: 554-5 and figs. 2:8 and 9. Objects Catalogs KhQ1587 (75 pieces) and 1545-1555 (11 pieces).

<sup>20</sup> De Vaux 1956: 558-9 and figs. 4:10, 13 and 16. Objects Catalogs KhQ2580 (7 pieces), 2593, 2594, 2515, 2523, 2592 and 2606 (one piece each).

<sup>21</sup> De Vaux 1956: 554-5 and figs. 2:6 and 7. Objects Catalogs KhQ1591 (204 pieces) and 1540-1544 (5 pieces).

<sup>22</sup> De Vaux 1956: 558-9 and figs. 4:5 and 7. Objects Catalogs KhQ2576 (8 pieces) and 2577 (30 pieces).

<sup>23</sup> "Main building" is intended to denote all loci except those of dumps and outer enclosures.

that these tablewares (including communal cups, dipping dishes, and eating bowls), although not unknown in other sites in Judea (e.g. Jerusalem and Jericho), just the same, are not found in such large concentrations elsewhere. The 1,260 pottery vessels derived from pantries 89 and 114 represent 57% of the catalogued pottery vessels of the main building (2,205 vessels in all).

### *The Period **Ib and Period II** Dining Rooms and their Furnishings*

In the middle of his third (1954) season of excavation Roland de Vaux found himself excavating what he considered to be the largest room at the site (locus 77). By the end of that season, with the discovery of a water conduit in locus 77 for washing the floor and the excavation of the annexed room and pantry to the southwest (loci 86, 87 and 89), it was apparent that the two rooms formed not just a meeting room but a dining complex for large numbers of people.<sup>24</sup>

Although the large “pantry” was discovered, no evidence of the furnishings of the two rooms was thought to have been preserved. However, I would like to propose again a reconstruction I made previously, that not all evidence of the furnishings was lost.<sup>25</sup>

On the tenth of March in locus 77 there appeared a rectangular **engaged pillar or pilaster (de Vaux)**, of mud brick and plaster attached to the middle of the eastern wall of the locus and then a similar-built, freestanding pillar about two meters to the west. During the next nineteen days he

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<sup>24</sup> De Vaux 1973: 11.

<sup>25</sup> S. Pfann, “The Messianic Banquets of Qumran and Jesus: A Comparison,” in *Biblical Theology and the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Jubilee Celebration*. (The Second Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins, November 9-12, 1997; in press), and Pfann, “The Multifaceted Stratigraphy of Khirbet Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” ASOR Annual Meeting, Qumran Section (James Charlesworth and Sidnie White Crawford, Chairpersons) November, 1997; Napa, California; in press. Preliminary publication in 1998 on the web site: [www.uhl.ac](http://www.uhl.ac)

sought more pillars, uncovering two additional ones in close succession, following the line of the central axis of the room. De Vaux was surprised to see that this succession did not continue beyond the middle of the room, which would be expected if the pillars were used to support the roof. He ascertained that since the pillars were built upon the original plastered floor of Period Ib, they were to be associated with the Period II settlement (24/3/54).

De Vaux offered the following record of the excavation of locus 77 in his field notebooks.

9/3/54. We undertook to excavate the large room, locus 77, situated to the south of loci 54, 55 and 57. It had not been divided by partition walls. The walls were plastered. A well-built door leads to locus 54. We collected curved plastered elements, which may be from the corners of the door. It is the largest room of the *khirbeh*. The floor remains uncertain.

10/3/54. We reached a plastered floor which was for the most part destroyed. Against the eastern wall, near the middle, we located the traces of the setting of a rectangular pilaster made from bricks and then plastered. More to the west, on the axis of the room, were traces of a rectangular pillar, with a heap of collapsed bricks around it. The various pieces of rounded plaster found yesterday must have come from the corners of such a pillar.

11/3/54. We proceeded with the excavation.

13/3/54. We progressed slowly. We found no trace of the second pillar, which we expected after the first, towards the middle of the room. At this height, against the north wall: the remains of an oven?

14/3/54. We proceeded with the excavation.

15/3/54. Excavation of the locus was concluded. At a small distance to the west of the first pillar were traces of a second but we were not yet in the middle of the room and there was nothing beyond it. Towards the western end, close to the south wall, was a circle paved with large stone slabs. We excavated the stairs which descend into the room from

locus 54; we counted five steps. Immediately to the west of these stairs in the northwest corner of the room were two lines of stones with some ash: perhaps a hearth? This construction, like the oven against the north wall, appears subsequent to the destruction of the building. In any event, there were only two levels here. Is this room from period I or II? In this latter case, the rudimentary channel which runs along the exterior of the south wall would be from period III.

*16/3/54.* Cleaning of the “oven” built against the north wall towards the middle. It is certain that it was subsequent to the destruction of the room: some ashes and burnt wood pass under it up to the plastered facing of the wall. But what is it? The material was evidently made of the fire-proof clay, but the structure is not round. We noticed pieces of two corners, as well as a curved part. Could this be a potter’s kiln? We cannot see how it functioned. However, two or three wasters were found nearby.

*18/3/54.* See locus 86.

*23/3/54.* A sounding around the circle of stones revealed that there was, under the plaster, another floor surface deeper down, then ashes and finally virgin soil. In the ashes, we only collected some potsherds from the Iron II. The layer of ashes passes under the south wall of 77.

*24/3/54.* We made a trench in the northeast corner in order to follow the lower plastered surface. Around 6 m. from the northeast corner, there was a displacement of the level. During period II, there was a step ascending towards the west. Thus, the brick pillars are clearly from period II.

*25/3/54.* We continued the trench towards the west finding again the vestiges of both levels along the wall. The plaster of the lower level was poorly preserved, yet was still better than that of the upper level.

*28/3/54.* We began to remove the upper floor.

*29/3/54.* While taking out floor II, we uncovered an intermediate pillar associated with the

step descending towards the east. The three pillars and the pilaster of the eastern wall are made of unbaked bricks, founded directly upon the plaster of period I. They were subsequently strengthened around the base by gravel and the plastering of the floor. They are from period II. In the south wall, we distinguished a door from period I, which was closed during period II. We need to find out into what it opened. It is not likely that it opened to the exterior.<sup>26</sup>



Locus 89, Photo 338

In the attached room to the south, locus 86/89, de Vaux made a similar find to that of the pillars in locus 77: a pilaster at midpoint on the far wall of locus 86/89 and a second pillar midpoint in the room each built of similar construction to those of locus 77 but were built into the foundation of the floor of Period 1b. The suggestion that these two **pillars** acted as a support or anchoring point for a central roof beam was proven to be impossible. In such a case, another pilaster would

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<sup>26</sup> *EKQAF* 2003: 41.

have been expected in the wall opposite the first pilaster, in line with the central pillar, to lend support to a central roof beam. Instead, a doorway was in line with the two pillars that would, instead, have weakened the support.

De Vaux offered the following record of the excavation and explanation of the levels of locus 86 in his field notebooks.<sup>27</sup>

*16/3/54.* New locus to the southwest of room 77. We removed a layer with much ashes, finding pottery items *in situ* against the south wall. This wall contains a pillar of plastered bricks belonging to the preceding level. Finally, the room was cut through by the poorly-made channel which runs along locus 77 on the south. The entire puzzle became clear as follows.

Period I. Construction of loci 77 and 86-87-89, the three last forming a single room.<sup>28</sup>

Period II. Restoration of locus 77. Locus 86 was separated by a wall which incorporated the pillar of the preceding period.<sup>29</sup>

Period III. Modification of the structures by a poorly-made channel which skirted the southwest corner of locus 77, cut through room 86 and continued east, along locus 77.

Farther up, it had traversed diagonally locus 81.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *EKQAF* 2003: 40.

<sup>28</sup> During Period 1b the cobbled area south of locus 77 (i.e., loci 90, 93, 94, and 98) should be considered to have been an exterior component to the complex, since this area had its most direct access to that locus. It should perhaps be viewed as an area for overflow crowds or for those who were considered unfit to enter the main building. Pantry 89 belongs to this period.

<sup>29</sup> The dining complex of this period was limited to loci 77 and 86, with access to other loci of the earlier period being blocked (including the exterior “overflow” area.) Pantry 114 would have been associated with this complex but at the end of the period was hidden away (from the hands of the approaching army?).

<sup>30</sup> The “ovens” and other installations of locus 77 also belong to Period III.

De Vaux offered the following record of the excavation of locus 89 in his field notebooks.

*16/3/54.* New locus south of locus 87.

*17/3/54.* Against the south wall we encountered a half-pilaster corresponding to the pillar imbedded in the wall between loci 87 and 86.<sup>31</sup>

Clearly the pillars did not serve as roof supports, but their purpose must have suited the function of the room itself. The similarities between the pillar complexes of loci 86/89 and 77 are striking, which de Vaux assigned to two successive Periods, **Ib and II**. (1) The line of pillars of both loci begin with an engaged pillar (or pilaster) attached to the middle of the narrow wall furthest from the entrance to the room. (2) Additional pillars were added in a line extending to the midpoint of the room between the pilaster and the entryway (loc. 77: 3 pillars; loc. 86/89: 1 pillar). (3) In both periods, a low partition wall was built parallel to the back wall (with the pilaster), each about 2.4 meters away and with an opening on the right facing the back wall (visible in photos 319, 329, 331, 336–340). (4) The pillars of each period were built of mud brick and covered with a thick layer of plaster with approximately the same dimensions and were preserved to less than a meter high.

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<sup>31</sup> *EKQAF* 2003: 41.



Could the strange pillars of the dining rooms actually be table supports?

*The Period 1b and Period 2 Dining Rooms*

Left: The Period 1b dining room (locus 86/89+77); Right: The Period 2 dining room (locus 77)

In the context of a pantry and dining room, it would be prudent to seek a functional role for these pillars which were in use during Period 1b (locus 86/89) and Period 2 (locus 77). (Locus 86/89 was buried subsequent to the destruction of the site by a supposed earthquake in *ca.* 31 BCE). In each case, the pillars could have functioned as supports for a single table or more, as might be expected in a dining room. If the pillars functioned as table supports, then three options present themselves: (1) each pillar would have been plastered on its top and served as a table on its own.<sup>32</sup> (2) Each pillar served as a support for a tabletop (illustrated below). (3) Each set of pilaster and pillars supported a single extended tabletop (illustrated below). (4) A combination of

<sup>32</sup> J.-B. Humbert, "L'espace sacré à Qumrân. Propositions pour l'archéologie," *RB* 101-2, 1994:199-201. Humbert proposed that the so-called "pillars" were actually altars ("autels") for use of libations and meal offerings.

the last two where the table in each case remains outside the preparation area, defined by the low wall. (locus 89 would follow option 2 and locus 77 a single tabletop spanning the three pillars alone (not illustrated).

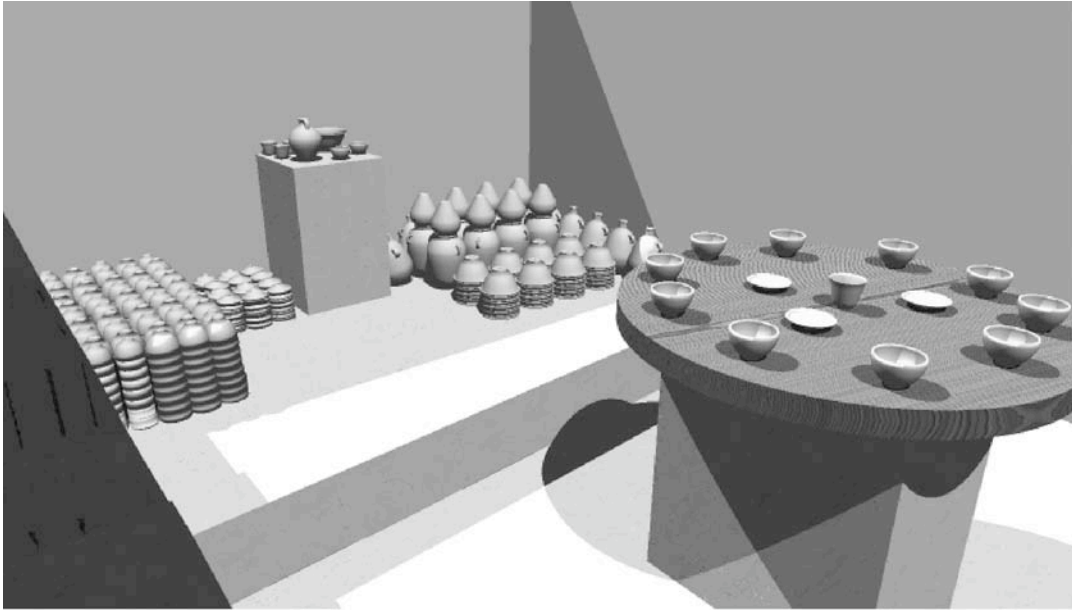
Option (1) is problematic since the upper surface of each pillar is relatively small in comparison with the task of serving a large number of participants (as the pottery cache indicates). Option (2) might be supported by an apparent round “shadow” of charred remains visible next to the pillar of locus 86/89 that might suggest itself to be the remains of a round, wooden tabletop which surmounted the free-standing pillar (cf. photos 338 and 331). Option (3) is credible if one considers that the literature surrounding cultic meals often reflect a single communal table. Although this would have demanded the provision of unusually large wooden or plastered tabletops for the period, it still would be feasible, especially if mortise and tenon construction were used.

Within any of the above scenarios, the low wall would have served as a partition (perhaps with a curtain extending from the ceiling above), which would have separated the food preparation area from the area where the food was served. In the case of locus 89, the pantry stood behind this wall in the food preparation area.

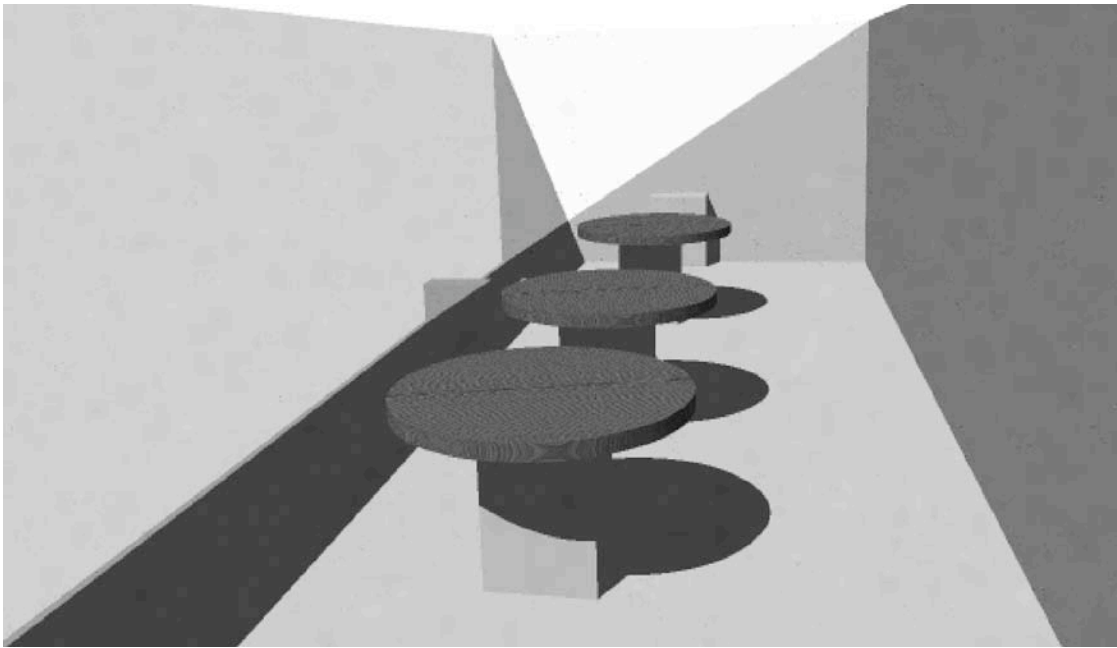
*Artist's Reconstructions of Options 1 and 2 for Each Period.*<sup>33</sup>

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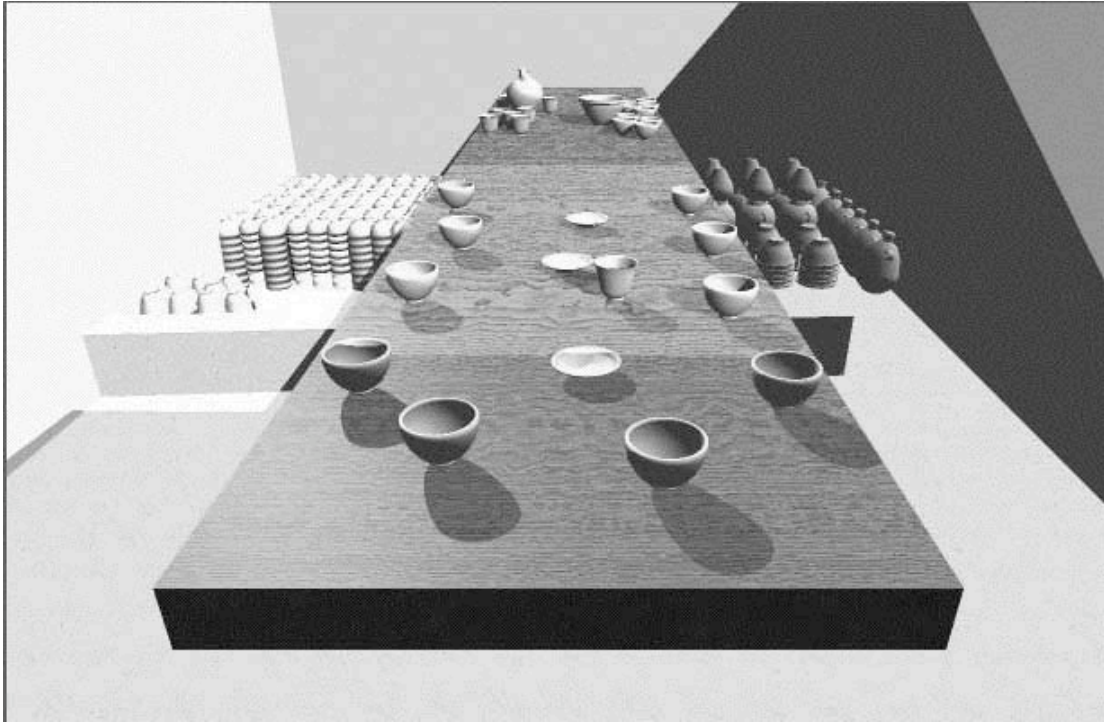
<sup>33</sup> Isometric reconstructions by Stephen J. Pfann, Jr.



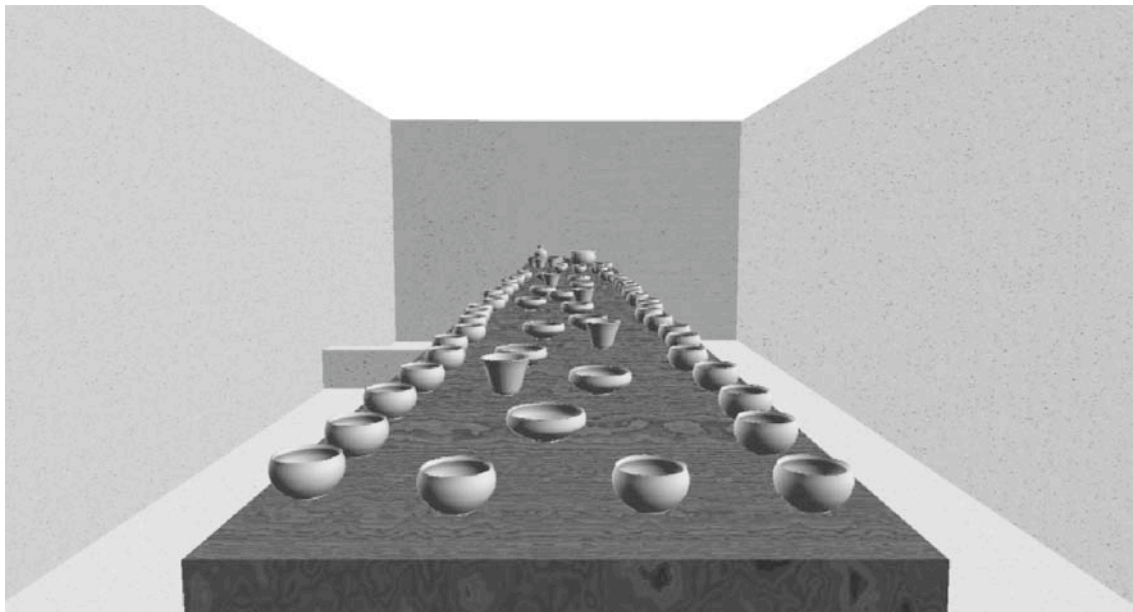
Locus 86/89 with Round Table



Locus 77 with Round Tables



Locus 86/89 with Long Table



Locus 77 with Long Table

### *Dining Practices at Khirbet Qumran Based on the Archaeological and Literary Evidence*

Rather than belaboring the question of the identity of the Qumran community, I would, at this point, like to use the group's own literature, the Dead Sea Scrolls, found associated with the site itself, as a primary source. The information on the Essenes from Philo and Josephus are utilized only as secondary sources for presenting a sensible reconstruction of the communal meals which once took place relative to the rooms and pantries of the site of Qumran.

It was posited above that, based upon a statistical analysis of the various pieces of tableware associated with each of the two “pantries,” the ratio of bowls to cups indicated that the meal participants were seated in groups of ten. This is also supported by the primary literature of the group. (1) In the Dead Sea Scrolls, the annual census includes arranging and ranking the membership in groups of “thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens” (CD 13:1; 1QS 2:21; 1QSa I.14-15).<sup>34</sup> (2) At all assemblies, including the communal meals, the divisions, each with a leader, were to be organized in groups of “thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens” (1QSa I.27-II.3). *The*

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<sup>34</sup> Similarly in the Synoptic Gospels, at the Feeding of the Five Thousand, the disciples were directed to seat the people in groups of “hundred and fifties,” although the divisions of “thousands” and “tens” are not mentioned (Mark 6:40).

*Rule of the Congregation* (1QSa)<sup>35</sup> specifically states that the meals would take place “where ever ten are gathered” (1QSa II.22).<sup>36</sup> These divisions evidently were intended to reflect the divisions of the Israelites in the wilderness under Moses: “So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and experienced men, and set them as heads over you, commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, commanders of tens, and officers, throughout your tribes” (Deut 1:15).

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<sup>35</sup> The Rule of the Congregation (1QSa) begins with the statement: “This is the rule for all the congregation of Israel in the last days,” which might at first seem to indicate that it was a rule book to be utilized only during a future eschatological period. However, in the mind of the community, the “last days” had already begun: 4Q398 MMT 11-13:4 (C21) “Now this is the Last Days: when all those of Isra[el] shall return forever.” The “last days” was the period preceding the coming of the Messiah and his eternal kingdom and was the period in which the community was currently living. Thus, the guidelines for the community meal given in 1QSa, and in abbreviated form in 1QS 6:4-6, should be taken as the current practice required for the community meal. For an overview of the Essene’s schematization of history, see S. Pfann, “Historical Implications of the Early Second Century Dating of the 4Q249–250 Cryptic A Corpus,” in Esther G. Chazon, David Satran, and Ruth A. Clements, eds., *Things Revealed: Studies in Early Jewish and Christian Literature in Honor of Michael E. Stone*, JSJSup 89, Leiden: Brill, 2004: 171-86.

<sup>36</sup> In Rabbinic **practice**, a quorum of ten men was necessary for religious events. However, the further divisions of thousands, hundred and fifties was not. In the New Testament, at the “Last Supper” a single cup was shared among at least thirteen individuals (Mark 14:23), as was also commemorated by the Christians of the first century (1 Cor. 11:26).

## Rule of the Congregation

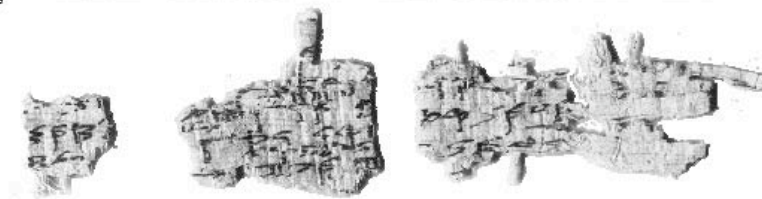
1QSerekh HaEdah

c100 BCE



4QSerekh HaEdah<sup>e</sup>

175 BCE



### 1. Preparation of the participants for the meal.

The participants in the two daily meals of the community at Qumran were restricted to full members who were between the ages of 20 and 60 and who were not physically impaired. The participants, as in all assemblies, entered the meal room in order: the priests with the high priest at the lead, followed by the Israelites headed by the “Anointed (or Messiah) of Israel” (1QSa II.11-17).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The appearance at each meal of an “anointed one of Israel,” i.e., an actual lay member of the community who officiated at the meal alongside an “anointed of Aaron,” i.e., a priestly member, took place in every community meal. Neither of these individuals was to be mistaken with the coming “messiah” or “messiahs”, although these meals may have prefigured a future messianic banquet. By extension, it is affirmed that such an anointed representative will participate “at every me[al], where at least ten me[n are ga]thered together” (1QSa II.22 and 1QS 6:4-6).

According to Josephus, the Essene communal meals took place twice a day: at the beginning of the “fifth hour” (i.e., the beginning of the second watch of daylight) and at sunset. In each case the participants immersed themselves, changed from work clothes to sacred garments, and entered a special “sacred” room for the meal.

Then, after working without interruption until the fifth hour [11:00 am], they reassemble in the same place and, girded with linen loincloths, bathe themselves thus in cold water. After this purification they assemble in a special building to which no one is admitted who is not of the same faith; they themselves only enter the refectory if they are pure, as though into a holy precinct. (Josephus, *Wars* II.18.129)

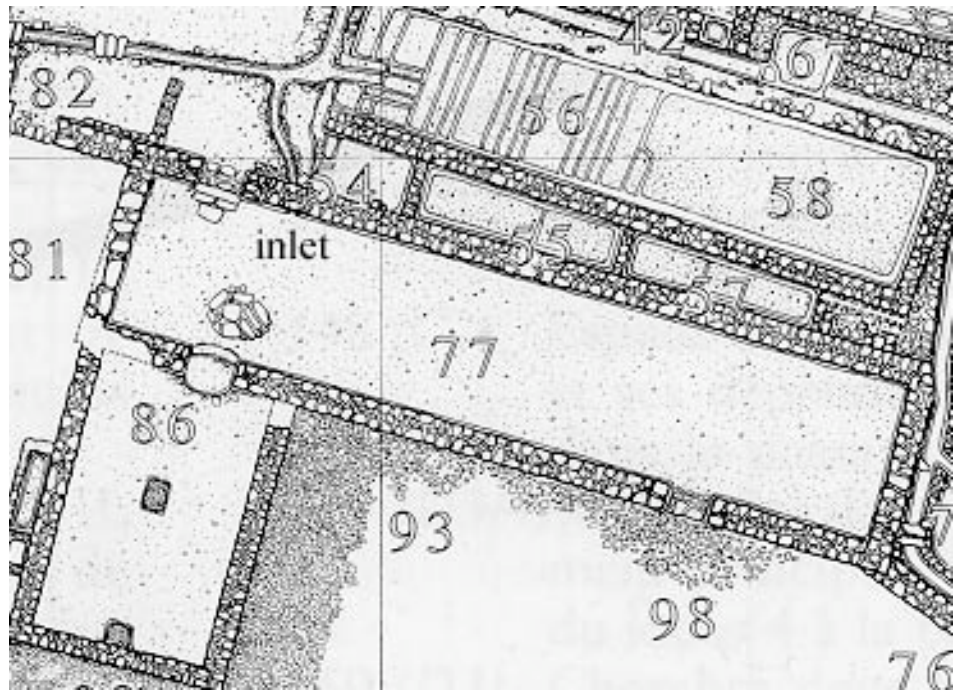
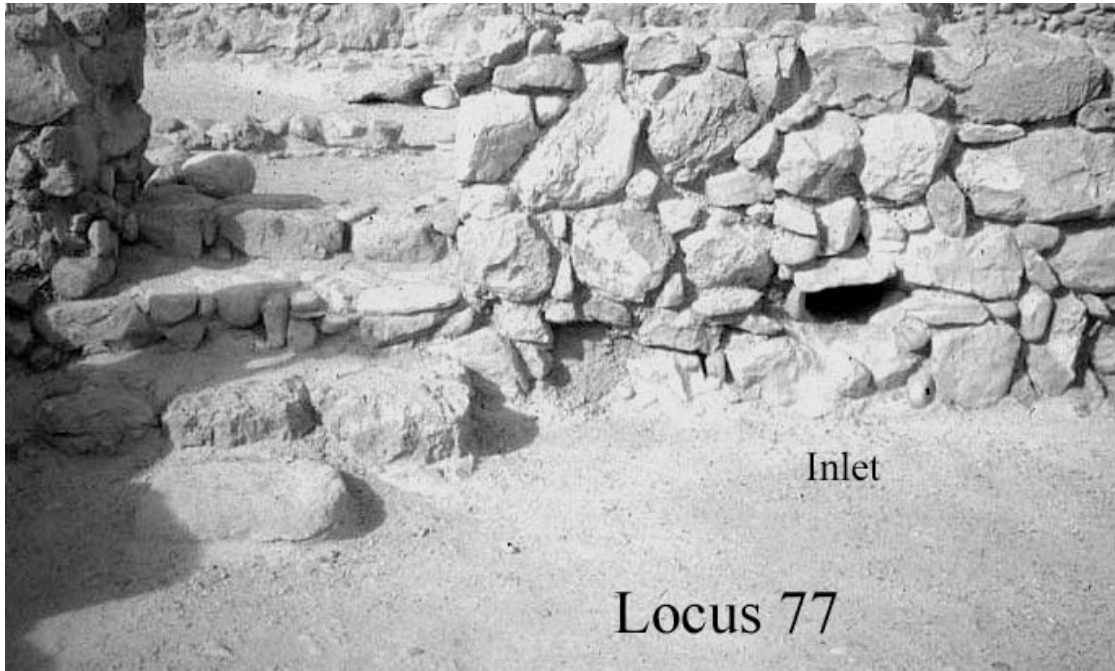
On the basis of its unique architectural features, de Vaux concluded that locus 77 served as the community’s refectory:

Furthermore, a conduit leading out of the main channel has its opening in this room near the north-western door. This conduit could easily be opened or closed. The fact that water was brought into the room in this way, combined with the sloping of its floor, made it easy for the room to be washed, the water being carried off to the outside by way of the south-eastern door. This arrangement indicates that it was necessary to clean the room at frequent intervals and suggests that it also served as the refectory.<sup>38</sup>

The emptying into locus 77 of an aqueduct for washing the floor of the sacred area reminds one of the same procedure that was utilized at Herod’s Temple in Jerusalem. Herod’s aqueduct connected the springs south of Bethlehem directly to the Temple precincts. This may imply that “holy precincts,” as Josephus also calls the Essene dining rooms, were best cleansed with water from a living water source.

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<sup>38</sup> De Vaux 1973: 11 and earlier, in the French, de Vaux 1956: 542.



Note the inlet of the aqueduct to the right of the steps descending into locus 77.

## 2. Preparation of the food and order at the Common Table.

Whether described as “the Community Table,” “the Common Table” or “the same table,” all extant texts speak of a single table shared by the entire community that stood as the centerpiece of the communal meal. The community entered into the meal room in procession by rank preceded by the priests (headed by the Chief Priest) and followed by the laity (headed by the Anointed of Israel). The bread and wine were first blessed by the Chief Priest, before the main course of the meal. Then, the Head (Anointed/Messiah) of the Congregation and the congregation itself blessed the bread. According to Josephus, two priests distributed the elements of the meal in two stages: the baker distributed the bread (before the initial blessing) and the cook distributed the main course, one bowlful to each participant. A blessing was said again at the end of the meal. According to the community’s own rule books:

In these (precepts) (2) shall walk those that are together in all their dwelling-places. And in whatever concerns work or property, the lower shall obey the higher. And they shall eat in common, (3) bless in common, and deliberate in common. And in every place where there are ten persons of the Council of the Community, let them not lack among them a man (4) who is a priest. And let them sit before him, each according to his rank, and in the same order let them ask their advice in everything. And then when they set the table to eat, or (prepare) the wine (5) to drink, the priest shall first stretch out his hand to pronounce a blessing on the first-fruits of bread and wine < >. (1QS *Rule of the Community* VI.2-5; Dupont-Sommer, trans.)

And [when] they gather for the Community tab[le], [to drink w]ine, and arrange the Community table [and mix] the wine to drink, let no man [stretch out] his hand over the first-fruits of bread and [wine] before the Priest; for [it is he who] shall bless the first-fruits of bread and w[ine, and shall] first [stretch out] his hand over the bread. And after[wards], the Messiah of Israel shall

[stretch out his hands, over the bread. [And afterwards,] all the Congregation of the Community shall [bless, each according to] his rank. And they shall proceed according to this rite at every meal [where] at least ten persons [are assembled. (1QSa *Rule of the Congregation* II.18-22; Pfann, trans.)

And the testimony of first-century Jewish writers concerning the practices of the Essenes:

Their clothes and food are also held in common, for they have adopted the practice of eating together. In vain would one search elsewhere for a more effective sharing of the same roof, the same way of life and the same table. (Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber sit* 86)

Daily they share the same way of life, the same table, and even the same tastes, all of them loving frugality and hating luxury as a plague for body and soul. And not only do they have a common table, but common clothes also. (Philo, *Apologia pro Judaeis* 11-12)

They choose virtuous men to collect the revenue and gather the various products of the soil, *and priests to prepare the bread and food.* (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.1.5.22)

When they are quietly seated, the baker serves out the loaves of bread in order, *and the cook serves only one bowlful of one dish to each man.* Before the meal the priest says a prayer and no one is permitted to taste the food before the prayer; and after they have eaten the meal he recites another prayer. At the beginning and at the end they bless God as the Giver of life. Afterwards they lay aside the garments that they have worn for the meal, since they are sacred garments, and apply themselves again to work until the evening. Then they return and take their dinner in the same manner, and if guests are passing through *they sit at the table.* No shouting or disturbance ever defiles the house; they allow

each other to speak in turn. To those outside, this silence of the men inside seems a great mystery; but the cause of it is their invariable sobriety and the fact that their food and drink are so measured out that they are satisfied and no more. (Josephus, *Wars* II.8.130-133)

### *Defining Sacred Space and Pure Space at Qumran*

#### 1. “Camps and Towns”

The evidence in the scrolls is that the Community divided their settlements into two categories, camps and towns.

This is the elaboration of the laws to be followed during the entire period of visitation, that which will be visited upon them during the periods of wrath and their journeys, for all who dwell in their camps and all who dwell in their towns. (4Q266 D<sup>a</sup>11.ii.18–21)

Our Law-giver encouraged the multitude of his disciples to live in community: these are called Essaeans, and I think they have merited this title because of their holiness. They live in a number of towns in Judaea, and also in many villages and large groups. (Philo, *Apologia pro Judaeis* 1)

The community structure represented by the term *machaneh* “camp” was modeled on the concept of the camp of Israel as comprised during the wilderness wanderings described in the Books of Moses. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the rules governing such camps were elucidated in “The Rule of the Congregation” (1QSa), “The Damascus Rule” (D, CD) and “The Rule of the Community” (1QS). According to these texts, the camps apparently represented settlements that were exclusively Essene. Among the camps there are varying lots or degrees of status. The highest degree are those which are called “holy camps”, Jerusalem itself being the most holy of all. The settlement at Qumran was also apparently a holy camp, having all of the apparatus

necessary within most of its borders to produce products which were required to be both pure and holy. Those who lived in such a camp were required to be pure and holy themselves to maintain this level of purity in the camp. These camps were sacrosanct; those who lived in them lived exclusively according to their own (and heaven's) rules and judgments, separated, by definition, from the rules of the land in which they sojourned. The rituals and products which were produced there necessarily demanded the highest level of purity, as at Qumran: sacred food, sacred wine, holy anointing oil, sacred scrolls, and pottery vessels to contain sacred substances and objects.

The camps which were not classified as "holy" existed according to the rules of the land in which they were established. The occupants were able to conduct commerce with outsiders and were subject to the taxation and laws which governed the land. These lower-level camps produced products and services for situations where a high state of purity was unnecessary. (Such was the case of the Essene camp at Ein Feshkha which, according to de Vaux, processed bitumen, produced reed mats and tanned leather for shoes and belts.)

There were also camps within *'arim*, "towns" or "cities". These *'arim*, made up of mixed populations which were primarily non-Essene, contained a resident Essene colony or quarter. Within the quarter, there was a sector, or at least a meal room, that had been purified and sanctified as a "sacred precinct". This was the bare minimum requirement for an Essene colony, made up of at least ten male members between the ages of 20 and 60 (including a priest and a scribe), to carry out necessary purification rites and consume sacred meals. This quarter could include married members: "But if they live in camps according to the rule of the land and marry women and beget children, then let them live in accordance with the Law, and by the ordinance of vows according to the rule of the Law" (CD VII.6-8).

Josephus and Hippolytus note:

They are not in one town only, but in every town several of them form a colony. Also, everything they have is at the disposal of members of the sect arriving from elsewhere as though it were their own, and they enter into the house of people whom they have never seen before as though they were intimate friends. (Josephus, *War* 2.8.124)

But there is not one city of them, but many of them settle in every city. (Hippolytus, *Against heresies* IX.15)

It seems likely that Josephus's description of Essene daily life (*War* 2.8.129–133, quoted above), comes from these colonies which existed within the cities, as it reflects a context in which visitors could be entertained and the uninitiated could listen in on the meals from just outside the dining room.

## 2. Graduated Levels of Holiness

The designation “holy camp,” applied to Jerusalem and select other sites (e.g., Qumran, but not Ein Feshkha), was drawn from the pattern of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness. There, both the Tabernacle and the associated camp of the tribes of Israel were considered to be both pure and holy, but in graduated levels of holiness. The focal and most holy point was the Holy of Holies at the heart of the tabernacle. The degree of holiness radiated out from there in a diminishing fashion to the less holy, but nevertheless holy, perimeter of the camp. It was only when one crossed out of the camp to the area outside, that one passed from the sacred to the profane realm. Likewise, in the Qumran literature, both the Temple and the rest of the walled city of Jerusalem — “the Temple City” — were considered both pure and holy.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. J. Maier, “Temple: The Temple of the Temple Scroll” in *The Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Oxford University Press, 2000: 925.

### *A. Holy People and Holier Priests*

This gradation of holiness within the Temple was, first of all, superimposed upon the members of the Essene community: “While these things exist in Israel, then the Council of the Community is established in truth as an everlasting planting. It has become the Holy Temple for Israel and the foundation of the Holy of Holies for Aaron” (1QS VIII.4–5). 4QMMT also notes the graduated levels of holiness within the membership of the community: “Because they [the Israelites] are holy and the sons of Aaron are most holy” (4Q396 f1-2.iv.8 [B79]). And Josephus adds:

They are divided into four lots according to the duration of their discipline, and the juniors are so inferior to their elders that if the latter touch them they wash themselves as though they had been in contact with a stranger. (*War* 2.8.150)

### *B. Holy Space*

Since the settlement at Qumran served as one of the holy camps, a similar gradation of holiness applied there. As mentioned above, the holy camp or Temple city included all areas that were both holy and pure. Outside the walls of the camp or Temple city, there were areas that were considered to be pure but not holy. Such a demarcation of the camp at Qumran can be discerned through an examination of the use of the site. The accompanying map delineates areas that were both holy and pure at Qumran versus areas that were pure but not holy.

The curious practice disposing of animal bones by burying them in pots in the outer courtyards of Qumran, has been an enigma ever since significant quantities of these were discovered in its open courtyards.<sup>40</sup> As I proposed earlier, this practice fits well with the form of sacred meals practiced

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<sup>40</sup> Recent excavations have also unearthed many in the southern enclosure; personal communication from Oren Gutfeld and Randall Price; see also J. Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Grand Rapids, 2002: 121.

at Qumran.<sup>41</sup> This unusual practice was common to both Periods **Ib (loci 80, 130, 135 and the southern enclosure)**<sup>42</sup> and **II** (loci 60, 80, 92, 130 and 132) at Qumran just as the table settings and protocol used in the communal meals continued through both periods. The community's buildings may have been changed and even adapted radically during the time between Period **Ib and II**, but the group's communal practice seems to have remained relatively stable and unchanged throughout much of its history.

Furthermore, I illustrated that a separation existed between areas at the site which were considered both pure and holy (which included most of the rooms within the main building, marked on the map by a bold, solid line), and those which were only pure and restricted by control gates, like the external courtyards where the animal bones were buried (marked with a broken line). I consider the existence of pots with animal bones an important means toward distinguishing those areas that are pure but not holy space, from those that are considered both pure and holy. The Bible prescribes that the leftovers and ashes of various offerings were to be carried "outside the (holy) camp to a pure place" **to be disposed of (cf. Lev. 4:12; Lev 6:11; and also Num 19:19)**. The practice of burying bones in pots in courtyards at Qumran was apparently intended to fulfill the requirement to not allow the leftovers of sacred meals and sacrifices to be eaten by animals in general and dogs in particular; cf. 4Q394 8.iv.8 (MMT B58) "We do not

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<sup>41</sup> Pfann, "Multilayered Stratigraphy." Ashes were found inside the pots and the bones themselves often showed signs of burning. Thick layers of ash and an installation that may have been connected with the burning of the leftovers were also discovered in association with the potted bones in the eastern part of locus 130.

<sup>42</sup> A broken jar with bones was unearthed in the original central courtyard of the building in locus 23. The early pottery forms associated with these bones provide evidence for their burial during an early point in period I, before the building and the "sacred space" were expanded to include that area.

allow dogs to enter the holy camps” (note the plural).<sup>43</sup> This is not to say that animal sacrifice was practiced at Qumran, for animal sacrifice outside of Jerusalem had been forbidden by Mosaic Law. However, the killing of an animal, whether for ordinary consumption or for ritual purposes such as the Passover sacrifice, included prayers for thanksgiving or of dedication to God. It would have been inconceivable to the priestly group at Qumran that the remains of a meal that had been sanctified to God through prayer should become food for unclean animals such as jackals or hyenas.<sup>44</sup> The remnants of holy food, including the bones of the animals that had been consumed, required suitable disposal. Thus, numerous pots of bones were buried within the pure areas at Qumran, safely within the community’s enclosure wall, protected from scavenging animals.

If the courtyards constituted holy but not pure space within the compound, what constituted holy *and* pure space? It should be anticipated that a graduated level of holiness existed within the sacred areas at Qumran just as there were degrees of holiness at the Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>45</sup> In all probability for the holy camp at Qumran, the areas in which the most sacred activities took place, i.e., the areas of study, worship and meals, were held in higher esteem than the utilitarian areas of food production, pottery making, and laundering. As an evidence, note that loci 1-30, the

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<sup>43</sup> This is likely also the issue which provided the pretext for the statement of Jesus in the Gospel: “Do not throw what is holy to the dogs” (Matt 7:6).

<sup>44</sup> The idea that the bones were part of consecrated foods and thus could not be carelessly discarded was first proposed by K. Schubert, *Die Gemeinde vom Toten Meer*, 1958: 27, 50. For other early hypotheses see de Vaux 1973: 13–14, n. 3. This question was taken up again more recently by J. Magness 2002: 121.

<sup>45</sup> For a thorough exposition of the graded levels of holiness at Qumran, see Hannah K. Harrington, *The Impurity Systems of Qumran and the Rabbis*, SBL Dissertation Series 143, Atlanta, 1993.

assembly rooms for the nightly study of the Torah, were secured with locking door frames, and loci 77 and 86/89, the dining room, was provided with a unique aqueduct system for cleaning.

### *Food in the Sacred Space of Kh. Qumran*

#### *1. The Necessity for Pure Food*

On the surface, all food looks the same; the distinction between pure and impure food is not readily discernible to the naked eye. However, what defines the same food as pure or impure, sacred or profane, makes the difference between what is edible for one group and not for another, both today and certainly within Second Temple Period Judaism. For the Essenes, clear demarcations existed between clean and unclean food which were prescribed by halakhic guidelines for its cultivation and preparation.

The priestly background of the founders of the Essene movement provided a framework for their relationship to food preparation and consumption within their communities. These defining principles are reflected in the sectarian documents and corroborated in the archaeological remains from Qumran.

For the Essenes, the camp at Qumran (like the Temple) was sacred space, where heaven and the human world met. All food consumed in sacred space had to achieve a new status to be acceptable not only to man, but also to God himself. All food, from its point of origin, had to be pure and unblemished, since it was to be prepared, dedicated, and blessed by priests before God. The various foods utilized in community meals, whether bread, wine, or the main course, had to be prepared in a pure setting and remain pure. As a result, each food preparation area at Qumran—whether the bakery, the winepress, or the kitchen—was designed to produce a specific part of the meal from start to finish, while maintaining it in a high state of purity (see below).

Pure food could only be prepared by pure priests. To facilitate this, each food preparation area was furnished with its own purification bath (*mikveh*), so that the individuals who prepared the food could also maintain a state of purity while coming in contact with it.

Only food that had been prepared within these guidelines could be offered and received back as a gift and then consumed with thanksgiving by men of the community in the Divine Presence.

## 2. Access to Pure Food

The dietary rules of the community were strictly observed. Before a novice could become a full member he was first required to pronounce certain mortally binding oaths before heaven. In the case of eating foods prepared by others, he bound himself to eat only the pure and sanctified food (Hebrew *tohorot* “pure [victuals]”) properly prepared by the priestly cooks and bakers for the community. When a member was absent from community meals for whatever reason, whether on a journey or due to punishment or excommunication, he was compelled to eat only what he was able to gather (and examine) with his own hands.<sup>46</sup>

Only blameless, physically unblemished, full members of the community had access to the pure food of the community meals. The pure food used in the meals, and even the disposable leftovers of those meals, were to be protected from any potential source of contamination. This was especially true concerning protection from any potential contact with the impurity of non-members and animals.<sup>47</sup> But it is also true concerning potential contact with members who could temporarily be in an impure state, and, as a general rule, with the blind, the lame, the deaf, lepers

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<sup>46</sup> Jos., *Wars* II.8.143.

<sup>47</sup> MMT B58–59: “And it is not permitted to bring dogs into the holy camps [note plural] since they eat some of the bones of the san[ctuary] while there is still some meat [on them].”

and women.<sup>48</sup> The scrolls also provide restrictions as to who should harvest, and how to protect produce, so that it can be eaten as pure food within the community.<sup>49</sup>

### 3. *Foods Consumed at Qumran*

Both literary sources and archaeological remains indicate some of the foodstuffs consumed by the Essenes in their community meals. The only foods specifically mentioned by Josephus and the Scrolls are bread and wine, both of which were used in a ritual context within the community meals. However, while the central importance of the ritual blessing of these items is highlighted in both Josephus and the Scrolls, the main course of the meal that followed is either mentioned or implied, though with no specific definition as to its contents.

Alongside this literary evidence relative to the sacred meal of the Essenes, a significant number of agricultural tools,<sup>50</sup> industrial installations, and organic materials have been preserved

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<sup>48</sup> The community's restrictions on access to pure foods and sacred space are similar to those that governed access to the Temple in Jerusalem. Justification for these restrictions is provided in the sectarian documents: the blind are restricted because they cannot see if they have touched something that has made them impure (MMT B49-50); the deaf because, even if they can read the Torah and the rules of purity, they cannot hear the proper interpretation as to how to protect oneself from impurity (MMT B52-53). It seems that the lame (and the physically blemished) are restricted since they repulse the angels (cf. 1QSa II.5-9), while women are excluded due to issues of chronic ritual impurity.

<sup>49</sup> "... (when gathering fruit) in a] baske[t any unclean person should n]ot gather them, [nor anyone else who] may not touch the community liquids; for these [will defile both the] basket and the figs {and the pomegranates}, [in the event that] their [ju]ice comes out wh[en he cru]shes any of them, while they were gathered by [one] who had not been brou[ght into the co]venant" (4Q284a Harvesting 1:2-6).

<sup>50</sup> Several of these tools have been published recently, including sickles, pruning hooks, knives and a hoe; cf. N. La Coudre et al., "L'amas métallique KhQ 960" and J. B. Humbert, "L'agglomérat métallique KhQ 960 et son contexte"

at Kh. Qumran, which indicate the various types of foods that were consumed by the community there, and that were cultivated locally.<sup>51</sup>

**Grain, Fruit of the Earth:** Although neither whole grain nor carbonized grain has yet been recovered from the site, a number of sickles (including two nearly intact examples),<sup>52</sup> at least four ample grinding mills,<sup>53</sup> and at least two bread ovens (cf. loci 100 thru 109)<sup>54</sup> with an accompanying *mikveh* (loc. 117), were unearthed during the excavations. The grinding mills and a plastered shelf (apparently the place for kneading the dough and forming the loaves) were found in close proximity to the ovens, allowing the entire bread-making process to be carried out, from beginning to end, within a pure enclosure (Qumran loci 101–109).

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in *Fouilles de Khirbet Qumran et de Ain Feshkhah*, Vol. 2, Göttingen, 2004: 397–405 (hereafter *FKQAF 2*). Also see de Vaux's account of Locus 52 and its associated objects in *EKQAF 2003*: 31. Early PAM Photographs of these objects are available in E. Tov and S. Pfann, eds. *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Microfiche*, Leiden, 1993. See especially PAM 40.952–955.

<sup>51</sup> Food production among the Essenes for personal use and trade should come as no surprise. Philo states: "There are farmers among them expert in the art of sowing and working the land, shepherds leading every sort of flock, and bee-keepers" (*Apologia Pro Judaeis* 8). He also states: "Some Essaeans work in the fields, and others practise various crafts contributing to peace; and in this way they are useful to themselves and to their neighbors" (*Quod omnis* 76b). Pliny the Elder states that the Essenes "have for company only the palm trees," implying that they are closely connected with palm groves; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* V.17.4. According to Josephus, "For the rest, they are excellent men and wholly given up to agricultural labour" (*Ant* 5.19b).

<sup>52</sup> Still today Bedouin raise wheat and barley along the wadis of the Judean wilderness, so there is little doubt that the community would have had ready access to grain, even from their immediate vicinity. However, until flotation analysis will be applied extensively at Qumran, it is unlikely that carbonized grain will be found in the excavations. For photos and drawings of two of the sickles see *FKQAF 2*, 2004: 397–405; figs. 2h and 3h.

<sup>53</sup> *FKQAF 1*, 1994: 141–144, photos 293 thru 300. De Vaux, 1973: Plate XX.

<sup>54</sup> *FKQAF 1*, 1994: 134, photos 273 and 274; 136, photos 278 and 279; 140, photos 290 and 291.

**Grapes, Fruit of the Vine:** The notable presence of a wine press in locus 75 (with mikveh locus 69) illustrates that the community had the means to produce wine from grapes.<sup>55</sup> By building a winepress within the site, the members were able to maintain the ritual purity of the wine from the place of its pressing to the place of its use nearby. Also, the inside surfaces of most of the bag-shaped storage jars, such as those found in the locus 89 pantry, are impregnated with a telltale purplish-grey stain, typical of vessels which have stored wine (or grape juice) for extended periods of time. The scrolls state that grapes and other fruits may be eaten with the pure food unless they have become susceptible to uncleanness by being covered by moisture (whether by water, dew or its own juice), and touched by someone who is unclean.<sup>56</sup>

**Olives and Olive Oil:** Olive pits have been found at Kh. Qumran in recent excavations. No obvious olive press has been found at Qumran. However, the means and equipment for pressing olives in the Second Temple Period relied to a certain degree upon improvisation. The means of pressing olives varied from the classic double beam industrial press, to the use of a wine press with a column drum for a crushing stone (e.g., loc. 75), or even the use of a simple mortar and pestle. The processing of oil, susceptible as it is to defilement, would best be performed within

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<sup>55</sup> See S. J. Pfann, "Annexe" in J.-B. Humbert, "L'espace sacré à Qumrân. Propositions pour l'archéologie," *RB* 101-2, 1994: 212-214. As stated in the article, the form of the installation is typically that of a wine press. Wine presses, in addition to being used for producing wine, may also be utilized for other purposes including for the production of olive oil, or, though less well-attested, date honey. Until flotation analysis will be applied extensively at Qumran, it is unlikely that the tiny grape pips will be found in the excavations. The potential to grow vines along the Dead Sea plain is amply illustrated by the fact that vineyards have been successful in various places in the region, including on the plain immediately below Qumran itself. As to the question of whether there was enough water to support vineyards, it is important to note that the springs of nearby Ein Feshkha are second only to the Jordan River in providing semi-fresh water along the Dead Sea coast.

<sup>56</sup> 4Q274 Tohorot A 3.i.6-8.

the confines of a pure and holy site that was carefully monitored and guarded from outside impurities.<sup>57</sup> Due to this, the production and use of olive oil and the practice of anointing was likely restricted to the “holy camps” spoken of in MMT, which included both Qumran and Jerusalem.<sup>58</sup> The presence of olive oil at the site could not have been avoided since it would have been the only source of fuel for the numerous lamps found there. The scrolls actually provide instructions on how to treat the olives during crushing so as to keep them and the oil pure for eating: “And if [olives] are pressed [in the olive pr]ess, let him b[y] no [mean]s defile them by

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<sup>57</sup> For evidence of the production of olive oil at the settlement, one might turn one’s attention to the enigmatic wall between loci 120 and 122 whose narrow apertures may have served as sockets to support levers for a pressing mechanism; *FKQAF I*, 1994: 97; photo 203. Alternatively, and more simply, the wine press could have had a multipurpose use, serving in the late fall as the crushing floor for an olive press (with column drums used as crushing stones, as has been attested elsewhere). For example this may be also be the rationale for the name of Jerusalem’s garden “Gethsemane” (*gath* = ‘wine press’ + *shemen* = ‘for olive oil’). Olive pits and date pits were found in close proximity in the 2002 season of excavation of the southern enclosure; personal communication from Randall Price and Oren Gutfeld.

<sup>58</sup> The use of olive oil for anointing was problematic among the Essenes for purity reasons, as stated by the historians and further explicated in the scrolls. Josephus writes: “They regard oil as a defilement, and should any of them be involuntarily anointed, he wipes his body clean. They make a point of having their skin dry and of being always clothed in white garments” (*Wars* 2.8.123a). Hippolytus notes: “And they do not use oil, regarding it as a defilement to be anointed” (*Against heresies* IX.14). In CD XII.15–17, it is evident that oil is seen as a liquid that can absorb uncleanness from touching or from dust in the air: “Every piece of wood or stone or dust that is desecrated by human uncleanness, by reason of oil stains: according to their uncleanness, whoever touches them will become unclean.” As J. Baumgarten points out, it is not that they necessarily disregard or abandon the anointings prescribed by Mosaic Law but that the one who is anointed must immediately wipe away the oil to avoid remaining susceptible to air-borne impurities; “Liquids and Susceptibility to Defilement in New 4Q Texts,” *JQR* 85, 1994: 91–101.

splitting them before he pours [them into the press. Let them be squee]zed in purity, and when their processing is [finish]ed they will be ea[ten in purity]” (4Q284a Harvesting 1:2–8). The farming of olives and the production of olive oil must have continued as an ongoing industry among the group’s members. This is best illustrated by the fact that one of the major pentacontad (“fifty day interval”) feasts of their liturgical year, the “Feast of New Oil”, was devoted to the tithing of the olive harvest which was to be given in kind.<sup>59</sup>

**Dates and Date Honey:** From Qumran itself, significantly large quantities of whole carbonized dates and date pits have been recorded in all excavations since the 1950s in both the caves and at the site including a large pit of carbonized whole dates which was found adjacent to the wine press (loc. 75) where date honey or date wine was produced at some point in the history of the site.<sup>60</sup> Dates and date honey would logically have been readily available foods for use during the community meals in the dipping dishes mentioned above. Evidence of date honey production and storage have recently been confirmed at the site: several pruning hooks for harvesting dates were discovered during the excavations of Qumran,<sup>61</sup> and residue from date honey has been found in

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<sup>59</sup> Scrolls which cite the feast include 4QCalendrical Documents “E” (Festal Calendars, i.e., 4Q325, 4Q327e–g and 4Q394), 4Q365 Temple (?) and 11QTemple<sup>a</sup>; cf. also Y. Yadin, *The Temple Scroll*, Jerusalem, Israel Exploration Society, 1983: 111–114. The means toward determining the amount to offer from an olive harvest is described in the Damascus Document: “And for the harvest [of the olive and the fruit] of its produce, if [(the harvest) is intact, its *noqef* is one out of thi]rty” (4Q266 D<sup>a</sup> 6.iii.7–9).

<sup>60</sup> E.g., a quantity of these can be seen in A. Roitman, *A Day at Qumran*, Jerusalem, 1997: 33 (Eng.) and 32 (Heb.).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Roitman 1997: 33 (Heb.). Although pruning hooks might be used for harvesting either grapes or dates, the relatively large size of certain of these (e.g., KhQ 1409bis is c. 34 cm in length) would indicate that at least some of them were used for harvesting dates. These include three from locus 52 (KhQ 963–965; PAM photo 40.952) and one from locus 84 (KhQ 1409bis; PAM photo 42.681). For the PAM photos, see E. Tov in collaboration with S. Pfann, *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Microfiche*, Leiden, 1993. PAM 40.952 can be found on fiche no. 17 and PAM 42.681 on

jars associated with the site.<sup>62</sup> This confirms the statement by Pliny the Elder that the Essenes were closely associated with palm groves “having for company only the palm trees” (*Natural History* V.17.4).

**Figs:** Until now there is but one example of a fig found at Qumran. It was apparently dried and in association with other fruits found on the floor of cave 8Q which can only be accessed from within the outer walls of the site.<sup>63</sup> Figs are mentioned in conjunction with other fruits in a passage which deals with purity regulations for the gathering of fruit into baskets: “for these [will defile both the] basket and the figs {and the pomegranates}, [in the event that] their [ju]ice comes out wh[en he cru]shes any of them, while they were gathered by [one] who had not been brou[ght into the co]venant” (4Q284a Harvesting 1:2–6).

**Other Fruit Trees:** There is no evidence thus far from the excavations of Qumran that other fruits were provided in their meals, although the presence of other fruits at the meal should not be discounted.<sup>64</sup> Both terms *peri ha'ets* “fruit of the tree” and *tevuat ha'ets* “produce of the tree” are used in particular for all covenantal fruits (five of the so called “seven species) including olives, grapes, figs, pomegranates (and presumably) dates. “And the produce of the tree (*tevuat ha'ets*)

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fiche no. 55. Object KhQ1409 bis (locus 84) was listed by de Vaux as an “ember scooper.” Whatever the object’s subsequent use, the blade was actually manufactured to serve as a typical pruning hook.

<sup>62</sup> A number of sealed “bag-shaped” storage jars were recently discovered buried close to the site. Upon opening and subsequent testing at the Weizmann Institute in Rehovot, they were found to contain a thick layer of polysaccharides at the bottom, likely the remains of dehydrated date honey. (Personal communication from S. Winer and D. Namdar of the Weizmann Institute.)

<sup>63</sup> *DJD III*, p. 31

<sup>64</sup> Desiccated pomegranates and walnuts were preserved, along with olive and date pits, in the Judean desert caves from the Bar Kokhba period; cf. Y. Yadin, *The Finds from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of the Letters*, Judean Desert Series 1, Jerusalem, 1963: pl. 42.

[the grape, the date, the fig, the pome]granate, and the olive in the fourth year, [all their fruit shall be holy and shall be set aside as] a holy offering. All (of them) are dedicated to the priest” (4Q251 Halakha A 10:7–9).<sup>65</sup>

**Vegetables, Legumes, Herbs and Spices:** Concerning other plants, the scrolls confirm that, as long as the rules of purity were kept, the eating of greens was allowed, “Every green upon [which there is no] dew moisture may be eaten (by the pure person) ... including ripe cucumbers” (4Q274 Tohorot A 3.ii.4). The historians also speak of wild greens being eaten by excommunicated members who by oath could eat only what they themselves gathered by hand. Herbs were also used in treating the sick, by those community members who were well studied in the arts of healing.<sup>66</sup> Concerning the actual practice of eating herbs and plants at Qumran (taking into

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<sup>65</sup> However, understanding the Biblical injunction of Lev. 19:23–25 more broadly, *tevuat ha'ets* seems to have been applied to other fruit trees and to other products derived from various trees (including wood) and plants (including herbs). “When you come into the land and plant all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count their fruit as forbidden; three years it shall be forbidden to you, it must not be eaten. And in the fourth year all their fruit shall be holy, an offering of praise to the LORD. But in the fifth year you may eat of their fruit, that they may yield more richly for you: I am the LORD your God.” This would extend the laws of purity, tithes and offerings well beyond the bounds of the five covenantal fruits. This may be what is expected as the offerings of the yearly feast known as *qorbanot ha'etsim* the “wood” or “trees” offering, which immediately followed the Feast of New Oil.

<sup>66</sup> Josephus states: “Those who are caught in the act of committing grave faults are expelled from the order. The individual thus excluded often perishes, the prey to a most miserable fate; for bound by his oaths and customs he cannot even share the food of others. Reduced to eating grass, he perishes, his body dried up by hunger. They have also out of compassion taken back many who were at their last gasp, judging this torture to death sufficient for the expiation of their faults” (*War* 2.8.143-144).

Concerning the medicinal use of plants, Josephus relates: “They apply themselves with extraordinary zeal to the study of the works of the ancients choosing, above all, those which tend to be useful to body and soul. In them they study the healing of diseases, the roots offering protection and the properties of stones” (*War* 2.8.136).

account limits of access to certain of them in the Judean desert), only further excavations done with scientific care and testing will determine the extent of their use.<sup>67</sup>

**Salt of the earth:** Although salt was readily available from the shores of the Dead Sea, it was inedible before processing.<sup>68</sup> Once done, there would be little doubt that this would have been an important trade item as well as a common part of the diet at community meals both for food and for ritual purposes.

**Meat and fowl:** The raising of flocks of sheep and goats is natural in the desert environment. The fact that shepherding should be one of the occupations found among the people of Qumran should come as no surprise, especially since a pair of sheep shears was found during the excavations.<sup>69</sup> Although it is not clear that meat would have been consumed at every meal, it would have been served, at least, on special occasions and during special rites, especially those

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Hippolytus affirms: “And they evince the utmost curiosity concerning plants and stones, rather busying themselves as regards the operative powers of these, saying that these things were not created in vain” (*Against heresies* IX.17).

<sup>67</sup> Early results of the flotation of soils in association with pottery and bone burials excavated in the summer of 2004 have produced numerous carbonized plant remains including seeds and a carbonized lentil (at labs of the University of the Holy Land).

<sup>68</sup> De Vaux suggested that the Essenes processed salt as part of their industry. He also concluded that the site of Khirbet Mazin, six kilometers south of Qumran, likely would have been utilized to exploit the local salt resources during the Roman period, although he had doubts that the site was actually connected with Qumran and Ein Feshkha. De Vaux 1973: 85, 88.

<sup>69</sup> *FKQAF* 2, 2004: 397–405; figs. 2g and 3g and Roitman 1997: 34 (Eng.) and 33 (Heb.). Spindle whorls, likely for spinning wool, were found at the site, although their stratigraphic connection to the occupation layers of the Qumran religious community itself seems doubtful.

related to the Feast of Passover and the annual Covenant Renewal Ceremony.<sup>70</sup> If meat was to be served in the bowls of loci 89 and 114, then it would likely have been stripped from the bones, chopped, and simmered in one of the numerous cooking pots found at the site, as part of the recipe for a stew or a soup. The copious bone deposits at the site often accompanied by cooking pots or jars bears witness to the importance of meat in the community's meals. Bird bones, although more rare, have also been found among the bone burials indicating that birds or fowl were, from time to time, part of the menu.<sup>71</sup> A likely location for the cook's kitchen where these meals were prepared is the installation of locus 125 with the associated *mikveh* in locus 118.

### *Conclusion*

There are those who say that farmers lived at Qumran and therefore the Essenes did not. Others say that Essenes lived at Qumran and therefore farmers did not. It is this author's sincere hope that the preceding paper has demonstrated, on the basis of literary, archaeological and historical data, that, indeed, the Essenes did live at Qumran and that clearly they engaged in agricultural activity. They lived a life of reflection and ritual in a sacred sphere in which food and meals played an essential role. Their daily provision was seen as the ongoing fulfillment of God's steadfast promise to provide staples on a daily basis to His people, as He had during Israel's

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<sup>70</sup> Humbert, "L'espace sacré" 1994: 205 and Magness 2002: 118. However, the meat meal could not have been limited only to the Passover sacrifice, since many of the animals were significantly older than one year (the age required for the Passover). There are also a number of bovine remains (cf. F. E. Zeuner, "Notes on Qumran," *PEQ*, 1960: 27-36). The remains of these older animals likely represent the community's flock and herd animals that were eaten when the flock was culled. Their meat would otherwise have been needlessly wasted if they were simply allowed to die naturally.

<sup>71</sup> Early results of the flotation of materials from an oven in the southern enclosure, excavated in 2002 and sampled again in 2004, includes a fragment of a chicken egg (the author is grateful to Egon Lass for this information).

wilderness wanderings. Their single table was perhaps an answer to the question of Psalm 78:19: “Can God spread a table in the wilderness?” The unity of their community experience answered emphatically, “Yes.”