The Colorado College

The End is Near and We Must Prepare:
Qumran Essenes, Israeli Jews, and Branch Davidians

A Senior Thesis in Classics/History/Politics

Presented to the Faculty of the Department of Classics, Department of History, and Department of Political Science

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

by

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Colorado Springs, Colorado

May, 2024

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Preface

The first series of novels I completed reading in its entirety was *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis. To this day, I still remember the infinite confusion that young me felt after reading T*he Last Battle* for the first time. “In the last days of Narnia…” Why? “Beyond that door,” “Further up and Further in,” “Narnia is not dead; this is Narnia.”[1] As an elementary school student at the time, I couldn't comprehend the meaning hidden behind these seemingly simple sentences. Of course, even my parents and teachers couldn't provide answers. Gradually, as I grew up, there was a certain period each year when I would revisit my obsession with Narnia, rereading the seven books over and over, but I still couldn't understand what happened in *The Last Battle*. One random day in high school, during that year's Narnia obsession period, I had a sudden idea and left the Chinese search engine to go to Google in search of answers. The search results shocked me greatly — “Children's Bible,” written by the famous British theologian and classicist.

I was born and raised in an atheistic family, and I had never even been to a church from childhood to adulthood. My knowledge of Christianity relied entirely on encyclopedias and childhood documentaries on western mysteries. For me, Christianity has always been shrouded in mystery, and I never imagined that my favorite novels would be filled with biblical metaphors and symbols. Having found the starting point, I felt a deep desire to uncover the mysteries and developed the idea that by studying and understanding Christianity, I could try to comprehend *The Last Battle*. Young me strongly disliked reading about the war itself, unlike the other books in the series. The descriptions of the war in *The Last Battle* were particularly dark in tone: “Black

[1] C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (New York: HarperTrophy, 1988).

night enveloped Narnia," "The sun was devoured by the time-giant," "ancient monsters entered Narnia from the distant hills,"[2] and so on. Even though the main characters didn't experience "true death" in the final part, the concept of "death" in the story's setting still terrified me. As I grew older, I began to think and reflect differently: the tranquility after "closing that door" and the healing and hope brought by the "real Narnia" seemed to hold more power than the chaos of the first half. But I still couldn't explain why these specific descriptions suddenly brought such different insights. However, I understood one thing — I must go to college to study and understand Christianity.

I knew what I wanted to study when I entered college. In my freshman year, I spent three and a half weeks studying the Bible. The learning process was somewhat painful, but I was happy because with each specific chapter I studied, more of my doubts were answered. Genesis and "The Lion Sings a New Song"[3] established Narnia; Babylon and the northern foreign nations of Narnia, Revelation and the end and new beginning of old Narnia. Revelation, no biblical texts brought more shock than this one. Thanks to more Christian courses, the mysteries of the past few years were almost completely unraveled. Gradually, my curiosity turned to the "Promised Land" — Israel and the holy city of Jerusalem where different nations have been fighting for years. As I grew up, I gradually lost the fantasies about the mysterious world in the wardrobe and the "world within the world," but I couldn't completely let that concept go, so to some extent, the "Promised Land" replaced them as the sacred place I had always yearned to explore.

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[2] Ibid.

[3] C. S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* (New York: HarperTrophy, 1988).

Originally, the goal of visiting Israel was to participate in an archaeology course and learn the basic field work, but a short trip to Masada completely shifted my concentration in archaeology to Jewish apocalypticism and the continuation of its ideologies in modern times.

Masada, located on the cliffs of the western shore of the Dead Sea, was far from the so-called main battlefield of contemporary Israeli-Palestine war. Like other Jewish villages in antiquity, it was destroyed by the Roman invasion. After a long and feverish journey from the Jerusalem area, the Essenes settled in the desert in a harsh environment in pursuit of the purity of their faith. These pious and perhaps egotistical ascetics chose to be forgotten by history and the public the moment they stepped out of the Holy City, and in the process of being forgotten, the believers were convinced that they were almost reaching for heaven, not realizing how absurdly and tragically out of reach it was. The Romans surrounded the entire site and went into the night confident of victory in the next day's siege, never realizing that all these desperate but steadfast Essenes had chosen to committed suicide and thus refused to be enslaved by the Romans.

Standing in front of this huge tomb, thousands of years later, and looking back as an observer of the untold story, I understood the Masadans' pride and conviction before they died, that for them, probably such a death was the noblest interpretation of faith, but there was no way to prove whether they actually reached that "New Jerusalem", as they had hoped, but I sincerely hoped that the high price they paid would lead to a rewarding afterlife. I was shocked that the Essenes had created a "spiritual utopia" for their beliefs. First they chose to physically isolate themselves, accepting the hostile environment as a settlement, and then convinced themselves through communal practice that their decisions and actions were noble. As their group structure was refined and they were completely isolated from outside opinions, the members gradually

became more firm in their beliefs and gained unlimited relief and hope, even in the harsh living conditions. When I, as an outsider, commented on these pious people whom I admired from time to time, I realized as in a trance that I was in a perspective that was weighed and self-serving. I also clearly understood that if I were put in the situation they were in, when the “evil priests” in Jerusalem were corrupted for obtaining financial benefits, I would not hesitate to change myself to maximize the benefits of reality. The Dead Sea, clear but lifeless, surrounded by countless ruins, was a constant reminder to those who came here in admiration and thought they had faith, of the evil and extreme self-interest of our human nature in this forgotten land with its sacred and pious atmosphere. On the ruins of Masada, looking at the endless desolation and lifeless desert around me, it was hard to imagine that thousands of years ago countless people moved here for the purity of their beliefs, created a civilization in the rocks and canyons, and left behind the marvelous Dead Sea Scrolls.

The story of Masada was from such a long time ago, but peace never arrived on this land. I began to wonder if apocalypticism or similar traditions were inherited until contemporary. Knowing something about the decades-long Middle East wars and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I began reading Ari Shavit’s *My Promised Land* in my spare time in order to better understand the Jews after World War II and the extremely controversial history of Israel's founding. The book documents interviews with people involved in important events before and after the founding of Israel, presenting the progress and changes in the country from their conversations and memories. I was surprised to find that this “spiritual utopia” also existed in the early years of Israel's existence. Unlike the Dead Sea Scrolls, Israel did not give its “utopia” more religious significance than a kind of patriotic cultivation in the aftermath of the Holocaust,

but its causes and consequences were similar to those of apocalyptic literature. It was the inevitable product of the establishment of a state by the survivors of the genocide, the survivors who witnessed hell and worked extremely hard to realize their dream state, living a life of abandonment of past and total dedication to the state in the land where has finally returned to the Jews, even if the final result was not the full realization of the ideals that once existed. Israel's founding was no doubt met with a lot of skepticism and enemies, but a large part of its rapid growth and success was due to the support of other global superpowers, most notably the United States.

Knowing that some of the American evangelical missionaries to the Native Americans included the theological theories of apocalypticism, I was curious about the religious rationale behind the American support for Israel, and the book Matthew Sutton's *American Apocalypse* gave me the basic answer: during the post the Second World War, a large percentage of Americans believed that the establishment of the State of Israel was an crucial factor in God's Plan, following by the rapture and the coming of the New World. Among the many evangelical groups, Mount Carmel in Waco, Texas, led by David Koresh, was of particular interest to me. Mount Carmel members lived in a communal life, with few contacts with the outside society, and with the communal rules, determined solely by Koresh alone, which its members voluntarily obeyed. After the U.S. government and FBI intervened in their illegal possession of excessive amounts of firearms, a series of conflicts with them resulted in the deaths of 51 people as well as 25 children, and the eventual nine adult survivors, who have been separated from the sect for several years, had never shown any remorse or criticism. I was curious about the past of these survivors and how Koresh's theology changed their lives, and why believers were willing to

adhere to Koresh's “gospel” when the end of days that Koresh preached had not yet arrived years later.

I used to think of the “real Narnia” just as an important plot of the novel, and there's no denying that C.S. Lewis's descriptions presented an extraordinarily beautiful and inviting new world, but after my trip to Masada, I realized that believers in Apocalypticism could be found in every civilization from ancient times to the present day, even the twenty-first-century. These theories were like pillars of life for desperate people, so powerful that they had caused group after group of people throughout history to develop their spiritual community and even sacrifice their lives for their faith. As someone who grew up in an atheistic society, apocalyptic theories were very strange and intrigued me a lot, so I decided to research groups of people who believed in eschatology across time and nations: what made specific people become believers, how strong they were in their beliefs, and the “unusual” behaviors they did to uphold their beliefs. What made a particular person a believer? Focusing on “spiritual utopias,” this paper explores how Qumran Essenes, modern Israel, and Waco used apocalyptic theories to develop committed believers, and how the three cases were similar or different in terms of their “endings.”

Introduction

Eschatology, apocalypticism, and related topics have always fascinated a diverse range of individuals across various cultures and time periods. The typical historical Western interpretation of apocalypticism in the contemporary context derives from Christianity's Book of Revelation. However, in this more secular era, religious connotations and practices have been largely supplanted by political or secular implications. For most People, especially atheists, apocalyptic thoughts only arise once they find themselves in a tough situation and are eager for supernatural forces to interfere and end up in an ideal situation. A popular example was the Nazi expedition to Tibet, China, in 1938-1939. Led by Heinrich Himmler, this mission aimed to explore the Aryan connections with Tibetans, prove their racial perfection and restoring the Nazis' faith while they were on the brink of losing. Although Hitler had little knowledge of Tibet beyond myths and had no personal experiences there, he still supported an expedition to this unknown and dangerous land in an attempt to validate that the Nazi party could still fight back. Those hopes from supernatural forces, or God, can be extremely powerful and lead to drastic changes in history or any society. Examining a couple of historical events such as the isolation of the Qumran community, the Crusades, the World Wars, or the fall of the great empires, apocalypticism served as a strong and probably the final source of hope, providing a final glimmer of light in the darkness, for people in despair who await for a certain epiphany.

This essay will examine the apocalyptic beliefs of the Qumran community, the early returning residents of the state of Israel after WWII, and the twenty-first-century American Evangelicals. Despite a 2000-year time span, these topics reveal similarities in apocalyptic mindset, but at the same time, "apocalypticism" still functioned in different ways in three groups.

I will analyze three community models that shared a similar belief in the impending apocalypse as their foundational principle and which kept their members separate from the rest of the society; however, these communities' ideal images of "utopia" was short-lived. Unlike the descriptions from the Book of Revelation, death, tears, mourning, the unbelieving, and nights still existed, and there was no proof that God eventually joined those groups. Their ambitious and somewhat extreme doctrines failed to satisfy their expectations. These short-term utopian patterns based on apocalyptic beliefs have recurred in various spatial and cultural contexts. Even in the scientific twenty-first century, successive generations assert to have a better understanding of the truth than their ancestors. Nonetheless, religion, apocalypticism specifically, never lost its presence in life. I have found this utopian idea among apocalyptic groups over time worthy to study since their ideologies and relevant accounts reflected their discontent toward reality. These groups were unable to confront discontent with the contemporary world so they intended to escape from it by joining those apocalyptic groups. Even in today, there are still unsolvable issues and difficulties for people, so we are surprise to see those communities recur and lead to social movements and changes. As M.G.Reddish commented in *Apocalyptic Literature: A Reader,* "The apocalyptic writers invite their modern readers to look beyond the problems to the God who is still sovereign over the universe. They affirm that ultimately God will prevail."[4]

Before entering the main content, I want to clarify my usages of "apocalypse," "apocalyptic eschatology," and "apocalypticism" as these terms are similar and may cause confusion. I am applying the definitions that Reddish gave these three terms. Firstly, apocalypse "is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated

[4] M. G. Reddish, "Introduction," in *Apocalyptic Literature: A Reader* (Hendrickson, 1995), 20.

by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world."[5]I will only use this term in the section where I mention where it is mentioned in the preface of C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, as it pertains to the literary genre of the work. Secondly, apocalyptic eschatology refers to a particular view of God's activity in the future. According to Reddish, apocalyptic eschatology primarily replaced prophetic eschatology due to the increasing despair among Israelites toward past events. Consequently, their hope gradually shifted from this world into the future one along with an eager desire for God to end the wicked current world and lead them to a new one[6]. Thirdly, apocalypticism "is a pattern of thought or a world view dominated by the kinds of ideas and motifs found in apocalypses-emphasis on other worlds(heaven, hell, the abode of the dead) and otherworldly beings(God, Satan, angels, demons), supernatural intervention in world events, apocalyptic eschatology, and divine retribution beyond death."[7] As this essay's focus is theology and the principles of the selected groups, the term "apocalypticism" will be actively used to reference worldviews and ideologies.

[5] M. G. Reddish, 20.

[6] M. G. Reddish, 19.

[7] Ibid.

Qumran Essenes: The Most Distant Prayer

The Qumran Essenes associated with the The Dead Sea Scrolls are the subject of this chapter. Their distinct way of life and beliefs, evidenced by various archaeological discoveries and communal rules found in the scrolls, stood out amongst the cultural norms in Roman Judea. The members of Qumran lived a communal life under strict religious rules in their pursuit of purity. Other than generally accepted beliefs and practices, the scrolls reveal the presence of apocalyptic eschatology, sparking discussions on its application in their lifestyle. Therefore, several questions arise: what was the rationale of this sect for moving from Jerusalem to this isolated site? How was apocalyptic eschatology attributed to maintaining the group under the strict community laws? What were some unique features of their theology? The rest of this chapter will expand on these inquiries with arguments and evidence mainly from the texts that were seemingly composed by the Qumran Essenes. In short, more than reading apocalyptic literature, the stability of the Qumran community is here attributed to their emphasis on tradition, the development of the villain of their apocalyptic eschatology, and the rejection of individualism.

Qumran is an archaeological site located on the west bank of the Dead Sea. Since the initial discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1946 in a cave near Qumran, the site has triggered a significant academic interest and attracted numerous scholars to visit and participate in excavations. As the surrounding major eleven caves were excavated, ample evidence, such as pottery, stones, and coins, was proven the origin to be the site of Qumran. Therefore, the Dead Sea Scrolls were commonly accepted by scholars as the “library of Qumran,” including a variety of writings and copies, as John J.Collins concluded in *The Dead Sea Scroll: A Biography*, the

scrolls include Hebrew Bible copies except for Esther, non-canonical works such as 1 Enoch, the Community Rule books (also known as the Community Rule and the Damascus Document), hymns, the War Scroll, parabiblical texts, historical events records, and magical/exorcism writings.[8] The ownership of the Scrolls and the site itself puzzled scholars, but the assumption that the scrolls belonged to the Jewish sect of Essenes had been suggested but it was not widely accepted until De Vaux and other archaeologists examined and proved the similarities and connections between the primary historical texts by Pliny, Philo, and Josephus and the texts of the scrolls.[9]

To explore the answers to these questions, it is necessary to examine the background of the Qumran residents and the founding of the site. Until the present day, the written and archaeological records of Qumran history remained insufficient and ambiguous. Two ancient sources that offered partial answers to the mystery are the Damascus Document and the Community Rule in the revealed Scrolls, and Josephus's *The Jewish War*. The Damascus Document was recovered from three caves at the site. It is mainly divided into two sections: a list of Statutes and an Exhortation, the letter introducing elements of the Qumran's founding story. Though the current archaeological findings failed to build enough foundation for the narrative, scholars still generally give credibility to the story as other historical accounts somewhat offered parallel narratives in its context.

The beginning of the Exhortation presents two crucial elements: the time in which the story was set and the leadership role of the group. "In the age of wrath, three hundred and ninety

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[8] Frank Moore Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958).

[9] John J. Collins, "The Site of Qumran,", in *The "Dead Sea Scrolls"*: *A Biography* (Princeton University Press, n.d.), 67–95.

years after He had given them into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon,"[10] and "yet for twenty years they were like blind men groping for the way,"[11] offer a timeline of God's visit to the Israelites, finding them perplexed, so he "raised for them a Teacher of Righteousness to guide them in the way of His heart"[12] who was responsible to spread God's knowledge and lead the Israelites back to the right path. The interpretation of the times mentioned earlier remain debated among the scholars and the historical figure of the Teacher of Righteousness has not been identified, but one thing for sure as James C. VanderKam concluded, "it is evident that before the Qumran settlement was built a new penitential movement came into being and that eventually the person known by the epithet 'the Teacher of Righteousness' became its leader."[13] Regarding the reason for moving out from Jerusalem to the wilderness, the Community Rule explained, "when these shall become the Community, they shall separate from the habitation of unjust men and shall go into the wilderness to prepare there the way to the Truth; as it is written, In the wilderness prepare the way of…, make straight in the desert path a path for our God."[14] Qumran, located in the wilderness of the Judean Desert, fit the criteria and was considered the most suitable location to implement the rule.

VanderKam, based on the original scrolls and relevant Jewish history accounts, offers a more comprehensive hypothesis. According to him, the Teacher of Righteousness encountered a

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[10] Geza Vermes, "The Damascus Document,", in *The Complete Dead Sea Scroll in English* (The Penguin Press, 1997), 127.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] James C. VanderKam, "The Qumran Essenes," essay, in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B.Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 128.

[14] Vermes, "The Damascus," 124.

series of conflicts with the "Wicked Priest" and subsequently led a group of followers with him to exile to the Judean Desert. This move aimed at pursuing wisdom and purity, preparing for God, and escaping the impurities present in Jerusalem. Thus, if we adhere to this hypothesis, the Qumran community gathered a group of disheartened individuals who were sick of the "impurities" in Jerusalem and yearned for the great wisdom of God and purity. Once they began to formally develop their special community and established the rules, it was necessary to maintain the stability of the community. The rules noted in the Scrolls, sharing similarities with the accounts of Josephus on Essenes, pointed out three significant features that sustained the close relation among members.[15]

First, the members of Qumran demonstrated a strong interest in preserving ancient traditions and establishing connections with their scriptural ancestors. Josephus, in his account *Jewish War*, dedicated an entire chapter discussing the Essenes, and one feature he noted was "they also take great pains in studying the writings of the ancients, and choose out of them what is most for the advantage of their soul and body."[16] Their affinity for the past also was reflected in their own apocalyptic literature. Excerpts from the Canon consistently appeared in Qumran Apocalypse, and the Messianic Rule serves as a suitable example. The Messianic Rule was composed in the same scroll as the Community Rule, which included the preparation process and individual's duties for the impending epic war between the "Sons of Light" and the "Sons of Dark"[17]. The rules were outlined by the duties at different ages starting with youth all the way to

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[15] Flavius Josephus, "Book II: Of The War, Chapter 2,", in *The Jewish War*, n.d., http://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/war-2.html.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Geza Vermes, "The War Scroll," essay, in *The Complete Dead Sea Scroll in English* (The Penguin Press, 1997), 161-183.

beyond thirties. In the description of a thirty-year-old man, the writers addressed, “at the age of thirty years he may approach to participate in lawsuits and judgments, and may take his place among the chiefs of the Thousands of Israel, the chiefs of the Hundreds, Fifties, and Tens, the Judges and the officers of their tribes, in all their families, (under the authority) of the sons of Aaron the Priests.”[18] The word choices here were drawn directly from Exodus 18:25, “Moses chose able men from all Israel and appointed them as heads over the people, as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.”[19] According to the writers, qualification to join the chiefs required sufficient growth and learning, indicating the writers' respect and emphasizing their scriptural ancestors. An identical phrase of Exodus appeared a few lines below as well, “all the wise men from the congregation, the learned and the intelligent, men whose way is perfect and men of ability, together with the tribal chiefs and all the Judges and officers, and the chiefs of the Thousands, Hundreds, II Fifties, and Tens, and Levites.”[20]

Originally, the phrase “officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens” referred to distinct levels of leadership, ranging from the most powerful one, ruling the groups of a thousand, to the less powerful, charging for the groups of ten individuals. The citation of this phrase in the Messianic Rule reflects the group’s belief that the ultimate goal of a man following these rules was to join their great ancestors, specifically the twelve tribes of Israel. The narrative here was meant to develop the conclusion to its readers (or doctrine receivers) that after a series of efforts the great reward was to be able to join and stand aside with the honored ancestors. The second reference of using the Exodus phrase in the same passage seemed unnecessary since it

[18] Geza Vermes, “The Messianic Rule,” essay, in *The Complete Dead Sea Scroll in English*, 158.

[19] Exodus 18:21

[20] Vermes, “The Messianic Rule,”159.

could be replaced by a shorter phrase with the same meaning. Reusing it, however, functioned as a quotation in contemporary scholarship, adding credibility to the argument and making the writing more persuasive. This encouraged members of the community to comply.

Furthermore**,** the War Scroll, although primarily focused on the final war between good and evil, still included a few indications of the exilic Israelites as well. The Scroll offered a broad overview of the war in terms of prayer, military tactics, and rules for different divisions. More specifically, the writers discussed a rule of writing down the prayers and standards prior to engaging in the battle. In the section of the Rule for the whole congregation according to their levies, the text began with the indication of the twelve tribes. It stated that "on the great standard at the head of the people they shall write, The people of God, together with the names of Israel and Aaron, and the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, according to the order of their precedence."[21] The authors' view that the twelve tribes were the most honored and significant human figures in the given context was evident in the first rule of the section. What's more, when it came to the Shield of the Prince, the writers noted, "they shall write his name, together with the names of Israel, Levi and Aaron, the names of twelve tribes of Israel according to the order of their precedence, with the name of their twelve chiefs."[22] The rest of the standards that needed to be written were Salvation of God, Victory of God, and Help of God. Along with those divine standards, the writers gave similar importance to the blessings of God. It was clear that to the scroll writers, the twelve tribes of Israel of Exodus were the most crucial and revered human figures in their apocalyptic context. The re-encounter of the "past" from the Qumran Scrolls

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[21] Vermes, "The War Scroll," 166.

[22] Vermes, "The War Scroll," 168.

clearly revealed the authors' awareness of using historical authoritative writings (not the ones we recognize in the present days). They sought to raise the validation and credibility of their writings as the rules for the community by referencing the Torah.

Vandercam also offered his supportive conclusion after studying the repeating canonical phrase in Hebrew, claiming "we may be permitted to conclude that the Qumran writers found these works to have a special authority. They could be presented as God's word, whether written or spoken, and their status settled points in dispute or other points the authors wished to make."[23] Due to the conflicts between the Teacher of Righteousness and the "Wicked Priest", the Qumran Scrolls writers then shifted their focus away from the priesthood in their customs and, instead, and devoted more attention to the "old-school" elements such as the twelve tribes of the Exodus. The community glorified the Wilderness Period led by Moses as the primary reason for moving to an isolated location and adopting an ascetic lifestyle was to gain an understanding of what their ancestors had endured, with the hope of gaining profound insights akin to those granted in the Covenant. New members, as they joined this framework, would begin to "educate" themselves in terms of theology in the way that the community leaders designed. Therefore, with the common study of scriptures, they would rapidly realize the importance of the exilic features once they dove into the Qumran apocalypse scrolls and found out the quotation of the canonical terminology. Additionally, as the community's understanding of Exodus deepens, they might recognize the parallels between the pursuit of purity and wisdom through desert migration and the Great Exile. Consequently, the Qumran residents would be more than pleased to stay in this secluded location and obey the strict community rules cheerfully. The usage of the past in the

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[23] James C. Vanderkam, "Authoritative Literature in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 5, no. 3 (1998): 395, https://doi.org/10.1163/156851798x00190.

writings created a solid ideological foundation for the Qumran community to reinforce the faith of the members so that communal order and rules could be preserved and followed.

Secondly, the Qumran community demonstrated a significantly polarized viewpoint. According to their apocalyptic worldview, there were only two distinct sides – good and evil – with no in between. The good side in the context was specifically regarding the Qumran members, as the beginning part of the Community Rule stated,

> all those who freely devote themselves to His truth shall bring all their knowledge, powers and possessions into the Community of God, that they may purify their knowledge in the truth of God's precepts and order their powers according to His ways of perfection and all their possessions according to His righteous counsel…all those who embrace the Community Rule shall enter the Covenant before God to obey all his commandments so that they may not abandon Him during the dominion of Beliah because of fear or terror or affliction. [24]

The audience of the Community Rule was the Qumran members, the passage above implied the just and wisdom: because they were willingly to "embrace the Community Rule", they were able to practice to serve God better and fight along with Him at the battle. For the non-Qumran people, though they were not specifically defined, the latter section offered two categories of men, providing a general idea toward the non-Qumran people by saying "the nature of all the children of the men is ruled by these (two spirits), and during their life all the hosts of men have a portion of their divisions and walk in (both) their ways."[25] All men were classified as either good or bad, and the previous quotations implied what constituted the good side, hence that those who did not adhere to the Rules would be regarded as evil. The significance of analyzing the polarization of good and evil in the Qumran apocalypse lies in examining the intention behind

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[24] Geza Vermes, "The Community Rule," essay, in *The Complete Dead Sea Scroll in English* (The Penguin Press, 1997), 99.

[25] Vermes, "The Community Rule," 102.

the adoption of a dualistic worldview, rather than criticizing the insufficient awareness of the complexities of war and religious conflicts.

As for the narratives provided for each side, the depiction of the evil side was incomplete. Contrary to apocalyptic literature like 1 Enoch, which presents a more comprehensive overview of the "last days" including the history, the past of the villains, and minute details of the conflict involving both sides, the account of the evil angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls emphasized God's justice and mercy. The narrative of the evil angels in the Dead Sea Scroll concentrated on reflecting God's just and kindness. The hymn of God and the curse of the evil angel were often combined to create dramatic contrasts. For instance, the writers wrote about the fallen angel being punished on Judgment Day, "Blessed be the God of Israel for all His holy purpose and for His works of truth! Blessed be all those who serve Him in righteousness and who know Him by faith! Cursed be Belial for his sinful purpose and may he be executed for his wicked rule! Cursed be all the spirits of his company for their ungodly purpose and may they be execrated for all their service of uncleanness!"[26] These four sentences followed the exact same pattern, each beginning with a pair of antonyms – "blessed" and "cursed" – creating a dramatic mood. The Scroll writers accused Belial of his "sinful purpose" and his followers of their uncleanness without elaborating on the specific purpose or type of uncleanness. Thus, the depiction of this role did not aim to narrate a complete apocalyptic story; rather, it served solely as a means to contrast and highlight the magnificence of God, reflecting Scroll's dualistic worldview. According to Jane Duhaime, the authors "were reluctant to describe God and Belial as two almost equal opponents."[27]

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[26] Vermes, "The War Scroll," 176.

[27] Jane Duhaime, "Dualistic Reworking in the Scrolls from Qumran," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49 (1987): 56.

Another important aspect of dualistic views was the accusation of corrupt priests in Jerusalem. The accused individuals were condemned for their impure actions, which the Scroll did not explicitly define. However, this ambiguity allowed the readers to associate these figures with those who acted against the community while claiming to be just. The members of Qumran lived an ascetic life, while the corrupt priests in Jerusalem were quite the opposite. Therefore, the portrayal of the villains in their writings somewhat could be understood as a "silent protest" from the Qumran Essenes to the Jerusalem priesthood. Although the writers of the Scrolls did not explicitly express their personal disdain towards the wicked priests, their writings aimed to convince Qumran members of their just and righteous behavior by dramatizing the evil power and its punishments. Scholars such as Duhaime also generally affirm a dualistic description, suggesting that the concept of a personalized celestial mediator provided a divine assistance to a community that perceives itself in distinctly dualistic terms. This interpretation reflected the community's pursuit of identity and self-legitimization, as well as the polemical nature of a priestly group intentionally isolated from the broader Israelite community.[28] Furthermore, the Qumran community believed that their current ascetic lifestyle would ultimately be blessed by God since they were the loyal and pure individuals. Dualism in Qumran scrolls catalyzed communal self-esteem by positioning the members of Qumran as the absolute just side and affording the cost of abandoning a more comfortable lifestyle in the cities. The dramatic contrast between how just the members were and how sinful the rest of men was effectively reduced hesitation regarding community doctrines and led members to form a tightly-knit group.

[28] Ibid.

Thirdly, the group emphasized the abandonment of individualism and prioritized communal concern, as shown by its approach to personal possessions and a strict hierarchical system. There was a complex and two-year-long evaluation process for the new members after completing a series of trials and joining the community. The individuals' primary objective during the evaluation was to learn the rules of the community and purify themselves from the uncleanness. Each year the council of the community would evaluate that person and decide his destiny. In the Community Rule, the authors provide instructions for handling personal property by claiming "to enter the company of the Community, his property and earnings shall be handed over to the Bursar of the Congregation who shall register it to his account and shall not spend it for the Congregation"[29]; regarding the assessment in the second year, the rules noted, "his property shall be merged and he shall offer his counsel and judgment to the Community."[30] The property and earnings reflected one's social background. However, as one submitted those to the community for communal use, he abandoned the past social identity and gained a new one within the community.

Qumran Essenes shared a similar perspective on wealth, as Josephus noted in his account, "for it is a law among them, that those who come to them must let what they have to be common to the whole order, insomuch that among them all there is no appearance of poverty, or excess of riches, but every one's possessions are intermingled with every other's possessions, and so there is, as it were, one patrimony among all the brethren."[31] His description outlined the reasoning behind collecting the possessions of new community members, intending to avoid financial

[29] Vermes, "The Community Rule," 106.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Josephus, Book II Chp 8:3

disparities within the community. Regardless of their previous socioeconomic status or class in society, individuals would leave these behind upon joining the community and embarking on a new life. The abandonment of the individual past was an effective way to maintain the community because only if an individual could completely discard the secular lures, money, or social status, he would fully accept this new lifestyle and immerse himself into spiritual practices without doubt or hesitation.

Although the members of the Qumran community abandoned their past social class in their original cities, they were assigned a new ranking within the communal hierarchy. As the Community Rule noted, new members would be evaluated based on "their understandings and their deeds,"[32] and the rankings were variable in "accordance with his understanding and perfection of his way, or his distortion."[33] Given the ranking in the community, they were obligated to adhere to the established hierarchy, as exemplified by the statement "one may obey his companion, the men of lesser rank obeying his superior."[34] Developing a complete hierarchy inside the community created a solid sense of belonging to the members since they were fully convinced that holding this new identity and following the rules made them nothing but purer than ever. Furthermore, the members of the Qumran community studied, ate, rested, and dressed uniformly, with each person contributing specific duties. Any negative emotions toward individuals or secular desires were strictly forbidden, resulting in the gradual dissolution of major differences between members. Every member then would be less likely to question the

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[32] Vermes, "The Community Rule," 105.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

community because the exact same lifestyle for everyone here was a silent affirmation of the justice and righteousness of the community.

The Qumran original composed scroll, such as Community Rule and Messianic Rule, among the Dead Sea Scrolls addressed a variety of diverse themes such as the founding "history" of the community, the series of rules of communal daily life, and the epic war between the good and the evil. While scholars agree that Qumran was an apocalyptic community due to the inclusion of eschatology in their apocalypse, this hope for the future was slightly different from what people commonly think of at present based on the Book of Revelation in which a detailed afterlife in the Holy City was well-depicted. The section that Vermes titled as "New Jerusalem" provides numerous measurements of the new city but does not delve into the Qumran members' new life in it, unlike the narratives present in John's Revelation. Commonly, a huge part of the apocalypse was the depiction of a bright future, creating a strong contrast with the present reality, as Reddish notes,

> Apocalyptic writings continue to offer hope also to people who feel overwhelmed by the world. The problems confronting the modern world are certainly enormous– overpopulation, environmental pollution and deterioration, threat of nuclear annihilation, global conflicts, crime, poverty, and hunger. The apocalyptic writers invited their modern readers to look beyond the problems to the God who still sovereign over the universe. They affirm that ultimately God will prevail.[35]

Rather, no accounts ever recorded that the purpose for entering Qumran was failing to endure a worse situation that they were previously from; rather, they chose this ascetic lifestyle in pursuit of moral and spiritual purity, and it was highly probable that their previous life had a more comfortable secular living condition than Qumran. To them, the issue they found in society was uncleanness. They despised it, so they came to Qumran, a pure place bringing their hope back.

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[35] Mitchell G. Reddish, introduction, in *Apocalyptic Literature: A Reader* (Hendrickson, 1995), 36.

To the people of Qumran, death was not the way for the pure ones to enter the New Jerusalem. Their daily practices and lifestyle were preparation for that holy state. The transition from one stage to another, in the Qumran context, seemed to be their hope for the future, but not necessarily through the physical death in the present world. Scholars such as Collins claim that the Scrolls barely referred to the resurrection of the dead. He gives a hypothesis that "the transcendence of death was not necessarily to be awaited as strictly future. It could also be experienced as present reality."[36] Collins also suggests that it was possible that members at Qumran were convinced they had already possessed eternal life. As he argues persuasively, closely reading the passage he cited from The Community Rule includes phrases such as "you have lifted me up to the eternal height; you have apportioned to man an eternal destiny with spirits knowledge."[37] The perfect tense in the English translation reflecting the original Hebrew, expresses the process of reaching heaven. Additionally, in the Messianic Rule, the authors offered an explicit explanation for the strictness of purity: "Nor shall anyone who is afflicted by any form of human uncleanness whatsoever be admitted into the assembly of God…for holy angels are present in their congregation."[38] As the angelic figures were perceived as involved in the Qumran community, its members might more confidently embrace the rigid communal rules. Qumran members were not suicidal in their apocalyptical expectation of transcendence. Instead, they were awaiting the final judgment from God and had gratification in daily practice and the angelic interaction at the same time.

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[36] John J. Collins, "Apocalyptic Eschatology as a Transcendence of Death Download Apocalyptic Eschatology as a Transcendence of Death," essay, in *Seers, Sybils, and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Brill, 1997), 89.

[37] Collins, "Apocalyptic Eschatology," 90.

[38] Ibid.

In conclusion, the hope for the "future" in the Qumran context did not emphasize the afterlife after the judgment by transcending from death. Instead, the transition from one stage to another was given great significance. As the rules of the community were seriously and strictly executed for the angelic existences inside the community, the community itself was regarded as a sacred place. Different from other Jewish groups that the Qumran community despised, it was, to its members, another stage of life, a spiritual utopia. Perhaps to the members, the moment when they left for Qumran was divinizing as they entered another stage of life. With the increasing self-esteem and honor after passing the trials and receiving a position in this sacred community, they enjoyed their lifestyle under the rules instead of regarding it as "ascetical." This was fostered in part by the conviction that the Qumran community alone was the elect and favored of God, leading to a sense of idealized contentment, regardless of whether individuals acknowledged it explicitly.

From an outsider's perspective, the mode of the Qumran community may seem absurd and nonsensical because the lifestyle was materially suffering and no one knew if they were receiving the blessing from God as they wished at the end of the day. Broadly, to maintain stability, the community relied on three integral and interdependent elements: establishing links with the past, adopting dualistic perspectives, and abandoning individualism. Three elements functioned collectively and mutually. An individual left all his past and even himself behind and got a different new identity in the geographically utopian community that the charismatic leaders founded, appealing to him to a communal life without any individual awareness and creating a dualistic worldview; then by learning and practicing along with the groups of people who did the same, one was more convinced of two things: one was that he had a deep connection with his

revered ancestors from the wilderness period and another one was that only Qumran community were acting rightly and the rest of the world did not which would be punished by God. As Collins argues as well,

> Apocalypticism and Torah observance, then, are complementary in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Apocalypticism provides a supporting framework that enables people to endure and persist when the world seems to be against them. True reality is hidden, but it will soon be revealed, and vindicated in a judgment. The criteria for that judgment, however, can vary. In the case of the Scrolls, they were provided by the Torah of Moses, properly interpreted.[39]

Due to their limited contact with the outside world and reluctance to entertain diverse perspectives, the members of Qumran were oblivious to the fact that they had deluded themselves into a pleasant and indulgent trance. The solace and elation they gained from the spiritual practices and this lifestyle helped them to withstand abject living conditions.

Though from a contemporary point of view, it was impossible to explore if the Qumran community members received blessings from God as they wished, most scholars agreed that the site was destroyed during the Second Temple Period by the Romans. The defeat of "villains" by God was not witnessed by the community. The community came to an end, while the world continued on. Existing for a short period, Qumran was a perfect shelter for the desperate ones and granted hope more than they had ever received before. However, its biggest downfall was that this model was not everlasting. Despite this, the ultimate objective of Qumran was always focusing on spiritual practices, so its participants had not experienced the destructive power of this "spiritual utopia". Their model played a key role in the extremely rapid development of a newborn nation or a community in the contemporary world that included plenty of people who

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[39] John J. Collins, "The Scrolls and Judaism," in *The "Dead Sea Scrolls": A Biography* (Princeton University Press, 2013), 182, accessed January 10, 2023, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1r2fb3.8.

shared a common traumatic past and sought to find hope for a better future. Joining those apocalyptic groups, seemed to provide them the meaning of their life, so they tended to do more work in return to the community. However, when the leaders' promises of imminent destruction and salvation failed to materialize, disappointment and frustration led to explosive chaos with the potential to influence social and government interference.

The Miracle of the Middle East: "Restore" the Promised Land

As Ari Shavit described the state of Israel in its early stage, "Israel's 1950s are not defined by misfortune but by a fit of human greatness. Against all odds, most of the Holocaust survivors of the housing estate make it. Against all odds, Ben Gurion's Israel pulls through. The Israel into which I was born in late 1957 does not only overcome its horrific past, it launches a radiant future."[40] After this Jewish state was formally founded in 1948, it became the shelter and home to a large number of Holocaust survivors and Jewish immigrants from all over the world. Remarkably, its government, with assistance from its international allies, successfully developed solutions to address a variety of challenges facing new immigrants, including employment, housing, and education. The results of the 50s were a quiet success: "Real GNP (gross national product) grew by an average annual rate of over 11 percent, and per capita GNP by greater than 6 percent"[41]; "From 1950 through 1955, Israel's economy grew by about 13% each year, and just under 10% in the subsequent years into the 1960s, according to Dan Senor and Saul Singer's *Start-Up Nation*, a book documenting the story of Israel's 'economic miracle.'"[42] Economically, the data showed this young state was on its way fulfilling that promise of "realize the redemption of Israel."[43] Although the use of "redemption" here had an apocalyptic connotation, Israel never claimed itself as apocalyptic. Some of its founding documents and social policies, however,

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[40] Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel* (New York, N.Y.: Spiegel & Grau, 2013), 172.

[41] Nadav Halevi, "A Brief Economic History of Modern Israel," in EH.Net Encyclopedia, ed. Robert Whaples (March 16, 2008), URL https://eh.net/encyclopedia/a-brief-economic-history-of-modern-israel/.

[42] Shoshana Solomon, "From 1950s Rationing to Modern High-Tech Boom: Israel's Economic ...," *The Times of Israel*, Apr 18, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/from-1950s-rationing-to-21st-century-high-tech-boom-an-economic-success-story/.

[43] Jewish People's Council, *The Declaration of The Establishment of The State of Israel,* May 14, 1948, https://www.gov.il/en/departments/general/declaration-of-establishment-state-of-israel.

revealed apocalyptical views which were commonly held among apocalyptical communities like Qumran. The success of the rapid development of Israel in its early stage (1948-1969), surprisingly, could be attributed to three significant features that the Qumran community used to possess: usage of the religious past, dualism, and the abandonment of personal pasts by community members, but these elements were slightly different according to Israeli's context. The citizens of this new state held the belief that it was a great honor to reside in "the Promised Land" and endeavored to realize the utopian image promised by their leaders. While no direct evidence indicates that Israel's founding fathers studied and incorporated Qumran's model into the country's policies, the similarities between the two models underscores the power of the "spiritual utopia" in these communities. While I am not suggesting that these three factors are the sole reasons for the developments, I have only chosen three common themes to build my arguments between the Qumran community and Waco.

This chapter will explain these three aspects based on the Declaration of Israel's Independence 1948, Plan Dalet(Plan D), and the Israeli Names Law along with recent scholarship on the selected documents and the interviews from Shavit's *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel*. From these perspectives, I will examine the terminology used in Israel's Declaration of Independence to characterize Israel's perspectives on land ownership in relation to the Canonical past. Then I will analyze polarized views of the Israeli-Palestine wars using Plan Dalet and the extreme Zionist interpretation of the apocalypse. Finally, I will argue that the abandonment of the Israeli immigrants' European past functioned in the development of Israel as spiritual utopia. This chapter concentrates only on the early stage of Israel, defined as 1948-1960, and will not explore the long-term conflicts between Israel and Arab/Palestine.

The Declaration of Israel's Independence(formally the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel)was proclaimed on May 14, 1948, at the United Nations by David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel and the Executive Head of the World Zionist Organization. This document declared the establishment of the Jewish State of Israel and ended the British Mandate by midnight on the same day. The first draft was written by Zvi Berenson; the second and the final drafts were revised by a group of Jewish leaders. As one of the most significant founding documents of modern Israel, this Declaration emphasized the connection between the Jews and the land of Israel. Among its arguments, religion held an important position, as the opening stated, "ERETZ-ISRAEL [(Hebrew)The Land of Israel] was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious, and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books."[44] Not only did the document claim the origin of the Jewish faith, but its mention of the Book of Books (also known as the Bible) gave the Jews credit for establishing one of the world's greatest religious texts for the rest of the world. In the following section of the Declaration, the importance of religion was reflected in deliberate word choices establishing the connection between contemporary Jews and their canonical ancestors.

When the declaration provided a basic overview of the State, it used a few religious terms,

> THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants

[44] Jewish People's Council, *The Declaration*.

> irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions.[45]

Here, the Declaration expressed several main points: Israel welcomed all Jews to move back to its territory from their locations; this nation would fulfill the visions of freedom, justice, and peace which were foresaw by prophecies. The first Biblical term was "Exiles." This usage referred directly to Jewish to be forced to leave Israel. According to canon, the return from the Exile was under God's blessing and guidance and he would provide land of Israel prepared for his Jewish followers, as Jeremiah 29:14 stated: "'I will be found by you," declares the Lord, 'and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,' declares the Lord, 'and will bring you back you the place from which I carried you into exile.'"[46]

In terms of the Holocaust, the verse from Jeremiah perfectly fit Jews' situation, suggesting that Israeli Jews intended to realize the Lord's promise to their ancestors that he would bring them back to the land of Israel. The rationale of this statement in the Declaration was to legitimize the returning of Jews to this land and founding of the Jewish State of Israel. The biblical expression here aimed to give hope to worldwide Jews that they could safely return to the homeland just as their ancestors always returned after the fatal exiles. The second biblical expression in the selection of the Declaration was "prophets of Israel." The authors depicted three central features of the State as freedom, justice, and peace. Their additional reference to the prophets expanded faith and determination to restore the glory of Israel as their ancestors did. In the biblical texts, often a prophecy of a bright future, commonly connected to the rebuilding of

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[45] Jewish People's Council, Declaration.

[46] Jeremiah 29:14

the Temple and New Jerusalem, comes after exiles or other destructive events to Jews. For example, Ezekial one of the most significant Jewish prophets, had a vision of a new land of Israel and Holy City guided by God after a series of chaos. During Ezekial's visit to the restored Israel accompanied by God in his vision, God declared the land should be "just and right" and no one could oppress his people.[47] More Jewish apocalypses like Ezekial's gave a hopeful new land to Jewish people, so the Declaration's references were written to give the Jewish audiences hope, to develop their faith in this new State, and to appeal to them to return to their homeland.

The references to the Canonical past in the Declaration emphasized the importance of religion, Judaism, in this State. Its narratives and arguments aimed also to depict a great goal to restore the Jewish state of their canonical ancestors. Jewish audiences of this announcement generally had a solid background in canonical texts so citing the phrases from those built a tight connection between the new State and the worldwide Jews. An effective strategy to appeal to immigrants as the national leadership of Israel showed their respect and emphasis on Jewish faith and culture. Additionally, the Declaration's original written document had religious annotation. According to Martin Kramer's article "Three Weeks in May: How The Israeli Declaration of Independence," the formal version of the declaration was inscribed on parchment, resembling a Torah scroll, and it utilized the same calligraphic script known as Ktav Stam, traditionally employed in the creation of such scrolls.[48] In Hebrew, such a document is referred to as a "megillah," signifying a "scroll," a term specifically associated with specific sacred writings. Presenting the declaration using the traditional Jewish way suggested that the Israeli leaders gave

[47] Ezekiel 45:8-9

[48] Martin Kramer, "Three Weeks in May: How the Israeli Declaration of Independence Came Together," Mosaic Magazine, May 19, 2021, https://mosaicmagazine.com/observation/israel-zionism/2021/05/three-weeks-in-may-how-the-israelideclaration-of-independence-came-together/.

this document a level of importance with those ancient sacred Jewish writings. These citations of biblical terms recreated the past traditions, and could be refer as the supportive evidences to reflect the key purpose of the Declaration— "the redemption of Israel."[49]

Quite apart from the deep historical reflection of the Declaration, the post-canonical history of Masada was also used to legitimize Zionism before the establishment of the State of Israel. Masada used to be a military fortress on the western coast of the Dead Sea built in the second century BCE. It was not famous until King Herod's invasion in the first century CE, which led to group suicide for their faith. The Roman army laid siege to Masada and built ladders in preparation for a final attack. However, on the night before the attack, the Jews remaining in the fortress, including men, women, and children, committed suicide. They believed that taking their own lives was preferable to being killed by the Roman army.

Masada, located in a relatively isolated place, was barely mentioned by ancient scholars. It was abandoned for centuries until the twentieth century when the Zionist movement was at its peak, but it then gave a deep meaning to Masada. *The Jewish War*, the only ancient account that has ever mentioned Masada, was translated into Hebrew.[50] This led to unprecedented enthusiasm for a pilgrimage to Masada. The translation of *The Jewish War* came with a slogan cited from Yitzhak Lamdan's Zionist poem: "Never again shall Masada fall."[51] This phrase became a rallying cry for the pre-State Zionists. In the 1940s, Jews in Palestine were confronting endless conflicts with local Arabs while Nazis were executing Jews in Europe. Depression and a series of

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[49] Jewish People's Council, Declaration.

[50] Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land, 80.*

[51] Yael Zerubavel, "The Death of Memory and the Memory of Death: Masada and the Holocaust as Historical Metaphors," *Representations* 45 (January 1, 1994): 77, accessed Jan 17, 2024, https://doi.org/10.2307/2928603.

helplessness about the future spread among Jewish groups. The Zionist leaders understood clearly that they were in trouble and a new faith was strongly needed. In 1942, groups of Jewish youths, led by Shmaryahu Gutman, a dedicated Zionist, embarked on a pilgrimage to Masada. Despite his lack of official position among Zionist leaders, Gutman, a historian, and educator, organized the trip with an educational purpose: to commemorate the connection between Masada and the Jewish people and to "make Masada the new locus of Zionist identity."[52] The journey presented numerous challenges. The young men experienced anxiety, fatigue, and dehydration throughout the trip. However, according to Gutman, these challenges were necessary for the purpose of the pilgrimage. He believed that the essence of Zionism was to keep moving forward without retreating or resting,"the essence of Zionism is momentum–never to retreat, never to rest, always to push forward. The new Hebrews must push the limits of what the Jews can do, of what any people can do. They must defy fate."[53] The group celebrated its final arrival at Masada and praised their ancestors' bravery a thousands of years earlier. In Gutman's representation, Masada was given a new apocalyptic meaning to interpret the reality–the Jews were facing the exact same problem as their ancestors of Masada: enemies were everywhere around this land but they would not give up the land to their enemies for living.

According to Shavit, in *My Promised Land*, Gutman's revived of Masada as a historical model was successful. News and media reported the Zionists' pilgrimage to Masada, and the members of the trip shared their reflections within the Jewish community. These perspectives led to an increase in studies and trips to Masada, which then became the new spiritual center for the

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[52] Yael Zerubavel, "The Death of Memory and the Memory of Death", 81.

[53] Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land,* 84.

young Zionists in just a few months. Shavit concludes that the recurrence of Masada in Jewish history, "it's not only a historical legend whose purpose is to prepare the Jews for a desperate war in the Land of Israel. Now Masada is a mythical, almost metaphysical metaphor for the loneliness of the Jewish people."[54] In the pre-State context, Zionists brought the ancient myth which was almost lost back to the light as they realized the Jews over the world were facing catastrophe and their "promised land" once again was falling. Using the past to develop hope, nationalism, and determination can stimulate the potential of the youth to make sacrifices for their land.

Like the Qumran Essenes, the twentieth century Zionists studied and renewed history. They developed bonds with their pasts when the situation was getting worse and a faith was strongly needed for lost and desperate people. Yael Zerubavel has studied this phenomenon with a focus on Masada as a collective memory of Israeli Jews. She claimed that before the Holocaust, Masada lacked attention because suicide was condemned by Judaism and there was limited historical evidence. However, the bond between Masada and Israeli Jews was reestablished as oppression towards Jews increased.[55] Zerubavel concludes,

> For the Jewish settlers in Palestine and especially for their native sons and daughters, the first generation of "New Hebrews," "Masada was not simply a geographical site, nor was it merely an episode from Antiquity. It represented a highly symbolic event that captured the essences of the authentic national spirit and helped define their own historical mission as the direct followers of the ancient Hebrews. The Masada episode, marking the end of the Jewish Revolt against the Romans, embodied the spirit of active heroism, love of freedom, and national dignity that, according to Zionist collective memory, had disappeared during the prolonged period of Jewish life in Exile. Masada was, therefore, raised as a model of behavior and an important patriotic lesson for the New Hebrews' education. To fulfill this role, the Masada commemorative narrative required a highly selective representation of the

[54] Yael Zerubavel, "The Death of Memory and the Memory of Death", 96.

[55] Yael Zerubavel, 74.

> historical record. By emphasizing certain aspects of Josephus's account and ignoring others, the commemorative narrative reshaped the memory of that episode and transformed its meaning.[56]

The educational purpose of Masada was then to promote nationalism and patriotism among the new generation. In order to realize the dream of developing an ideal Jewish State in the Promised Land, it was important and effective to create collective memories using accounts of antiquity to establish connections and to instill hope during times of threat. This strategy was similar to that of the Qumran Essenes, who used their "history" to assure themselves and manifest a positive future. Whether the Qumran Essenes achieved their goal was unclear, but the post-WWII rapid development of the state demonstrated the effectiveness and significance of patriotic education among young people.

Polarizing ideology also was essential to the founding stage of Israel, and it persists. Its approaches involved much more violence than the Qumran community saw. Starting in the late nineteenth century, when groups of Jews gradually moved back to Palestine due to the Second World War, armed conflicts grew more fierce, eventually becoming a long-lasting war between ethnicities. Compared to contemporary Israeli, the dualism of the Qumran community doctrine seems gentle, only including criticism and exclusivity regarding non-members. Qumran members despised non-members for their impiety, believing their own group practiced correctly. By contrast, Israelis, though they indeed were facing genocide worldwide, enacted series of military plans for reconquering their promised land and establishing a Jewish state. Therefore, they intended to respond with comparable actions to fight back, similar to a famous phrase from

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[56] Yael Zerubavel, 75.

the Old Testament "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."[57] In 1947, the UN voted and approved the Partition Plan of Palestine to create a Jewish and an Arab state. This decision triggered a series of riots by the local Arabs, causing death on both sides, so the Israeli government carried out official military operations toward the Palestinians. Among all the military documents, Plan Dalet stands out as it was a military strategy devised by Zionist forces during the civil war phase of the 1948 Palestine conflict. This plan aimed to secure territory in Mandatory Palestine as part of the groundwork for establishing a Jewish state. Requested by David Ben-Gurion, the plan was developed by the Haganah and finalized on March 10, 1948.[58] Every military move in this Plan was directed by one aim: only if the Israelis conquer Palestine, they would be able to survive from this unprecedented threat; not only the Nazi was the enemy, but also the people who refused to surrender the Promised Land to the Jews.

The opening of the Plan defined the "enemy" of this military operation: "the semi-regular forces of the Liberation Army affiliated with the Arab League, the regular forces of neighboring countries, and small local forces."[59] Not only did the plan regard the Palestinian forces as enemies, but also the military of the surrounding countries. The Arab League and Palestinian regional forces gathered and started attacking Israeli territories. For the Israeli government, the joy from the UN's decision was immediately replaced by the anxiety from the rising tension with all its neighbors. Moreover, the document also noted "small local forces" without giving an explicit definition. As the plan was executed, the Israeli government sent out flyers asking Palestinians voluntarily to leave. As the Lebanese paper AlHayat stated, "we have no wish to

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[57] Levi 24:20

[58] "Plan Dalet", *Wikipedia*, last modified March 24, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plan_Dalet.

[59] Sefer Toldot Hahaganah, *Plan Dalet*, March 10, 1948, http://www.mideastweb.org/pland.htm.

fight ordinary people who want to live in peace, but only the army and forces which are preparing to invade Palestine. Therefore . . . all people who do not want this war must leave together with their women and children in order to be safe. This is going to be a cruel war, with no mercy or compassion. There is no reason why you should endanger yourselves."[60]

Consequently, a large number of Palestinians migrated to other Arab countries, but some chose to stay. The term 'small local force' could refer to the remaining citizens who were not part of the regular force. Whether they were defending themselves or intentionally attacking, the Haganah considered remaining Arabs as enemies. The goal of the Israeli army, according to Plan Dalet, was to eliminate all Palestinian Arabs who remained in this land. The deep rationale behind the total exclusion of Arabs in Israel, according to Simha Flapan, was that "they projected onto the Arabs the wrath and vengefulness that they felt toward the Nazis. This process was facilitated by propaganda that consistently depicted the Arabs as the followers of Hitler. The theme of 'Hitler's pupils' ran through Ben-Gurion's speeches regardless of the reality of serious contacts with Arabs and Palestinian leaders about achieving a *modus vivendi*."[61] From the effect of spreading flyers and targeting all Arabs remaining, the Israeli government clearly executed these polarized thoughts of all Arabs as enemies into their military plan.

Plan D's targeting of Israel's enemies was also reflected in the assigned duties section. The Haganah not only aimed to expel the locals, but also wiped out their cities in and outside of the broader setting by the Paritian Plan from the UN. For example, under *Assignments of Duties*, the Plan Dalet laid out,

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[60] Simha Flapan, "The Palestinian Exodus of 1948," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16 (1987): 10, accessed Jan 12, 2024, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2536718.

[61] Simha Flapan, The Palestinian Exodus, 12.

> Mounting operations against enemy population centers located inside or near our defensive system in order to prevent them from being used as bases by an active armed force. These operations can be divided into the following categories:
> Destruction of villages (setting fire to, blowing up, and planting mines in the debris), especially those population centers which are difficult to control continuously.
> Mounting search and control operations according to the following guidelines: encirclement of the village and conducting a search inside it. In the event of resistance, the armed force must be destroyed and the population must be expelled outside the borders of the state.
> The villages which are emptied in the manner described above must be included in the fixed defensive system and must be fortified as necessary.[62]

Clearly, the goal of Plan D was not only to expel the Arabs and establish a totally Jewish state, but to completely eliminate their past on this land by firing the villages and replacing them with Israeli defensive bases as well. This erasing of the previous residents' culture and history reflected the panic toward the Arabs, as they did not see those cultures as a part of the history of this land, rather as evil and absolutely hostile. Completely eliminating the Arabic culture in Plan D was the method to secure the Israeli state. Simultaneously, to ensure the homogeneity of Israel, the Haganah even decided to attack the Arab bases outside but close to the border. According to the section “Occupation and Control of Front line Enemy Positions”,

> The aim of this plan is not an operation of occupation outside the borders of the Hebrew state. However, concerning enemy bases lying directly close to the borders which may be used as springboards for infiltration into the territory of the state, these must be temporarily occupied and searched for hostiles according to the above guidelines, and they must then be incorporated into our defensive system until operations cease.[63]

Although this statement is less aggressive and focuses on the concept of “temporary occupation”, it still demonstrates the Israeli government's determination to prevent any potential Arab resistance in or near their new state. Zionism led the Israelis to adopt an extremely polarized

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[62] Sefer Toldot Hahaganah, Plan D.

[63] Ibid.

perspective on Palestinians and neighboring Arabs, making their people's coexistence with Jews in the same land impossible. As Flapan noted, the Israeli Jews barely recognized the rights of Palestinian Arabs at the beginning, no matter when they first moved back or at the pre-State stage. The Arab's self-defense was regarded as the destruction of the peaceful Jewish settlements.[64] Zionism was deeply ingrained in the Jewish settlers, particularly at a time when they had not yet recovered from the trauma of the Second World War. These settlers carried continuous panic and hatred towards Palestinian Arabs. Zionists were fully convinced that they were the owners of the land of Palestine and others who used to inhabit this region automatically became their enemies. This rationale was reflected in these military plans from the expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs to burn down their cultural heritages. The Israeli government hoped to eliminate non-Jewish elements without regard for the historical preservation of culture due to the polarized Zionist ideology that viewed everything from previous Palestinian Arabs as a harmful threat to their Jewish state. The polarized ideology of Jewish settlers was performed in a more merciless and inhumane way compared to that of the Qumran Essenes. In this case, we can see how polarized ideology was applied in politics and the military to create fear and hatred, which then led to a powerful national movement aimed at expelling another racial group from the land.

A dualistic worldview was an essential feature of earlier apocalypticism, which usually portrayed a conflict between the evil and good(commonly referred to the targeting readers). Although none of these Israeli leaders had ever directly applied the Jewish Apocalypse or related prophecies to their situations, their collective response as a group under great threat had some parallels with historical models. Unlike the Qumran Essenes, who relied entirely on scripture to

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[64] Simha Flapan, The Palestinian Exodus, 12.

justify themselves, Israeli Jews did not have a well-developed and written "scripture," rather their Zionist ideology, which extended to different understandings among various political parties. Although the Zionist groups disagreed about many issues, they were in absolute agreement on how to handle the conflicts with the Palestinian Arabs. Certainly, the Zionists understood that a war would be mutually damaging and would cost them nearly as many as the Arabs. They also realized neither side was completely right or wrong. However, the Zionist leaders also were aware of a strong need for portraying the Arabs as evil in order to consolidate Israeli nationalism, which would be the driving power to maintain its national security. Therefore, viewing the Arabs as an extremely evil force was a necessary political move for the Zionists who had been under terrible threat for a long time. Without creating direct connections with apocalypticism, the polarized view from it functioned deeply in the conflicts between the Israeli Jews and Arabs.

When the UN recognized the establishment of Israel, the Palestinian Arabs were not the only group who had to abandon their past the Jewish immigrants from all over the world also chose to give up their European or African pasts when they arrived on the land of Israel. Like the Qumran Essenes, who voluntarily gave up all possessions and identities upon joining the group, new immigrants to Israel, whether survivors of the Holocaust or members of the upper class, left behind parts of their past. As Shavit states about the chapter "Housing Estate," "The Jewish State is a man-made miracle. But the miracle is based on denial….Yet the denial of the Palestinian disaster is not the only denial the Israeli miracle of the 1950s is based upon. Young Israel also denies the great Jewish catastrophe of the twentieth century."[65] This nation, composed of

[65] Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land,* 161

immigrants from around the world, quickly gathered as tensions with its neighbors increased, so it was necessary for the government to efficiently organize the immigrants for the purpose of developing military, economy, and education. To maximize production efficiency, the Zionist leaders took a wise move to establish a solid faith in a“utopian” state which required the immigrants to work together to achieve. Most newcomers of Israel carried different severe trauma from WWII, but drowning in sorrow would not be the solution for their future. In the short run, to develop their new Jewish state rapidly, the new citizens should block their emotions about the past and put all effort into building their future. To realize this goal, the Israeli government developed a communal lifestyle so that the new Jewish immigrants could largely immerse into their new home and culture.

In the chapter titled “Housing Estate,” Shavit includes several interviews with new immigrants from Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. Despite they all came from different backgrounds and experienced varying levels of trauma from the Second World War, as one might expect, they gave relatively consistent positive views on their decision to move to Israel. For example, Ze'ev Sternhell, the sole survivor of the Holocaust in his family, came from an upper-class family in Galicia, Spain before the war. He shared his perspective: with the lucky help of others, he was able to obtain a French identity and a chance to live there. However, he still ended up moving to Israel alone to embrace his identity as a Jew. He became emotional when describing his journey, stating,

> This was the last station–no more wandering, no more transformations, no more false identities. No more fraud and forgery. No more not being myself. For subterfuge and deceit were not needed here. Something artificial and scary fell away from me. Something that had to do with the perpetual need I felt to justify myself. But in the State of Israel I no longer had to justify or explain. It was a great relief. I didn’t speak Hebrew yet, I didn’t

> know what the future held. I was alone, without possessions or protection. But I was filled with the amazing feeling that the long, excruciating journey had come to an end.[66]

The State of Israel, the state of Jews, became the utopia for this young teenager who could have stayed in France with fortunate assistance and had had a quite comfortable lifestyle to take the risk to explore a completely new life alone. Despite knowing that he would have to work hard to help establish the state and might miss out on an easier path after the war, young Sternhell prioritized his Jewish identity above all else and fully devoted himself to the state. Although his life in Europe was satisfactory and he received a proper education, he lacked a sense of belonging and Jewish pride, which led him to move to Israel. He chose to start anew in this new nation rather than continue living a life where he could not take pride in his ethnicity.

Similarly, Israel's former chief justice, Aharon (Erik) Barak, also relocated from Europe. Not only did his Hebrew improve rapidly, but also "he viewed himself as someone who was born in Israel and acted accordingly. He didn't tell anyone about Democracy Square or the Children's Action or the ghetto or living in the wall."[67] In addition to intentionally ignoring his European past, he even changed his name to Aharon (a common Jewish name). For Jews like Sternhell and Barak, who had a strong educational background, chose to move to Israel in pursuit of the country's utopian image with enthusiasm and ambition. Their disregard for their European past not only enabled them to start anew, but also propelled them into more prestigious careers dedicated to their nation.

After recounting the story of each Jewish immigrant, Shavit describes their transition to a communal lifestyle which greatly contributed to the nation's rapid growth since its establishment.

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[66] Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land,* 139.

[67] Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land,* 156.

An iconic and successful example was Bizaron housing estate, located in southern Israel. Its population included groups of family immigrants, survivors of the Holocaust and the concentration camps. Shavit collected basic information and the development history of Bizaron from the archives of Tel Aviv's City Hall, which not only recorded the rapid construction of infrastructure in the neighborhood but also the new lives of the individuals. Initially, the housing estates only provided the simplest apartments, but the immigrants managed to renovate them with additional functions and aesthetics. With improved accommodation, these new residents were able to start their careers at a faster pace without spending extra time processing their grief of the past. Medical centers, schools, grocery stores, and many factories marked the growth of this new neighborhood and a seemingly optimistic identity transition from refugees of the war to Israelites.

During the day, Bizaron was bustling and everyone worked hard to advance their careers; in the nights, however, the residents were haunted by their traumatic memories. During the development phase of housing estates, the immigrants refrained from discussing their past and instead silently agreed that focusing on their work was the most beneficial solution for their new life and future generations. Despite growing up in different countries and cultures before the war, at this point, they quickly and completely accepted the fact that they were all Israelites. To gain more belonging to this new identity, not only did they put all their effort into realizing their ideal Jewish utopia, but also they intentionally avoided talking or thinking anything about the Holocaust. This collective mindset proved successful based on the results. The residents of Bizaron excelled in various fields and contributed to young Israel's economic, military, and technological advancements. These achievements were so remarkable that it is hard to believe

they were made by a newly formed immigrant nation. Shavit even concluded, "Israel's 1950s are not defined by misfortune but by a fit of human greatness."[68]

Undoubtedly the development of this new nation was efficient. In a short period of time, Israel rapidly transformed from a shelter for Jewish refugees to a stronger nation with solid military, agricultural, economic, and industrial power. The ability to move forward from past trauma without pausing for grief led to great efficiency in work. Jews coming from all over the world restarted their lives as Israelites and gradually worked towards their imagination of a Jewish state with the lead of Ben-Gurion and his fellow Zionists. It is debatable whether abandoning their European past was the right decision, but it did help them achieve their goals quickly. Avoiding the Holocaust and the war truly was a denial of an essential part of Israel's founding history. However, the purpose-oriented Israelites were fully aware of the threats around them, and their priority was to improve their nation's security for the future. Shavit also affirms the importance of leaving the past behind,

> The Israeli continuum does not have room for the individual. That's also why the Holocaust remains abstract and separate. It's not really about the people living among us. The message is clear: Quiet now, we are building a nation. Don't ask unnecessary questions. Don't indulge in self-pity. Don't doubt, don't lament, don't be soft or sentimental, don't dredge up dangerous ghosts. It's not a time to remember, it is a time to forget. We must gather all our strength now and concentrate on the future… Although vibrant and confident, Israel is not strong enough to deal with the horror of the past. It is still a scrappy society fighting for its life and its future. The Jewish state is a frontier oasis surrounded by a desert of threat. It is not mature enough for self-analysis. It is not tranquil enough to see its own drama in perspective.There are far too many challenges. There is far too much pain. Without self-discipline and self-repression and a degree of cruelty, everything might disintegrate…a lack of awareness was crucial for the success of Israel in its first decade of existence. If Israel had acknowledged what had happened it would not have survived. If Israel had been kind and compassionate, it would have collapsed.[69]

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land,* 161-162

Examining the founding history of the state of Israel, it is undeniable that its numerous achievements were magnificent, attributable to Ben-Gurion's government and the extremely hard-working immigrants. The success of its establishment was due to the determination of the people to realize the Jewish utopia, which was supported by the laws and acts set by the Zionist government. This triumph was reflected in three aspects as explained above: bringing back lost Jewish history from a thousand years ago to legitimize themselves, leaving no mercy or kind toward Arabs who were portrayed as evil in Jewish narratives, and avoiding the collective traumatic past in Europe for rebuilding Israelite identities. Although immigrants rarely brought up respective dark past, these three actions, while slightly extreme, were the natural responses to their trauma and their continuous fear. The State of Israel achieved rapid and successful development in its early decades by implementing these three aspects together. Israel neither claimed it to be "apocalyptic" nor regarded apocalypticism as an essential element in their founding document, but if we dive deep for the primary cause for Jews to choose this specific area to build their state, it was simply based on the Jewish Bible, the stories about "the Promised Land." The imagery of restoring a Jewish State was surprisingly similar to elements of apocalypticism. This strong hope drove an explosive inner force of these survivors from the war to build their new home in the desert. They were more united and had greater potential when facing threats that could lead to extinction.

Like the Qumran Essenes, who believed they were doing the right thing and were accompanied by their faith and hope in getting through inhospitable conditions, Israel's embracement of unity and inner power brought prosperity to it as to Qumran in the short run, but it was not sustainable. Both the Essenes and Israeli Jews had a perfect utopian goal, yet the

realities were often out of control. On the way to bring their dream to reality, these three actions were adapted by both Essenes and Israelites, they did get partial what they were eager for, but not at a small cost. For Israel specifically, not only did they refuse to admit the fact that the Palestinian Arabs' rights on this land, but also intentionally neglected feelings and reflections from the war. Once the state stabilized and required less labor, each individual was eventually granted space to reflect and ended up with disagreement on so many issues which remained unsolved even until now. Israel's economic success was undeniable and it did win international recognition, but it never achieved a lasting peace as the Israeli-Palestine war continues and the fighting between its political parties is restless.

I am not criticizing these strategies as wrong, nor am I making any moral judgments about Israeli actions. Instead, these three aspects were extremely crucial for the founding of Israel. Without the strong will to realize their 'utopia' for Jews, the state would not have achieved success or gained international recognition. Ben-Gurion and his government made a strategic decision to encourage millions of Jewish immigrants to settle in Israel, recognizing that this would be the most effective way to unite a diverse group of people and rapidly advance the state-building process. In Israel's case, The concept of a 'utopia' played a significant role in Israel's political identity and motivated its development despite numerous threats and enemies. To some extent, Israel's primary imagery of a perfect Jewish state has been partially realized, though with some natural outcomes, because the inner force successfully brought Israeli Jews together and proved to the world again their determination and power to survive and grow against all odds.

The Branch Davidians: Jesus in Texas?

Far away from the Holy Land, near Waco, Texas, a non-Jewish religious community surprisingly exhibited similarities with Qumran and twentieth-century Israel. The Branch Davidians, led by David Koresh until 1993, were centered at Mount Carmel, east of Waco. This group and Koresh himself eventually were investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives(ATF) for illegally possessing destructive devices. Koresh refused to be arrested, leading to armed conflicts between the two parties. Consequently, the ATF officially requested the intervention of the federal government and the FBI which was followed by two months of negotiations, but eventually executed the siege of the Mount Carmel complex. The Waco siege was called to an end when a devastating fire engulfed the entire building, resulting in the death of Koresh and most of his followers. Although both sides suffered numerous injuries and fatalities, this was not the only reason why the Waco Siege gained notoriety. More importantly, the incident exposed the unconventional lifestyle of an extremist religious group, or cult, as clarified by all officials. This chapter focuses solely on the lifestyle of the Branch Davidians without addressing any ambiguous or controversial details surrounding the siege. The arguments presented relied on official documents from the FBI, ATF, and archives from the U.S. Department of Justice, as well as interviews with survivors of the Branch Davidians.

According to the report from the U.S. Department of Justice, the Branch Davidians were originally an offshoot of the Seventh-Day Adventists, and they held a strong belief in the imminent Second Coming of Christ. They prepared for an oncoming war by possessing a large

number of weapons.[70] The group's leader, Koresh, taught members to interpret the world using the Book of Revelation and other apocalyptic stories of the Bible. During the government's order to arrest him and seek forfeiture of all communal weapons, he referred to the U.S. government as 'Babylon,' the evil character at the Second Coming of Christ based on the biblical apocalypse. Koresh also required all members, including children, to learn how to use the weapons, including children. The Branch Davidians lived a communal life at Mount Carmel and had minimal interaction with the outside world, believing that only they would join the kingdom of God after the Rapture at the end of time. The members of the sect were mostly from the middle or lower class, in their 20s or 30s, and a few moved to Mount Carmel as a whole family.

According to an Australian journalist Martin King, the only reporter whom Koresh allowed to have a tour at the property, these individuals were all searching for the meaning of their lives.[71] Eventually, they were completely convinced by Koresh's "religious instructions" and devoted everything to him. This chapter will discuss how the charismatic leader used the three aspects from the previous two chapters to create a close and extremely faithful community. These aspects included the connections that Koresh made between himself, the present, and the biblical prophecies; the dualistic interpretation of an evil figure (Babylon), in opposition to Christian virtue; and the uncommon community rules that forced members to give up their past lives. Furthermore, I will incorporate all three arguments and clarify the reasons why this tragedy

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[70] Archives at U.S. Department of Justice, Report to the Deputy Attorney General on the Events at Waco, Texas: Executive Summary, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 1993), https://www.justice.gov/archives/publications/waco/report-deputy-attorney-general-events-waco-texas-executive-summary.

[71] Martin King, Rare interview with David Koresh Inside Waco Compound, produced by A Current Affair, Apr 10, 2023, 7:01, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKbPuNltAcE.

was plausible in the first place. Additionally, I will explore the potential dangers of a strong apocalyptic hope.

The central method that Koresh used to make himself charismatic and attract many followers to Mount Carmel was to build a strong connection between Biblical texts and himself. He also used them to interpret the world around them. Originally named Vernon Howell, Koresh was born into a poor family with both teen parents and received his early education in a special education center. He excelled at learning and memorizing the New Testament, eventually becoming a Christian. After being expelled from previous churches, Koresh joined Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas, where he was encouraged to play music for the group during Bible study sessions. He was later involved in several violent incidents and arguments with both the members and the previous leader of the Branch. In 1990, Koresh officially became the leader of Mount Carmel and changed his name legally into "David Koresh," "David" referring to his leadership of Branch Davidians and "Koresh" emphasizing his divine role (Koresh is the Hebrew translation of Cyrus, the Persian King who defeated Babylon and helped Jews return to Israel).[72] This biblical name change was a crucial step in developing Koresh's absolute authority over the Branch Davidians. David Koresh not only claimed to be the leader of the Branch Davidians, but also presented himself as a prophet, the Messiah, the Son of God, and even God himself. Interviews with members of the group reveal that they placed great trust in Koresh's self-proclaimed identity and teachings.

Titles and biblical names alone could not serve as a persuasive defense for Koresh's charisma and ability to gain trust. In addition, his Bible lessons were another powerful tool. In

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[72] Biography.Com Editors And Colin McEvoy, "David Koresh Biography", The Biography.com, accessed Jan 12, 2024, https://www.biography.com/crime/david-koresh.

the remaining video of Koresh's teaching, showing that his tone was strong and almost aggressive. Unlike stereotypical preaching in a calm situation, Koresh's preaching was interactive with his audience. The leader posed straightforward questions to his followers, who responded in a manner akin to teaching young children about fundamental concepts. According to the report by King, "Several times a day these people down tools and underwent some mental hammering from him, of what he called religious instruction, but psychiatrists say it was really brainwashing."[73] Koresh's teaching approach was forceful and assertive, lacking in gentleness. The video footage reveals that the audience had mixed feelings towards Koresh's instructions, primarily admiration but also a hint of fear. As groups of young people who had figured out their lives and joined Mount Carmel seeking meaning of life, the powerful persuasion and charismatic vibe of Koresh as their hope and faith in life. Some survivors recalled their reflections of his lessons, saying, "it feels closer to God."[74]

Koresh's preaching frequently emphasized his unique interpretation of the book of Revelation and claimed to be able to decode more from it than the previous readers. Although most of his teachings were oral, he sent out a partial manuscript of his decoding of the Seven Seals before the day he died. According to the Book of Revelation, only the Lamb would be able to decode the Seal, so Koresh here intended to spread the message out that he was the Lamb. According to survivor Dana Okimoto's testimony, Koresh thought that a series of extraordinary events would occur in the last days, and God would reveal himself to the world. The Branch

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[73] Martin King, Rare interview with David Koresh Inside Waco Compound, produced by A Current Affair, Apr 10, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKbPuNltAcE.

[74] Dana Okimoto, interviewed by Mike Parkinson, *David Koresh: The Final 24 (Full Documentary)*, directed by Mike Parkinson(2007), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65rUlirPCjI.

Davidians would assist in delivering the message, when God would establish his kingdom on earth.[75] It was unclear whether Koresh's last-minute written preaching to the world through radio was solely performative, as his claim of being prophet or God himself was considered apparently absurd outside of Mount Carmel. Both the government and news reports had already described him as a cult leader. One plausible purpose of Koresh was to demonstrate to the Branch Davidians that he was divine and benevolent for sharing his "knowledge" with the rest of the world before his death. Despite receiving fatal injuries from the shooting on the first day of the siege, Koresh continued to issue orders, make negotiation calls, and do everything in his power to spread his message. One of his followers even commented, "He was shot in the hand and in the side, and he is 33 years old. So, there were lots of similarities between him and Christ."[76] The similarities between Koresh's injuries and Christ's crucifixion surely were coincidence, but Koresh and his followers interpreted them biblically to legitimize the conclusion that Koresh was Jesus. Therefore, sending out his written preaching was a way to inform his followers that he was doing exactly that Jesus did.

Koresh developed a close and loyal apocalyptic community around himself. Understanding those young people's curiosity about the meanings of life, he portrayed himself as a charismatic leader with a biblical name first, and gave compelling lessons to guide his followers into his theology. These were his foundational steps to create his absolute authority in the community, which he later used to manipulate members and fulfill his own will. Although he

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[75] Ibid.

[76] Kathy Schroeder, interviewed by Netflix, *Waco: American Apocalypse Ep2: Children of God*, directed by Tiller Russell(2023; Netflix), 8:32, https://www.netflix.com/watch/81418357?trackId=155573558.

delivered impressive speeches that appeared to provide solutions for those who were lost, his true motivation was to receive more admiration and worship.

Koresh's dualistic worldview was based on the Book of Revelation. He convinced his fellow Davidians that they were the good people and those who did not believe what he said were the evil ones. According to Dick Reavis, the author of *The Ashes of Waco*, "David's followers and David too believed that the army of Babylon, believed to be an army of unbelievers, would attack them."[77] Koresh's followers at Mount Carmel accepted his worldview without any doubt, as they were fully convinced that his words were God's words. To make his argument about the great final battle between good and evil more vivid and real, he not only had his followers build a fortress around the compound but also collected a illegal number of weapons: "136 firearms, 700+ magazines for those firearms, 200,000+ rounds of ammunition, 110 upper and lower receivers for AR15/M16 rifles, Grenade-launcher attachments for AR15/ M16 rifles, and 400+ empty M31 rifle grenades, along with black powder and other explosive chemicals,"[78] according to ATF's official report. The members of Branch Davidians, having seen the weapons and chosen to block information from the outside world, became convinced that the upcoming battle would be epic and dangerous. The members believed it was their responsibility to follow Koresh and fight alongside him. Then they completely fell into the mind trap of Koresh. He was aware that the number of weapons Mount Carmel possessed was illegal and would attract attention from the federal government. Simultaneously, he was aware of his own absolute manipulation of the members, both physically and mentally, to prevent them from

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[77] Dick Reavis, interviewed by Mike Parkinson, *David Koresh: The Final 24 (Full Documentary)*, directed by Mike Parkinson(2007), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65rUlirPCjI.

[78] Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives(ATF), *Remembering Waco,* https://www.atf.gov/our-history/remembering-waco.

identifying that what he intended to do was actually illegal. In fact, some younger members at Mount Carmel had little chance to develop a relatively basic understanding of what was good and bad, legal or illegal, because they grew up understanding what Koresh said was divine and good. As they became proficient with the weapons, the atmosphere of tension and seriousness at the compound created a more vivid image of the end of the world.

As the preparation for the final battle was nearly completed, Koresh then needed to find something to fulfill the role of Babylon in his worldview. Once a prophecy about the "end" was made, it was able to unite people rapidly and manipulate their emotions easily. However, it could not be sustained for a longer period, because people would eventually tire of waiting nervously and return to independent thinking. Koresh was clearly aware of this limitation, otherwise he would not persuade the members commit suicide when he died due to the fatal injuries from the first attack. It appeared that events unfolded as predicted, and it was possible that they were orchestrated. Possessing numerous threatening weapons, Koresh knew there was a potential that the government would interfere, and it was only a matter of time. On February 28, 1993, Koresh declared "the time has come"[79] upon learning that the ATF was en route, suggesting that he had been anticipating their arrival. The instant shooting and siege that occurred fulfilled Koresh's prophecy of the final battle. As a result, the members of Branch Davidian viewed the ATF, FBI, and other federal government organizations as devils.

At a dramatic turn of events, the FBI and Koresh reached an agreement that he would release two children from the compound when the local radio played one time of his recording

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[79] David Koresh, *Waco: American Apocalypse Ep1: In The Beginning*, directed by Tiller Russell(2023; Netflix), 11:48, https://www.netflix.com/watch/81418356?trackId=155573558.

messages. However, the parents from Branch Davidian hesitated to have their children go with the FBI. One mother, Kathy Schroeder, expressed her concerns, stating, "When we are talking about letting the children out, it was hard for me, because here I am sending them to Babylon….Society thinks of people leaving Mount Carmel as people getting their lives saved. I don't care about living, I care about living for God. That was probably the hardest thing I have ever done."[80] Her statement reflected a deep impact of Koresh's eschatological worldview. While the FBI's ultimate goal was to save the children at the compound from abuse and potential violence, Schroeder still insisted that the FBI was evil and she was doing wrong. This polarized worldview was deeply ingrained in the Branch Davidians, who expressed fear and distrust toward law enforcement agencies. The brainwashing was successful because Koresh even persuaded those who had lived outside of Mount Carmel to forget their previous understanding of their country and follow his teachings.

Koresh mindfully used his people's fears to gradually fulfill his "prophecy". In fact, the whole "prophecy of the last battle" was a natural consequence of having possessed a great amount of weapons illegally, but Koresh switched cause and effect here, predicting an impending conflict between good and evil, and then engaged in illegal activity that he knew could attract the attention of the government. After the intervention of the government, he gathered both parties from his "script": he and the Branch Davidians were good, and the government was the evil Babylon. This reversed cause and effect puzzled his members successfully. From their perspective, the Branch Davidians had received a message from Koresh about the war and prepared for it. Shortly after, the "enemy" appeared and shooting began. Everything seemed to

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[80] Schroeder, *Ep1: In The Beginning*, 39:06-39:25 and 40:48.

have perfectly fulfilled Koresh's prophecy, leading the members to further trust Koresh's claim of being God and to believe in his words. Meanwhile, they would be more likely to reject outside voices, so their community remained close-knit as they were the ones witnessing the fulfillment of God's prophecy.

Finally, Koresh's manipulation extended to the unusual relationships between members, which led them to give up their previous marriages before joining Mount Carmel. Koresh not only annulled the marriages of couples upon entering the community, but he also made teenage girls his wives. Under his control, the members of the Branch Davidians willingly abandoned their traditional values regarding family and relationships. Strikingly, men yielded their original wives to become all Koresh's wives, and parents allowed Koresh to have extremely inappropriate relations with their teenage daughters. In an interview with the compound survivors, Schroeder mentioned the obsession with marrying Koresh, "Every single one of us was married to David Koresh, because David was our Christ, giving us truth from God. I remember the Bible studies went all night long, and women would stay up, in the hopes of being the one that he would take to bed with him. Finally, David decided to take me to his room. I am going to be, for the first time, with God alone through David. The whole time we were having sex, it was a Bible study. He did it for me."[81]Koresh convinced everyone at the compound that being his wife and engaging in sexual activities with him was a gift from God. The expectation to be chosen as his sexual partner and mother of his children spread to females of all ages, even those teens. Footage recorded four teenage girls giggling and laughing dreaming of becoming his wife one day.

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[81] Schroeder, *Ep2: Children of God*, 9:10-20:25.

This unusual obsession clearly demonstrates how Koresh successfully blinded his followers to his selfishness behind the image of a glorious and merciful "Christ." Koresh showed a complete disregard for the physical and mental health of the young girls who grew up in the compound and did not receive proper health education. He abused his ultimate authority and victimized the children of his followers. Additionally, he convinced mothers to accept and even participate in the abuse. It was important to note that Schroeder, who was a mother at the time, was also affected by this situation. She was growing up outside of the compound, so theoretically she should have known the basic common sense to ensure teens' health. Surprisingly, she claimed, "People think that a man having sex with a bunch of underaged girls is a crime. And in conventional wisdom, that could be very well true. However, these weren't underaged girls, because you come of age at 12. So all of these girls were adults in our belief system."[82] Schroeder's defense failed to prove Koresh's innocence, but it drastically exposed the group's complete brainwashing as they saw Koresh as different from conventional wisdom. The zealous residents of Mount Carmel were blindly optimistic that they were the only group of women who could receive private time with "God." As the Branch Davidians received more outside judgments, they became closer to each other and more steadfast in their loyalty to Koresh. Negative comments only reinforced their belief that outsiders understood nothing, and that they were the chosen ones alongside "God."

Mount Carmel was a place where obsession and love for Koresh prevailed, resulting in low tolerance for rebellious behavior. Not everyone was completely submissive to Koresh's charisma. Heather Jones, the last child released from the compound, experienced something

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[82] Schroeder, *Ep2: Children of God*, 22.

quite different. Her parents were separated when she was young because her mother refused to become Koresh's wife and fled. Heather stated in the interview about her childhood, "After my mom left, I wasn't allowed to be around my dad. I couldn't eat with him, I couldn't go outside and play like a normal kid, with your father."[83] Though she did not give any better explanation on why Koresh physically separated her dad and her, it might have been a form of punishment or a warning. Her father had been loyal and faithful to Koresh and she was too young to think independently, so a possible reason was that Heather was receiving the small punishment that should have been given to her mother, who refused Koresh's rule. These unhappy childhood experiences never led Heather to develop the fantasy of being Koresh's wife, so Koresh ended up treating her terribly, using violence abuse almost daily.

Heather's experience sheds light on the other side of the story at the compound. Koresh was known to be gentle and rewarding towards those who willingly followed his communal rules and devoted themselves to him. However, when faced with individuals who did not comply with his demands, he resorted to abusive behavior, no matter if they were small children. However, when faced with individuals who did not comply with his demands, he resorted to abusive behavior. Therefore, Koresh was enjoying power and admiration from his followers excessively to the point where he could not tolerate any form of dissent. Koresh sought validation by enforcing toxic communal rules and his narcissism was satisfied by the aggressive behavior of his female followers at Mount Carmel. The more unconventional their behavior, the more satisfied Koresh became. In other words, the members of the Branch Davidians who abandoned their past and individualism to become followers of the "messiah" did not benefit themselves,

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[83] Heather Jones, interviewed by Netflix, *Waco: American Apocalypse Ep2: Children of God*, directed by Tiller Russell(2023; Netflix), 20:53-22:00, https://www.netflix.com/watch/81418357?trackId=155573558.

only Koresh. They believed they were closer to the truth and had developed special connections with God, but unfortunately, they were trapped in the fraudulent daydream that Koresh had created for them.

A miserable fire ended this apocalyptic community and no one could tell whether Koresh and his followers who died had reached the Kingdom of God. Examining Koresh and Mount Carmel's tragedy, a shift in focus among members is evident. While initially attracted to Koresh's preaching of the Book of Revelation, groups of young people who had lost their way became immersed in communal life at Mount Carmel and began to focus solely on Koresh himself, rather than the historical Revelation. Unlike the Qumran community or the new state of Israel, the concept of a 'utopia' was not a response to any dire circumstances at Mount Carmel. None of the members had to confront any type of extreme danger that led them to rely on the Book of Revelation to seek hope. Both the Qumran Essenes and Israeli Jews made decisions with the goal of achieving a better future. While both groups had leadership, neither placed a particular emphasis on divine identity, as Koresh did. Koresh used his preaching in the book of Revelation and his prophecy about the end as his tool to maintain his own charisma. His theology and even his figure were founded on the connections he made between himself and the Bible. After winning the basic trust by giving compelling Bible lectures and changing his name, Koresh realized that the "peaceful" life could not stimulate the nerves of Branch Davidians and help maintain his authority, so he arranged and realized his prophecy of an incoming attack from "Babylon."

The followers of Koresh seemed unaware of the causal relationship between the siege and the possession of weapons. Koresh's fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy helped establish

him as a more divine and charismatic figure. While the unconditional obsession and loyalty of the Branch Davidians made Koresh more radical and absurd in his communal rules, he claimed that following his decisions equaled following God's words and that those strictures ultimately benefited the members. Interviews with survivors clearly indicated that the members of Mount Carmel were living under Koresh's individual will. His followers did not care about death nor the afterlife, they simply were eager to be around Koresh no matter what. Apocalypticism here tended to be Koresh's tool to manipulate the Branch Davidians, because the eschatological scene and vibe would efficiently unite a group of people. Koresh adapted the polarized worldview from the biblical apocalypse to control the emotions and nerves of his group. This strategy proved successful, as his members exhibited great defense and loyalty while confronting the federal government in negotiations and gunfights at Mount Carmel. The strong faith in the charismatic leader and his apocalyptic preachings led to the determination to fight against the federal government and defend the cult.

Conclusion

The Qumran Community, twentieth-century Israel, and the Branch Davidians had little direct connection with each other, but they surprisingly shared similar responses to their own eschatological fantasies. All three communities were established with the assumption of being under fatal threat. Indeed, both the Qumran Essenes and Israeli Jews faced actual threats such as the expulsion from Jerusalem, invasion from the Roman army, and a series of attacks from the Arabs. However, the Branch Davidians did not face such a threat. Their understanding of "threat" was based solely on Koresh's preaching that the evil force would attack them soon. To respond and prepare for possible dangers, three communities, despite their chronological separation, acted similarly. First, three communities used biblical texts to convince their members to fully commit to a new life. The Qumran Essenes viewed their move to the desert as a reference to their scriptural ancestors' Exodus. Israeli Jews believed they were meant to return to the Palestine area because it was the 'Promised Land' given by God. The Branch Davidians' leader, Koresh, used the biblical Apocalypse to interpret reality and convinced his followers that he was Jesus. This initial action set up a foundation for further community expansion, as its appealing perspectives drew in those living in fear or uncertainty. The audience eagerly awaited the subsequent action, enticed by the promise of a different life than the mundane.

To secure the members, three communities then developed a dualistic worldview, in which they all portrayed themselves as the absolute just side and their "threats" as the evil forces. Eventually, the group members would be rewarded with the opportunity to live in a utopia blessed by God, while the 'evil forces' would be punished. This dualistic worldview, although might be viewed as ridiculous by outsiders, served as a catalyst for those who were already

interested in committing to these communities. The members needed a promise from the group leaders that their commitment to the new life would be worthwhile. The dualistic worldview largely increased their confidence in being right and intensified their animosity towards the "evil forces."

As the members were mentally satisfied with the new worldviews, the leaders of three communities then required the members to abandon certain aspects of their previous lives to fully embrace the new communities. The Qumran Essenes gave up their personal possessions and identities from the cities, the Jewish immigrants refused to reflect on their European past before and during the war, and the Branch Davidians completely abandoned their previous belief system and values. These three actions successfully helped create utopian images among the group members, leading them to physically gather and separate themselves from others. Although they had not lived in their utopias yet, they firmly believed that the disaster before the rapture would happen soon and the utopian lives would follow. Despite being morally questionable, the power of these three communities was undeniably significant. The Qumran Essenes formed a tight and faithful community in the Judean Desert and left with a famous historical legacy –The Dead Sea Scroll. In the 1950s, Israel experienced a rapid influx of immigrants and established a strong foundation, positioning itself as a dominant power in the Middle East in 10 years. The Branch Davidians, an illegal cult, became infamous in U.S. history due to their unwavering trust in Koresh and his eschatology.

Although there were many similarities, there were still subtle differences in the exact execution of the three actions due to the different founding purposes of the communities. Israel had more political and military aspects as it was established as a nation, so the Zionist

government intentionally made their policies harsh, leaving little tolerance for their enemies. The Qumran Essenes focused on their own preaching lives and did not attempt to "correct" other people's behavior. Therefore, their communal rules included asceticism and scripture scribbling. In contrast, the Branch Davidians, under Koresh's abusive authority, engaged in immoral and illegal activities such as weapon possession and child abuse.

The pursuit of and belief in utopia could be extremely powerful in the short term, leading its supporters to become addicted and fully devoted due to their despair towards reality. What these disappointed and bored people needed was a miracle, some supernatural signs, or some knowledge that there were still things worth hoping and waiting for. This hope was often related to the familiar story in the Book of Revelation, where the new and everlasting Jerusalem would come after the disasters and the final judgment. Such information and fantasies built a mental utopia for believers, who began to view things differently and recollect their passions. Although the fantasies of the apocalypse varied across different spatial and cultural contexts, they were often portrayed as comforting and illuminating, like a bonfire in the darkness, warm and inviting to those who were lost and wandering. People gathered around it and greedily enjoyed the heat, oblivious to the surrounding darkness, which made them obsessed with the feeling of escaping from the unpleasant reality. It was powerful enough to appeal to a group of Essenes, who developed their community in the barren Dead Sea area. It also called back millions of Jews from all over the world to the new nation built on the land of Palestine. Additionally, it gathered a faithful group of Davidians who shot government officers, even in the twentieth century.

However, the ecstasy brought by the bonfire was momentary, and even its most faithful followers could not deny this fact. The bonfire would eventually burn out and vanish without a

trace after its brightest moments, not only because its fuel was always limited, but also because the groups gathering around it were unable to maintain the ideal environment to keep its flame burning. Unpredictable factors such as wind and rain often interfered with their plans. The brightness was not flawless; rather, it was delicate. Only its believers sought to perfect it, and the groups disbanded once the flame burned out. None of the historians have ever known the full picture of those extreme and isolated Qumran Essenes. However, the scholars mostly agreed that the political and natural environment provided no possibility for the Qumran community to remain there any longer.

After the immigration boom during and after the Second World War, the newly formed nation of Israel carried millions of hopes to restore ancestral glory to the Holy Land. The surviving generations of the Holocaust tried to forget and abandon their European past and were fully devoted to working for their new nation. The first stage was successful–the economy, agriculture, and infrastructure were developed at a surprisingly rapid pace with a common eagerness for a glorious future. As more people were out of poverty and started to confront what was behind the developments, internal political conflicts arose. The Zionists and anti-Zionists accused each other of treason, and the endless conflicts with Arabs remained unsolved. The Branch Davidians were ended by a miserable fire. Although the members gave all their trust to Koresh and his apocalyptic preachings, neither "the end of the world" ever came nor the "villains" in their worldview received the expected punishment from God. The earth is still spinning as it did for the past thousands of years.

These apocalyptic communities, regardless of their cultural, spatial, or religious contexts, originated from dissatisfaction with reality, due to the corruption within the governing class or

the unstable social situations. Individuals who shared this despair then gathered together and devised a solution to cope with their suffering: escape. In order to achieve this, communities needed a set of values or explanations for their suffering. Apocalyptic thoughts provided the best foundation: darkness, suffering, and misery were seen as the path to a glorious future and ultimate happiness. Once fully committed, these communities were already separating from the rest of the society, even when they were still physically living in the common societies or not. After that, they wanted to ensure they were the truth-seekers and those who did not follow their values were ignorant, so they rather spent more time fully immersed in the apocalyptic communities and refused the comments from outsiders. They moved into the mental utopia, though sadly which was not an everlasting and perfect shelter. They saw almost everything as polarized, hoping to be rewarded for their faith and eagerly waiting to see people they disliked punished. After holding onto their passion for a while and realizing that the promised "end," "rapture," or "messiah" did not and would not arrive, the apocalyptic communities disbanded silently. However, this pattern would show up again sometime in the future and the apocalypse never lost its trace in history. Generations by generations, the lost, despaired, and pessimistic ones learned and grasped it tightly–as the light of their lives.

Does this mean apocalypse, in its religious meaning, never loses its importance? The answer would be yes if the question was given to the Qumran people. Their faith in the apocalypse, the Truth, and God was the purest among all communities. However, later generations tended to use the apocalypse as a means to an end, a path to happiness. If they find happiness or what they need in reality, the apocalyptic values or the God behind them would mean nothing. The description of the End in the Book of Revelation was frightening and not

enjoyable. Many hoped to be among the lucky and blessed ones who would have access to the "new Jerusalem."

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