‘Doing Justice’ (משפט ובצורת) to the Dead Sea Scrolls: Reading 1QS 8:1–4 in literary and sectarian context

Introduction

Among the various Dead Sea Scrolls appears a document that was discovered in the first Qumran cave, commonly referred to as the Community Rule. Within that document appears the following rather positive passage (1QS 8:1–4):

Within the Community Rule, 1QS 8:1–4 has at times been used as an intertext to support claims pertaining to the future expectations of both early Jesus movements and the historical Jesus himself. In particular, the passage has functioned as an intertext to support the notion that Jesus and some of his earliest movements foresaw the future restoration and liberation of greater Israel in toto, including outsiders. Without getting involved in this larger New Testament debate, the current article wishes to address the appropriateness of using 1QS 8:1–4 as an intertext without taking its literary and sectarian contexts into consideration. Focusing throughout on the interrelationship between judgement and boundary demarcation, this article will unfold in a centripetal manner. Firstly, it will treat the commonalities among all the sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls. Secondly, the discussion will direct its focus specifically to the Community Rule. Finally, we will look at 1QS 8:1–4 in particular.

1QS 8:1–4 has at times been used as an intertext to support claims pertaining to the future expectations of both early Jesus movements and the historical Jesus himself (see e.g. Horsley 1987:165–284, 200, 201–208, 1992:175, 198–199, 206–209, 1995:39, 2003:79–104, 2011, esp. 205–211; cf. Allison 1998:142; Davies & Allison 1997:55, esp. n. 119; Kaylor 1994:187; Van Aarde 2011:1 n. 3). In particular, the passage has functioned as an intertext to support the notion that Jesus and some of his earliest movements foresaw the future restoration and liberation of greater Israel in toto, including outsiders. The claim is probably true that the historical Jesus proclaimed some form of liberation of Jewish (and gentile) outsiders, whether it be in this world or the next. As far as it relates to the early Jesus movements, however, this claim goes against the more standard scholarly conviction that these movements expected the liberation of insiders and the condemnation of outsiders at the final judgement.

Without getting involved in this larger New Testament debate, the current article wishes to address the appropriateness of using 1QS 8:1–4 as an intertext without taking its literary and sectarian contexts into consideration. With the term ‘literary context’, the present author means not only the pericope’s context in the Community Rule as such but also its context within the larger collection of Dead Sea Scrolls. In this regard, I fully agree with the following statement by Allison (1998:142):

1. To simplify matters, the present discussion will overlook the fragments of this text discovered in cave four. Considering these fragments would not have altered or weakened the current argument and conclusion.

2. This article quotes from García Martínez (1994) when featuring translations of Dead Sea Scrolls.

3. The Hebrew text derives from Abegg (2004:30), as it appears in the edition by Parry & Tov (see bibliography).

4. For more information on the relationship between 1QS 8:1–4 and the historical Jesus, including especially the Sayings Gospel Q, see the more comprehensive discussion in Howes 2014.
Weren (2015:1–2): ‘In order to prevent that an intertextual analysis becomes bogged down in subjective links, the intertextual analysis must always be preceded by an intratextual analysis’. With the term ‘sectarian context’, the present author means the social context within which the sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls were authored, excluding from consideration those texts that did not originate with the ‘Dead Sea sects’, as I prefer to call them. The term ‘Dead Sea sects’ includes all the chronologically, geographically and socially diverse sectarian communities and factions responsible for authoring the original literature, later discovered at Qumran.

Although it is very likely that these Dead Sea sects should be identified with the Essene movement, the present article will neither assume nor discuss this identification. This is not to deny that the Dead Sea sects were Essenes, but rather to ignore this question altogether, since it adds little to the current discussion. The legitimacy of calling these communities ‘sects’ is perhaps an open question, but to the extent that they deliberately separated themselves from mainstream Judaism – if not physically, then at least mentally and emotionally – it remains valid to refer to them as sects. The literary and sectarian contexts overlap in as far as the literary content of the Dead Sea Scrolls betray the social context in which these documents originated.

This article will unfold in a centripetal manner. Firstly, it will treat the commonalities among all the sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls. The content of the Dead Sea Scrolls indicate that the different Dead Sea sects had quite a lot in common. Secondly, the discussion will direct its focus specifically to the content of the Dead Sea Scrolls betray the social context in which these documents originated.

The sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls


The sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls

The sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls perceive and portray the world in dualistic terms (cf. Grossman 2008:5; Schiﬀman 1994:149; see Collins 1997a:45–51, 99–106, 125–126, 142, 150–151; Levison 2006:191–192; Nickelsburg 2008:23–31; Qimron 2006:195–202). They unequivocally identify the people of greater Israel, including especially her leaders, as outsiders (Arnold 2006:27–28; Davies 2008:38–39; Schiﬀman 1994:380–381; see Harrington 2008:187–203; Newsom 2008:13–21; Timmer 2008:389–396). These writings feature many different insulting sobriquets of their Jewish kinsmen, including lot of Belial, devilish assembly, sons of darkness, lot of darkness, enemies, traitors, rebels, vicious men, vipers, fire-starters, lion cubs, viper’s venom, serpent’s venom, sinners, sons of deceit, men of injustice, spoilers of fraud, hypocrites, wretched ones and council of futility. The citizens and leadership of greater Israel are charged with a plethora of crimes, which may be subdivided into the following categories: (1) an inability to obey the Torah, deliberate non-compliance, abandoning and abhorring God’s covenant and even God himself, disloyalty, acting in their own interest, scheming against God’s teachings and refusing to partake in God’s covenant; (2) fornication, unclean actions, polluting the temple and desecrating the Sabbath and holy feasts; (3) apostasy, idolatry and fornicating with strangers; (4) persecuting, hating, despising, begrudging and pilfering from their kinsmen; (5) injustice, brutality, pilfering from the poor and tyrannizing the populace; (6) delusion, lunacy, stupidity, incomprehension and the absence of enlightenment; (7) taking revenge and masterminding wickedness against the community; (8) dishonesty, deceitfulness, deception, artificiality, (malevolent) slyness, sedition, withholding information and fraud; (9) greediness, prosperity and the absence of compassion for the poor; (10) impertinence, smugness, arrogance, insolent eagerness, lack of respect, debauchery and egotism; and (11) intolerance and impatience.

It should be clear from this brief overview that the Dead Sea sects did not in any way see themselves as part of greater Israel (cf. Davies 2008:33; Newsom 2008:16; Qimron 2006:195). As far as these sects were concerned, they were themselves the exclusive embodiment of the ‘actual’ Israel (Blenkinsopp 2005:11; Brooke 2005:50–51; Collins 1997a:91; Davies 2008:33; Harrington 2008:203; Horsley 2006:50, 52; Lawrence 2005:87, 89, 90, 99; Shemesh 2002:54). Outsiders were therefore not part of the real Israel. According to Davies (2008:33), the word ‘Israel’ is used by the Dead Sea sects in three distinct ways: (1) as a self-designation for the in-group; (2) as a reference to an illegitimate nation of days gone by, who were rightfully punished during the Babylonian exile; and (3) as a reference to the existing and similarly illegitimate Jewish out-group.

As the foregoing taxonomy reveals, the Dead Sea sects failed and/or refused to acknowledge any measure of corporate guilt. To their minds, they did not in any way share in the wrongdoings of either their forefathers or greater Israel (Himmelfarb 2001:30; see Blenkinsopp 2005:19–20; Davies 2008:33–36; Shemesh 2002:52–59; cf. e.g. CD 2:7–10; 3:13–14). Rather, they were the only people alive with an accurate understanding of the Torah, so that it was impossible for Jewish outsiders to live in agreement with the commandments of God (Arnold 2006:40; Harrington 2008:201; Lawrence 2005:87; Timmer 2009:347; VanderKamm & Flint 2002:262; cf. Grossman 2008:1; Nickelsburg 2008:24; see Brooke 2005:57–59; Hempel 2003:69–76). Among other pieces of evidence, this dualistic worldview is illustrated in the rituals by which new members were initiated. It was expected of evidence, this dualistic worldview is illustrated in the rituals by which new members were initiated. It was expected of
involved the extermination of all other people, leaving behind only the 'genuine Israel' in the form of the Dead Sea sects (Harrington 2008:203; cf. Collins 1997a:17; Davies 2008:39; Ginsburkskaya 2010:85; Puech 2006:281).14

Yet, the apocalyptic end would be directly preceded by the 'end of days' (אחרית הימים), an eschatological period described in some of the sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls. The so-called end of days entailed the assessment and refinement of the Dead Sea sects, as well as the reinstatement of the rightful temple cult by instituting a new temple (cf. Arnold 2006-28; VanderKam & Flint 2002:264; see Collins 1997a:56–58, 1997b:79–82, 1998:157; Schiffman 1994:391–394). According to Timmer (2009:342), the time of assessment should be distinguished from the end of days. This claim seems to be based on a misreading of Collins (1997a:52–70), who in truth describes the assessment and refinement of insiders as an essential part of the end of days. Be that as it may, the new temple was in all likelihood not to be an actual building, but rather the members themselves, who would embody the sanctuary through perfect conduct and ritual cleanliness (Collins 1997a:58, 60; cf. Harrington 2008:197; Klawans 2010:384; VanderKam & Flint 2002:264; see Horsley 2006:47–48). To complicate matters, the Qumran community already viewed themselves as a stand-in for the Jerusalem temple before the advent of the end of days (see Kapfer 2007:164–165, 169–172). Hence, the difference between the two temples must have entailed a different degree of individual and corporate holiness. At any rate, the definitive and final sanctuary would only be erected at the apocalyptic end (Collins 1997a:58, 60, 108; cf. Knibb 2010:415–416).

The end of days also included the emergence of two distinct messiahs, namely a royal and a priestly messiah (cf. Hughes 1997:12; Neufeld 1997:121; VanderKam & Flint 2002:265; Werman 2009:294–295; see Collins 1997a:77–87, 1998:160–166; Knibb 2010:420–425). Both messiahs would in different ways be responsible for re-establishing the kingdom and temple of Israel. On the one hand, the kingly messiah would contribute to the latter by defeating the gentiles and pacifying greater Israel (cf. Werman 2009:294–295; see Collins 1997a:80–85, 90, 1997b:86, 1998:157–160). In the aftermath of military subjugation, this messianic king would govern all his conquered subjects and judge daily disputes like the kings of old (cf. Schiffman 1994:381–382; VanderKam & Flint 2002:266–267). On the other hand, the priestly messiah would contribute to the restoration of Israel's kingdom and temple by atoning for Israel's transgressions, maintaining the ritual purity and moral perfection of the Dead Sea sects, and performing his duties as instructor and judge (cf. VanderKam & Flint 2002:267; see Arnold 2006:194–197; Collins 1997a:85–87). These developments should not be mistaken for those events that would accompany the final apocalypse (cf. Timmer 2009:342; see Collins 1997b:75–79). The definitive, post-apocalyptic temple building would only be constructed after the apocalypse and final judgement (cf. Puech 2006:279). The same goes for the annihilation of all outsiders. In other words,

7. The reference here to the Dead Sea sects as a ‘movement’ is no more than a handy way to connote the idea that there were commonalities among individual sectarian groups. The term ‘movement’ here references all the constituent groups, although there may be minor exceptions.


9. Cf. 1QS 2.7–8; 10.20; 4Q256 4.1–2; 4Q257 frag. 1.2–4; 4Q260 frag. 1.5–1; 4Q496 frag. 12.4; 11.11020 frag. 20.1–7; 1Qhab 6.10–12; 7.16; 4Q201 2.15–16; 1Q14.33; 11Q11 3.6; 4Q280 1.7.

10. Cf. 1QH 14.9; 4Q347 frag. 7.1, 12–21; 2.15; 4Q343 frag. 1.1, 7; 4Q200 frag. 7.5–7; 4Q941, frags. 8.10, 10–16.

11. Cf. 1QH 19.22–23; 4Q347 frag. 1.4–6; 1QM 13.16; 4Q496 frag. 3, 1; 4Q163 fragms. 18.1–19.1; 4Q381 frag. 31.5–6.

12. Cf. 1QS 4.16: 5.12–13; 4Q257 frag. 1.3; CD 2.5–9; 20.21–21; 8.1–6; 19.13–29; 4Q267 frag. 2, 2.19–21; 1QM 1.5.10–12; 4Q502 frag. 2.3; 4.6; 11.3; 11.6; 7.15–1.9; 11.12; 4Q496 frag. 4, 11; 11Q19 frag. 13.16; 4Q161 fragms. 4.2, 2–4.1; 4Q163 fragms. 6–6, 2–12; 8.18–19.1; 4Q169 fragms. 1–3; 4.3–9; 9.10; 1Q16 tabs. 6–10.12; 4Q171 2.7–9; 3.12–13; 4Q110 3.1; 2.12–17; 4Q342 2.8; 10Q2 1.10–11; 4Q375 1.4–5; 4Q390 frag. 2, 1.6–7; 1QM 12.10; 2Q17 1.17–19, 29–32; 4Q280 4.5; 4Q286 frag. 7, 2.6–8.

13. Cf. 1QS 2.8; 4.12; 4Q256 4.1; 4Q257 frag. 1.2–4·5; 1QM 15.2; 18.11; 4Q496 frag. 3, 1–4; 7; 1Q16 tabs. 10.5–13; 3; 4Q201 2.15–16; 4Q204 6.13–15; 4Q212 4.19–12; 4Q542 2.5–7; 1QM 21.16; 11Q11 3.7–12; 4.5–13; 4Q161 12.7; 4Q280 4–5; 4Q286 frag. 7, 2.4–5, 9.

14. Cf. 1QS 10.11; 13, 16; 4Q264 frag. 1.1–3; 4Q88 9.5–9; 1QM 10.23–24.
the Dead Sea sects foresaw a period in the future that would directly precede the apocalyptic end and prepare for its ultimate arrival.

The Community Rule

The themes discussed in the previous section feature prominently in the Community Rule (Lawrence 2005:100; cf. Klawans 2010:381; see Levison 2006:191–192). To be more specific, the dualistic mindset of the Yahad is treated systematically in the passage on the two spirits, which features in 1QS 3:13–4:26 (Broshi 2006:237–238; Hempel 2008:390; Nickelsburg 2008:24; Schiﬀman 1994:149; cf. Qimron 2006:195; see Arnold 2006:73–74; Collins 1997a:10, 38–41, 101, 105, 1998:153–154). It is explained by this text that God carefully separated the entirety of humanity into two distinct groups when creating the cosmos. In his divine wisdom, God predetermined each person to live in accordance with one of two unchanging spirits, namely the spirit of truth and light or the spirit of deceit and darkness (1QS 3:19, 25; cf. Broshi 2006:237; Knibb 2010:408; Timmer 2009:345–346; see Levison 2006:186–188; Shemesh 2002: 52–53). Those living according to the spirit of light are often referred to as the ‘sons of light’ (בני אור), and are constituted in whole by the members of the Yahad. Conversely, those living according to the spirit of darkness are often referred to as the ‘sons of darkness’ (בני חושך), and are constituted in whole by non-members (Arnold 2006:34; Harrington 2008:191; Nickelsburg 2008:24; cf. Horsley 2006:42; Newsom 2008:13). In order to join the Yahad, one had to love the former and hate the latter (1QS 1:9–11; cf. Arnold 2006:34, 53, 57–58, 68, 73–74; Newsom 2008:17; Timmer 2008:395). Eviolation of the Yahad entailed being regarded from that point forward as a son of darkness, and no longer belonging to the sons of light (Arnold 2006:78; see Shemesh 2002:46–52).

The Community Rule tells us that the sons of light originated from a fountain of light. They were not only ruled by the ‘prince of lights’ (משיח צדקה) but also sustained by the God of Israel and his ‘angel of truth’ (אל חכמה אלוהים) (cf. Nickelsburg 2008:24). The traits of these sons of light included goodness, humbleness and wisdom. Because of their inherently good nature, their ultimate fate would comprise of ‘plentiﬁc peace in a long life, fruitful offspring with all everlasting blessings, eternal enjoyment with endless life, and a crown of glory in righteousness with endless life, and a crown of glory with eternal enjoyment with endless life, and a crown of glory in righteousness with endless life, and a crown of glory in righteousness. This pertained also to the sons of light. The Dead Sea sects believed that all people, members and non-members included, were made up of nine distinct parts (Broshi 2006:238–239; Knibb 2010:408; cf. 4Q186). Since the number nine is uneven, every person on the earth belongs either to the camp of darkness or the camp of light, depending on which spirit controlled the majority of those nine parts. In other words, the sons of light also experienced the inﬂuence of the spirit of darkness, even if they were for the most part controlled by the spirit of light. Every so often, the angel of darkness would cause an outsider to stray from the path of righteousness (1QS 3:21–24; 11:9–10; cf. Puech 2006:271; VanderKam & Flinto 2002:261).

Yet, as we have seen, the sons of light had exclusive access to divine clemency. Even though the benchmark was perfection (e.g. 1QS 2:8–9; cf. Collins 2010:162; Lawrence 2005:86, 92; Newsom 2008:17; see Arnold 2006:41–43, 58, 78–80), the Yahad foresees a period of severe refinement and cleansing. At the time when the Community Rule was authored, this preparatory period was still to be initiated (see Collins 1997b:80–81, 2010:168). In other words, this preliminary stage was also viewed as part of the Yahad’s eschatological future, even if it were to precede the apocalyptic end (Himmelfarb 2001:31; Horsley 2006:42). To clarify, the Yahad looked forward to a speciﬁc period of time in the future, but earlier than the apocalypse and ﬁnal judgement, when God would purify and reﬁne his chosen people (cf. 1QS 4:20). Such decontamination pertained only to the Dead Sea sects themselves, and not to greater Israel (cf. Flint 1997:60). The belief in a period of internal reﬁnement raises the question of why the so-called ‘sons of light’, preordained for apocalyptic salvation, would need to be puriﬁed. The answer lies in their particular brand of demonology. Even if the sons of light were not ruled by the spirit of darkness like the rest of humanity, they were nevertheless inﬂuenced by it (Collins 1998:153; Knibb 2010:408; cf. Arnold 2006:74; see Levison 2006:177–185). According to the Community Rule (4:23), people’s hearts were inhabited by both the spirits of light and darkness. This pertained also to the sons of light. The Dead Sea sects believed that all people, members and non-members included, were made up of nine distinct parts (Broshi 2006:238–239; Knibb 2010:408; cf. 4Q186). Since the number nine is uneven, every person on the earth belongs either to the camp of darkness or the camp of light, depending on which spirit controlled the majority of those nine parts. In other words, the sons of light also experienced the inﬂuence of the spirit of darkness, even if they were for the most part controlled by the spirit of light. Every so often, the angel of darkness would cause an outsider to stray from the path of righteousness (1QS 3:21–24; 11:9–10; cf. Puech 2006:271; VanderKam & Flinto 2002:261).
knew full well that they presently lacked absolute and total perfection (Puech 2006:271; Shemesh 2002:56; cf. Lawrence 2005:97; Timmer 2009:352; see Ginsburskaya 2010:77–90; Qimron 2006:197–202). For this reason, they anticipated a period before the apocalyptic end when every son of light would be wholly purified by God (1QS 4:20–21). Due to such a rigorous process of cleansing, this period would entail the achievement of ‘perfect behaviour’ and the complete nonappearance of injustice amidst the sons of light (1QS 4:22–23; cf. Flint 1997:60). Such purification and perfection was necessary to prepare for the final judgement, since it would enable God to liberate the Yahad while condemning the sons of deceit (1QS 4:22–26; cf. Arnold 2006:42; Puech 2006:271; Timmer 2009:343, 344). Crucially, the futurist epoch of preparation sketched here should in all likelihood be equated with the eschatological ‘end of days’ ( אחרית הימים) discussed in the previous section.

A lexical survey supports the foregoing summative analysis. The verb ‘judge’ ( עשה) and the noun ‘judgement’ ( עשה) feature variously in the Community Rule to convey five distinct meanings: (1) something that must be exercised internally by those who form part of the in-group, in the sense of ‘justice’ and ‘discernment’; (2) legal proceedings performed either within the community before the ‘end of days’ or by the community during the ‘end of days’; (3) the time of apocalyptic judgement; (4) this-worldly admonishing of the community by God; and (5) full-scale condemnation of the out-group by God at the apocalyptic end. The second, fourth and fifth meanings are particularly significant to the overall purpose of the current article.

**1QS 8:1–4**

No interpretation of 1QS 8:1–4 should be attempted without taking into account the information that precedes this section. As with the passage on the two spirits, 1QS 8:1–16 treats the intervening period of refinement and purification. On the one hand, the featuring of future tense verbs and future-directed temporal phrases leaves little doubt that this pericope deals with the future (Collins 1997a:60, 148; Horsley 2006:47; cf. Arnold 2006:42; Ginsburskaya 2010:85; Lawrence 2005:87; VanderKam & 18.Cf. 1QS 1:5; 3:1; 5:4; 6:23; 8:9; 9:5; 10:25; 11:2, 5.


23.The possibility should not be ignored that the demonstrative pronoun הַאֲדֻמִּים actually refers to the fifteen men of the preceding verses (Berg 2007:166–167, esp. n. 18; cf. The translation of Wise et al. 2004:31).

Flint 2002:264). Yet, the phrase ‘when these things [or men] exist in Israel’ (报复יה אל עבר👨‍❤️‍👨) in 1QS 8:4 clearly illustrates that there existed a prerequisite for the initiation of this messianic age (cf. Collins 2010:162). 1QS 8:1–4 describes this prerequisite. The text starts by predicting that ‘in the Yahad Council [there shall be] twelve men and three priests’. Even though scholars disagree about the precise meaning of the term ‘Yahad Council’ ( יָהָדָא עִדָּתָא), it seems most probable that the term acted as a substitutive self-designation for the community proper, perhaps applying particularly when they were congregated in one or more of their community gatherings (Berg 2007:165–166; Collins 2010:161; cf. Arnold 2006:34 n. 25, 36; Kapfer 2007:160; see Hempel 2003:75, 2008:44, 46, 49–54; Metso 2008:72–77, 80–81).

As far as the reference to ‘twelve men and three priests’ ( pantalla ואישים חמשה) is concerned, a decidedly persuasive case has been made by Berg (2007:161–177) that they were an elite group within the council of the Yahad (cf. Collins 1998:176, 2010:161–162; pace Metso 2008:78–84). These individuals should therefore not merely be understood as a symbolic designation of the community proper. The numbers ‘twelve’ and ‘three’ do in all likelihood respectively reference Israel’s twelve and Levi’s three tribes (cf. Collins 2010:162; Hempel 2008:54; Metso 2008:81). Additional support comes from 4Q164. In this text, the number ‘twelve’ ( אַשְׁרֵי אוֹתִי) is pertinently associated with ‘the heads of the tribes of Israel’ ( ראשׁי שבטי ישראל). Reading these two texts side by side almost forces a conclusion that reads the twelve men and three priests in 1QS 8:1 as leaders of Israel’s traditional tribes (pace Metso 2008:81). Unlike the Yahad itself, this selection of tribal chiefs is typically portrayed as being not just ‘holy’ (שמחת) or ‘perfect’ (תמים) but as treading in ‘perfect holiness’ (תמים זいくות) (cf. Collins 1998:176, 2010:162, 163; see Berg 2007:171–172). According to Arnold (2006:41–43), the phrase ‘perfect holiness’ pertains to the Yahad as a whole, and not exclusively to the fifteen Jewish leaders. This seems unlikely, though, because the Community Rule uses the phrase in question here and elsewhere consistently in reference to the fifteen Jewish leaders, and only them. The Damascus Document likewise refers to leaders of the Dead Sea sects as persons of perfect holiness (Kapfer 2007:154). The term ‘perfect holiness’ describes an increased level of holiness and perfection when compared with isolated occurrences of the words ‘perfect’ and ‘holy’ or ‘holiness’. The term denotes a state of complete and utter faultlessness. One day, it is imagined, such perfect holiness would be instituted and sustained via trials (Berg 2007:173). Tribal leaders would submit themselves voluntarily to such scrutiny. It is not explained in 1QS 8:1–4 who would judge during these proceedings. Yet, if this text is interpreted via both 1QS 9:7–21 and the Liturgy of the Tongues of Fire (4Q375; 4Q376; 1Q29), it seemingly suggests that the judge would be either the Maskil or the priestly messiah (see Arnold 2006:194–197, 201; Berg 2007:173–176). Thus, the fifteen tribal leaders would subject...
themselves to a process of judgement, testing and cleansing directly before but also during their tenure.

As long as these individuals are perfectly holy, they would qualify to ‘implement truth, justice [and] judgement’ (יא有助ל תחת ומכש) in the rest of the Yahad. It seems likely that this process has in mind the responsibility of the fifteen leaders to act as judges of their individual tribes. Both the War Scroll and the Damascus Document support the latter interpretation. According to 4Q491 frags. 1-39-10, priests, Levites and the ‘chiefs of the camps’ (봉두) are in charge of judging the tribes before they enter into battle (cf. Arnold 2006:199). In CD 10:4–10, the leaders of the tribes of Israel and Levi are explicitly defined as ‘the judges of the congregation’ (שפטי העדה) (cf. Metso 2008:67).25 The intention behind this process of judgement is to ‘implement compassionate love and unassuming behaviour’26 and to ‘preserve faithfulness on the earth with firm purpose and repentant spirit in order to atone for sin’.27 It follows that the Yahad’s decontamination would occur by means of a process during which its members would be judged by the recently selected tribal leaders. Hence, the Community Rule predicts that there will be a messianic epoch during which a remnant of Israel will be cleansed and kept faultless through continuous judgement of the Yahad. Tribal leaders will remove imperfection from the Yahad to prepare for the final judgement (cf. Berg 2007:168). This process of judgement will lead to a perfect Yahad (see Kapler 2007:169–170). This untarnished community will embody the temple through perfect behaviour. In addition, they will be thoroughly ready for the final judgement.

Conclusion

If 1QS 8:1–4 is considered in literary and sectarian context, the function and meaning of this text is illuminated. Far from describing a form of future judgement that is devoid of condemnation, it describes a preliminary eschatological step that is absolutely necessary for the future condemnation of outsiders, as well as the future liberation of insiders. As such, it is illegitimate to use this text as an intertext to support claims that the historical Jesus and/or one or more of the early Jesus movements expected a form of future judgement that would exclude the condemnation of gentile and/or Jewish outsiders. This conclusion remains true in spite of how legitimate these claims about Jesus and/or (some of) his early movements might be in their own right. Ultimately, the evidence is overwhelming that those responsible for the sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls expected the future condemnation and annihilation of all outsiders.

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Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

25 It should be noted that the numerical values differ in this text: the tribe of Levi (and Aaron) has four and the tribes of Israel have six, for a total of ten (Metso 2008:67).

26 יתום רוחני יכלו יקר עון יכבוד ית˃vxוות יתבשיח הלוחים.

27 הים מאיתו עם איראש גורב ומסיר ויהי בשמיה הוד צהובים.