

The Community Rule

Serekh ha-Yahad



Height 8.8 cm (3 7/16 in.), length 21.5 cm (8 7/16 in.)

4Q258 (Sd)

Parchment

Copied late first century B.C.E.–early first century C.E.

Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority (7)

Originally known as The Manual of Discipline, the Community Rule contains a set of regulations ordering the life of the members of the "yahad," the group within the Judean Desert sect who chose to live communally and whose members accepted strict rules of conduct. This fragment cites the admonitions and punishments to be imposed on violators of the rules, the method of joining the group, the relations between the members, their way of life, and their beliefs. The sect divided humanity between the righteous and the wicked and asserted that human nature and everything that happens in the world are irrevocably predestined. The scroll ends with songs of praise to God.

A complete copy of the scroll, eleven columns in length, was found in Cave 1. Ten fragmentary copies were recovered in Cave 4, and a small section was found in Cave 5. The large number of manuscript copies attests to the importance of this text for the sect. This particular fragment is the longest of the versions of this text found in Cave 4.

Reference

Qimron, E. "A Preliminary Publication of 4QSD Columns VII-VIII" (in Hebrew).
Tarbiz 60 (1991):435-37.

English Translation of The Community Rule

And according to his insight he shall admit him. In this way both his love and his hatred. No man shall argue or quarrel with the men of perdition. He shall keep his council in secrecy in the midst of the men of deceit and admonish with knowledge, truth and righteous commandment those of chosen conduct, each according to his spiritual quality and according to the norm of time. He shall guide them with knowledge and instruct them in the mysteries of wonder and truth in the midst of the members of the community, so that they shall behave decently with one another in all that has been revealed to them. That is the time for studying the Torah (lit. clearing the way) in the wilderness. He shall instruct them to do all that is required at that time, and to separate from all those who have not turned aside from all deceit.

These are the norms of conduct for the Master in those times with respect to his loving and to his everlasting hating of the men of perdition in a spirit of secrecy. He shall leave to them property and wealth and earnings like a slave to his lord, (showing) humility before the one who rules over him. He shall be zealous concerning the Law and be prepared for the Day of Revenge.

He shall perform the will [of God] in all his deeds and in all strength as He has commanded. He shall freely delight in all that befalls him, and shall desire nothing except God's will...

Transcription and translation by E. Qimron.

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