

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS ON POSSIBLE ARAMAIC ETYMOLOGIES
OF THE DESIGNATION OF THE JUDAEAN SECT OF ESSENES
(Ἐσσαῖοι/Ἐσσηνοί) IN THE LIGHT OF
THE ANCIENT AUTHORS' ACCOUNTS OF THEM AND
THE QUMRAN COMMUNITY'S WORLD-VIEW

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ABSTRACT. The author considers three possible Aramaic etymologies of the designation Ἐσσαῖοι/Ἐσσηνοί: (1) Since, according to reiterated Josephus Flavius' accounts and the Dead Sea scrolls' evidences, the Essenes and the Qumranites, closely associated with them, believed in predestination and foretold the future, they could be called: *those, who believe in predestination*, sc. the “fatalists”, “determinists”; or: *those, who predict fate*, i.e. the “foretellers”. This hypothetical etymology is derived from the Aramaic word *ḥaššayyā* (*m. pl. in st. det.*; resp. *ḥš(ʿ)(y)yn* in *st. abs.*) reconstructed by the author from the term *ḥšy/ḥšʿ* (“what man has to suffer, predestination, fortune”) after the model: *C₁aC₂C₃aC₃*. (2) In the present author's opinion, the Qumran community held itself allegorically to be the “root(s)” and “stock” of Jesse, giving life to the “holy” Davidic “Shoot” (see: *Isa. 11:1*); or, in other words, the Qumranites appear to have considered their *Yahad* (lit. “Unity/Oneness”) the personification of a new Jesse, who would “beget” and “bring up” a new David. (Cf., e.g., *1QS*a, II, 11–12: “When [God] begets (*yôlîd*) the Messiah with them (*ʿittām*; i.e. the sectarians. — *I. T.*)...”). Proceeding from this doctrine, one can assume the etymology of the designation Ἐσσαῖοι/Ἐσσηνοί from the Aramaic-Syriac spelling of King David father's name *Jesse* — *ʿš(š)ay*. (3) The Essenes' and the Qumranites' aloofness from this world and their striving for interrelations with the other world could be a reason, by which they came to be regarded as “liminal” personalities and nicknamed (probably, with a tinge of irony) after the name of “*rephaites*” (the original vocalization seems to have been: *rōfēʿîm*, lit. “healers”, sc. “benefactors”) of former times, whom they really recalled in some key aspects of their outlook and religious practice. In this case, the designation *θεραπευταί*, “healers”, — applied in Jewish Hellenized circles, primarily, in Egypt, to the members of the (*ex hypothesi*) Essenean communities of mystic-“gnostic” trend — could be in fact a Greek translation of the Hebrew term *rōfēʿîm*. It also seems natural to assume that this designation of the sectarians could be interpreted/translated by the uninitiated by the word *ʿasayyā*/'*āsên*, meaning “healers”, “physicians”, in the Aramaic-speaking milieu of the region of Syria-Palestine.

KEYWORDS: Essenes, Therapeutae, the Qumran community, predestination, prediction, Messianic expectations, mysticism, esotericism, immortality of the soul, angel-like beings, rephaites.

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I. The Essenes as "foretellers"- "fatalists"

The correct etymology of the designation Ἐσσαῖοι/Ἐσσηνοί (unmeaning in Greek), *i.e.* the "Essenes", Judaeen sect flourished in the 2nd century B.C.E. – 1st century C.E., was unknown or at least doubtful for many uninitiated Jews nearly from the start of its emergence, as one can conclude, for example, from the following note attested in Philo of Alexandria:

This name (*sc.* Ἐσσαῖοι. – *I. T.*), though in my opinion the form of the Greek is inaccurate, is derived from holiness (ὁσιότητος).¹

Describing the appearance of three principal Jewish sects, Josephus Flavius singles out the attitude towards predestination (εἰμαρμένη; lit. "lot", "fate", "destiny", *sc.* Providence) as the main aspect of religious "schools" separation in Judea in the middle of the second century B.C.E. (*Antiquitates Judaicae*, XIII, 171–173). At this, the very essence of the Essenes' doctrine, according to Josephus, is "that all things are best ascribed to God" (*Antt.*, XVIII, 18). In *Antt.*, XIII, 172, he mentions:

The genus of the Essenes affirm, that fate (τὴν εἰμαρμένην) governs all things, and that nothing befalls men but what is according to its (determination).

The widely spread Essenes' practice of the prediction of future events (including personal fates), well known to Josephus Flavius², was likely to be based on their belief in predetermination. In *Antt.*, III, 214–218, Josephus speaks of the Judaeen high priest's breastplate and describes its role in the process of predictions. At this, he transcribes the Hebrew word *hōṣen* for a "breastplate" as ἑσσην, and correlates the latter term with the Greek λόγιον, "oracle"³ (cf. the Septuagint's correlate term λογείον). Thus, it is not impossible that Josephus perceived the implicit meaning "prediction" in the designation Ἐσσηνοί.

Pliny the Elder (*Historia Naturalis*, V, 15, 17) asserts that the numbers of the Essenes (*Esseni*) "are fully recruited by multitudes of strangers that resort to them, driven thither to adopt their usages by the tempests of fortune". The mention of *fortuna* (this term correlates with the εἰμαρμένη in Josephus' account) in this context can imply the Essenes' belief in predestination, according to which the sectarians, as they thought, found themselves in the community.

¹ Philo of Alexandria, *Quod omnis probus liber sit*, XII, 75. See also: *ib.*, 91; Philo's *Apologia* (1) (in Eusebius' *Praep. Evang.*, VIII, 11). Cf.: Josephus Flavius, *Bellum Judaicum*, II, 119; Hippolytus of Rome, *Philosophumena*, IX, 18, 3.

² See, *e.g.*: Josephus Flavius, *BJ*, I, 78–80; II, 111–113, 159; *Antiquitates Judaicae*, XIII, 311–313; XVII, 346–348; XV, 371–379; XVII, 345–348. Cf. also: Hippolytus, *Philosophumena*, IX, 27.

³ *Antt.*, III, 163, 217.

The doctrine of absolute predestination plays a key role in religious outlook of the Qumran community,⁴ and it is considered to be one of the most fundamental arguments in favour of the widespread Qumranites' identification with the Essenes.⁵ All is predetermined in the world — in heaven and on earth; and there is neither the past, nor the future for God: all is the present for Him, all is the eternal “now”.⁶ A Qumran Hebrew etymological and semantic equivalent of the term εἰμαρμένη, used by Josephus, is the notion *gôrāl*, “lot”, “share”, sc. destiny, frequently attested in the scrolls.⁷ Judging by the sectarian manuscripts, mainly the so-called *Pesharim* (i.e. Commentaries on the Prophets and Psalms), the members of the Qumran community, like the Essenes (cf. in this connection especially Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*, II, 159), predicted the fates of the whole world, as well as of certain individuals.⁸

In the light of these considerations it seems most natural to correlate the hitherto unclarified etymology of the term Ἐσσαῖοι / Ἐσσηνοί⁹ with the Aramaic notion *ḥšy*¹⁰/*ḥš*¹¹, which is interpreted by M. Jastrow as “what man has to suffer, predestination, fortune”¹². The term *ḥšy* is attested in the Midrash on the Book of Lamentations, or *Eichah Rabbah* (89:14; *ib.* 20), which, along with the *Bereshith Rabbah* and the *Pesiqta de-Rab Kahana*, is the oldest composition of the midrashic literature. It is written in the so-called Jewish Palestinian Aramaic,

⁴ On the *Sitz im Leben* of the Qumran Community and its scrolls in Judaea of the Hellenistic Period see, e.g.: VanderKam, Flint 2002; Eshel 2008; Tantlevskij 2013a, 243–302.

⁵ See, e.g.: Wise 1993, 71–74.

⁶ See, e.g.: 1QH^a IX (= 4Q432 2), 7–34; 1QS IX, 24–25; 1QpHab VII, 13–14, etc. Cf., e.g., 1QH^a IX, 23–24: “Everything is engraved before You... for all the periods of eternity, for the numbered seasons of eternal years in all their appointed times”. On the basis of the main Qumran manuscripts' analysis one can conclude that, according to the sectarians view, the idea/plan of the entire future Universe arises originally in God's Mind (*bînāh*, *sēkel*), and the world itself comes into existence by His Knowledge (*da'at*), Wisdom (*ḥokmāh*), Thought (*maḥšābāh*). Cf., e.g.: 1QS XI, 11; 1QH^a IX (= 4Q432 2), 7–34. See further in detail, e.g.: Tantlevskij 1994, 281–297; Tantlevskij 2013b, 316–324; Tantlevskij, Svetlov 2014a, 50–53; Tantlevskij, Svetlov 2014b, 54–66.

⁷ Cf. also the Hebrew notions *ḥēleq* in the meaning “share”, “portion”, “lot” (e.g.: CD-B XX, 10, 13) and *tē'ūdāh*, “destiny”, “predestination” (e.g.: 1QH^a IX, 19).

⁸ See, e.g.: Tantlevskij 1995; Tantlevskij 1997a, 329–338.

⁹ The lists of the most widespread etymologies of the denomination “Essenes” hitherto proposed one can find, e.g., in: Tantlevskij 1997b, 193–213; *Idem* 1999, 195–212; *Idem* 2013a, 280; Beall 2000, I, 262–268.

¹⁰ See: Sokoloff 2002, 217.

¹¹ Jastrow 1926, 508.

¹² M. Sokoloff (2002, 217), however, leaves this term without any interpretation.

which “continued, as opposed to the other Western Aramaic languages of the middle stage, one of the written Old Aramaic languages of the western branch”¹³. One can try to reconstruct a conjectural noun (*m. pl.*) of the same root after the model $C_1aC_2C_2aC_3$ (normally designations of persons by their profession, usual activity, etc. are formed after it) as *ḥaššayyā*¹⁴ in *st. det.*, resp. *ḥš(ʿ)(y)yn* in *st. abs.* The etymology of the term Ἐσσαῖοι / Ἐσσηνοί derived from this hypothetical term appears to be relevant not only semantically, but also linguistically. In connection with the correspondence of the beginnings spelling cf., *e.g.*, the following transcriptions attested in Hellenistic sources: *Ḥammôṭ* is normally rendered as Ἐμμαοῦς¹⁵; *ḥōšēn* – as ἔσσην¹⁶; as to the Greek “endings” -αῖοι / -ηνοί, they can represent transcriptions of the Aramaic endings -ayyā / -în (*pl. m.* in *st. det.* and *pl. m.* in *st. abs.* respectively) plus the Greek ending *m. pl.* -οί proper.

Thus, if the suggested derivation of the Ἐσσαῖοι/Ἐσσηνοί's etymology from the reconstructed Aramaic term *ḥšy(y)ʿ/ḥš(ʿ)(y)yn* is correct, then the “Essenes” are:

1) *Those, who predict fate*, the “foretellers”. In *Antt.*, XIII, 311 (cf. also: *BJ*, I, 78), Josephus Flavius even mentions a special school of the Essenes, who “learned the art of foretelling things to come” (it flourished at the end of the 2nd cent. B.C.E.). (Cf. also especially: *BJ*, II, 159.) The Essenes had the “foreknowledge (πρόγνωσις; ‘predetermination’. – *I. T.*) of future events given by God” (*Antt.* XV, 373; cf. *ib.* 379: “...many of these (Essenes) have, by their excellent virtue, been thought worthy of this knowledge of divine revelations”).

2) *Those, who believe in predestination*, that is to say, the “fatalists”, “determinists”¹⁷.

II. The Essenes as the personification of a new “Jesse”, begetting a new “David”

Josephus Flavius, obviously sympathizing with the Essenes, remains silent concerning their Messianic expectations, in all probability, deliberately — for reasons of safety. It seems that one can reveal the only remark of this character in *Antt.*, XVIII, 18, according to which the Essenes “believe that they ought to strive especially for the approach of the Righteous One (τοῦ δικαίου τὴν πρόσσδον)”. (Cf.: *Jer.* 23:5, 33:15.)

¹³ Лёзов 2009, 459. Works written in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic were composed *par excellence* in Galilee.

¹⁴ Cf., on the other hand: Jastrow 1926, 508.

¹⁵ Albright, Mann 1969, 108.

¹⁶ Moreover, one should bear in mind that the original pronunciation of the sect's name could begin with 'E-, not 'E-.

¹⁷ See, *e.g.*: Tantlevskij 2013b, 316-324.

On the other hand, we know that it was already at the early stage in the history of the Qumran community that the sectarians came to regard their *Yahad* (lit. “Oneness”, “Unity”=community) as a potential spiritual earthly “father” of a lay Messiah (while God is his Heavenly Father), who, according to their expectation, would arise just in the midst of them in the “latter days”, owing to their pious mode of life (in particular, to their eschatological “preparations” in the Judean wilderness) and righteous activities.¹⁸ In one of the earliest Qumran documents – *1Q Rule of the Congregation (1QSa)*, II, 11–12, it is said:

When [God] begets (*yôlîd*) the Messiah with them (‘*ittām*; i.e. the sectarians. — *I. T.*)...¹⁹

The author of the Qumran *Thanksgiving Hymn 1QH^a* XI, 7–10²⁰ depicts eschatological “woes” of the community, begetting (*sc.* promoting by means of its righteous activities the coming of) a “Wonderful Counsellor with his might” (*Isa.* 9:5), i.e. the Davidic King-Messiah.²¹ (Cf., e.g.: *Jer.* 30:21; cf. also: *Rev.* 12:1–6.)

The author of the *4Q Commentary on Genesis A (4Q252)*, V, 2–5²² plays on several meanings of the word *ham-měḥōqēq* in his commentary on *Gen.* 49:10²³: it is “the staff”, and at the same time the denomination of the leader of the Qumran *Yahad*-“Unity” — “the Lawgiver” (another meaning of the word *měḥōqēq*), who is identical with the “[Expounder of] the Law” (cf.: *CD-A VI*, 7, VII, 16; *4QFlorilegium I*, 11). (In the texts *4Q252*, V, 2–5 and *CD-A VI*, 7–10, “the Lawgiver” seems to be none other than the Qumran charismatic leader, named the Teacher of Righteous.) The adherents of the “Lawgiver” are designated in the *Commentary* as “the legs” (we read *hā-raglayim*, not *had-daglayim*, “the banners”²⁴) of Judah. On the whole, the *Yahad*, headed by “the Lawgiver”, is represented in the *Commentary* as a true successor of Judah, a “keeper” of “the Covenant of kingship”, substitut-

¹⁸ See further: Tantlevskij 2012, 200–207; *Idem* 2015.

¹⁹ See further, e.g.: Tantlevskij 2012, 198–207; *Idem* 2014d, 93–99.

²⁰ Cf. also: *4Q428 (4QH^b)*, fr. 2; *4Q432 (pap 4QH^f)*, fr. 4, col. I.

²¹ Cf., e.g.: *1 Enoch* 62:4–8; *Test. of Joseph* 19:8.

²² Published in: Brooke *et al.*, eds. (1996a), 185–207, pls. XII–XIII; see also: Brooke (1996b), 385–401.

²³ It seems that the terms “scepter” (*šēbet*) и «warder» (*měḥōqēq*) with their original meanings “rod”, “staff” could be used in *Gen.* 49:10 not only as an allegory of dominion, but also as an euphemism for the organ of Judah’s male power. (Cf., e.g.: Good 1963, 427–432; Carmichael 1969, 438–444.) The present author believes that the phrase ‘*ad kî yābō’ š{î}lōh* can be interpreted in a *double entente*, with the agent not only Judah, but also his “scepter”/“rod”; in the latter case, this passage could be rendered as follows: “until it (‘scepter’/‘rod’) enters/comes into his (Judah’s / his descendant’s) own/what is his”, i.e., until Judah possesses what is his due.

²⁴ This reading is attested in the Samaritan Pentateuch.

ing in a certain sense for an absent legitimate King of Judah's tribe, "until the coming" (*'ad bô'*) of "the Righteousness Anointed One, the Shoot of David"²⁵ in the world. (NB: "Judah" is one of the self-denominations of the Qumran community in the scrolls.) It is not impossible that the *Yahad*, employing in the *Commentary* a symbol of generative power for its self-designation, endeavoured to express in that way the belief in its direct participation in the appearance of the legitimate Davidic King-Messiah.

In the light of some passages of the Qumran *Thanksgiving Hymns* (see, e.g.: *1QH^a* XVI, 4–12; XIV, 14–16), using the allegorical plant illustrations, one can also say that the sectarians held themselves to be a "garden", bearing fruit in the coming of the King-Messiah, the "root(s)" and "stock" of Jesse, giving life to the "holy" Davidic "Shoot"-*nēšer* (see: *Isa.* 11:1). In several other Qumran documents,²⁶ the passage of *Isa.* 11:1–5 is directly connected with the appearance of the legitimate Davidic Messiah in the midst of the community, and its priestly leaders are depicted as his teachers and advisors.²⁷ In other words, the members of the Qumran community appear to have considered their *Yahad* the personification of a new Jesse, who would "beget" and "bring up" a new David. (NB: In the Bible²⁸ and in the Qumran scrolls²⁹, the term *'āb* is used not only in its direct meaning "father", "begetter", but also has a connotation "advisor", "teacher".)

Since the Qumran sect apparently laid the foundations of the Essenean movement, it seems to the present author possible to suppose that the designation "Essenes" could be eventually derived from the name of King David's father — Jesse (Heb. *Yišay* [or *Yiššay*³⁰]; the name's Aram. and Syr. form *'Īšay* is attested in *1 Chr.* 2:13). The etymology of the sect's denomination from Jesse was proposed in the *Panarion* (*Haer.* XXIX, 1,4; 4,9) by Epiphanius of Salamis, who cited *Ps.* 132:11 ("From the fruit of your belly I will place on your throne") as a main biblical proof-text for its confirmation. This Christian author believed that *Ἰεσσαῖοι*³¹ (= *'Eσσαῖοι*), including their Egyptian branch — *θεραπευταί* (lit. "healers", "physi-

²⁵ Cf.: *Jer.* 23:5, 33:15; *Zech.* 3:8, 6:12.

²⁶ E.g., the *Commentary on Isaiah* (*4QpIsa^a*), fr. 8–10 (col. III), 11–25; *4Q285* (*4QSefer ham-Milhamah*), fr. 5, 2–4 (= *11Q14*, fr. 1, col. I, 10–13); *1QSb* (*1QRule of Benedictions*), col. V.

²⁷ Cf., e.g.: *Isa.* 11:3–4 and *4QpIsa^a*, fr. 8–10, 22–25; cf. also: *Deut.* 17:17–20 and *11Q Temple Scroll^a* 56:20–57:15.

²⁸ Cf., e.g.: *Gen.* 45:8; *Judg.* 17:10, 18:19; *2 Ki.* 2:12.

²⁹ Cf., e.g.: *1QH^a* XVII, 30–31, 35–36.

³⁰ On this possible vocalization see, e.g.: De Lagarde 1889, 44.

³¹ This spelling is also attested in: Nilus the Ascetic, *Tractatus de monastica exercitatione*, 3; he considered the Essenes to have been a pre-Christian Jewish sect.

cians”; or “worshippers”),³² described “in Philo’s treatises “, and, first of all, “in his book *περὶ Ἰεσσαίων*” (5,1),³³ were none other than early Judaeo-Christian ascetics.³⁴ The spelling Ἰεσσαῖοι was apparently derived from the Hebrew form of the name Jesse – *Yišay* / *Yiššay* (cf., e.g., the Septuagint’s transcription of this name as Ἰεσσαί and Josephus’ one as Ἰεσσαίοις). As for the designation Ἰεσσαῖοι, it could be derived from the Aramaic/Syriac spelling of the name – *’İšay*.³⁵ (As a parallel to the transcription of the first syllable one can mention, e.g., Josephus’ and Origen’s transliteration of the word *’iššāh*, “woman” in Hebrew, as ἔσσα (*Antt.* I, 36) and ἐσά (*Epist. ad Africanum*, I, 82,84) respectively; in the Septuagint, the Aramaic equivalent of *Yišay* / *Yiššay* – the name *’Ittay* / *’İttay* is transcribed as Ἐθθεῖ, Ἐσθαεῖ.) In this connection let us note that medieval Jewish scholars transcribed the Greek Ἰεσσαῖοι as *’ysy’y*³⁶ (cf. also the Modern Hebrew spelling of the “Essenes” as *’ysyym*).

Etymology of the designation Ἰεσσαῖοι from “Jesse” – or its other possible etymologies of “Messianic” character – appears to give an opportunity to answer an intriguing question: why is this denomination not found in the New Testament, nor its Semitic original in the old Rabbinic literature? It seems that those Jews, as well as early Christians, who knew or only suspected the true meaning of the term “Essenes”, did not employ this designation, because they could consider it to be blasphemous (as, for example, Jews avoided, and sometimes abstain nowadays, from usage of the term “Christians”).

On the other hand, it is also not impossible that the hypothetical Semitic original of the designation of the community — (*’*)*yšy’* / (*’*)*yšyn* could be taken in uninitiated circles not as derived from the proper name *Yišay*, but in its literal sense — as the “wealthy (people)” (from material or/and spiritual points of view). Echoes of such an interpretation, in the present author’s opinion, could be found in Philo’s treatises *Quod omnis probus liber sit*, XII, 77 and *De vita contemplativa*, II, 13. In the first work, Philo of Alexandria says that the Ἰεσσαῖοι “called themselves the ‘wealthiest (people)’ (*πλουσιώτατοι*)”, since they are moderate in needs, and this is tantamount to an abundance. In the second composition, the philosopher

³² Cf., e.g.: Tantlevskij 2003, 107–115.

³³ Cf., e.g., the following title of a Latin translation of the treatise “On Contemplative Life” by Philo of Alexandria: *Philonis Judaei liber de statu Essaeorum, id est Monachorum, qui temporibus Agrippae regis monasteria sibi fecerunt*.

³⁴ Cf.: Eusebius of Caesaria, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II, 16–17.

³⁵ The addition of a prosthetic *aleph* before *yod* was a wide spread practice in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (as well as in Mishnaic Hebrew). See, e.g.: Dalman 1960, 100; cf., e.g.: Taylor 2010, 377; Tantlevskij 2014c, 547.

³⁶ Cf., e.g.: Rossi 1866, 90–97.

defines the θεραπευταί (who, as it was noted above, in all probability represented an Egyptian branch of the Essenes) as those who have got “the wealth of insight (τὸν βλέποντα πλοῦτον)”. Some Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora (including Philo himself) may also have connected the denomination Ἐσσαῖοι/Ἐσσηνοί with the term ἐσσία (Doric form of the word οὐσία; cf.: Lat. *esse*, *essentia*), meaning “essence”, “property” and probably known to the educated public from Plato’s treatise *Cratylus*, 401. (NB: these Greek and Latin terms are possibly congeneric with the Hebrew *yēš/’iš*, “substance”; “existence”=“there is” [the name *Yīšay* is apparently derived from this very word].) From the point of view of this correlation, the “Essenes” could probably be considered as those, who investigate the *essence* of God and the Universe,³⁷ and, at the same time, as those, who have obtained imperishable *property*.

III. The Essenes as new “rephaites”

In the Qumranites’ view, the border between the transcendent and the earthly worlds is relatively “transparent” on both sides, *i.e.* not only angel-like beings can descend from the heavens and stay in their community,³⁸ but also certain representatives of this world are able to visit the heavenly one. In particular, it follows from some of the *Thanksgiving Hymns* (*e.g.*: 1QH^a, XI, 19–23; XII, 27–29), as well as from the so-called *Self-glorification Hymn* (4Q491^c) and its recension(s) included in the *Thanksgiving Hymns* collection³⁹, the author of which informed his adherents of his heavenly “voyage(s)” and of his firm belief that on finishing his terrestrial path he would stay with the heavenly beings in the celestial Council. Further, judging by these fragments of the *Hymns*, the Qumran *Rule of the Discipline* (see, *e.g.*: 1QS, IV, 8), the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (or the *Angelic Liturgy*; 4Q400–407; 11Q17),⁴⁰ etc., the Qumranites evidently believed that the departed righteous and wise (first of all, their own dead comrades) came to be angel-like beings (who are designated, in particular, *’ēlīm*, “gods”). This view is obviously attested also in the following fragment of the *War Scroll* (1QM), XII, 1–2:

For there is multitude of the holy ones in the heavens, and the hosts of angels are in Thy Holy Abode, [praising] Thy [Name]. And Thou hast established in [a community] for Thyself the elect of Thy holy people (*i.e.* the departed righteous ones. — *I. T.*).

³⁷ Cf., *e.g.*: Philo, *QOPL*, XII, 80; *Idem*, *DVC*, *passim*; Josephus, *BJ*, II, 136.

³⁸ See, *e.g.*: 1QSa, II, 3–9; 1QS, XI, 8; cf., *e.g.*: 4QD^b (*Damascus Document*^b), fr. 17, I, 6–9; 11Q14 (11Q *Sefer ham-Milhamah*), fr. 1, II, 14–15; 4Q369 (*Prayer of Enosh* (?)), fr. 1, II, 9.

³⁹ See in detail, *e.g.*: Tantlevskij 1997b, 193–213; *Idem* 2000, 92ff.; *Idem* 2004, 67ff.; *Idem* 2012, 299–313. Cf., *e.g.*: Wise 2000, 173–219.

⁴⁰ Some fragments of this composition were discovered at the fortress of Masada as well.

[The] list ("book". — *I. T.*) of the names of all their host⁴¹ is with Thee in the Abode of Thy Holiness, and the num[ber of the righ]teous in Thy Glorious Dwelling".⁴²

In the light of the texts mentioned above, and especially the hymnic fragment of 4Q491^c and its recension(s), one can assume that "gods" ('ēlîm/'ēlôhîm), mentioned in the Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, are not only the angelic beings, but also the deified departed righteous.⁴³

An implicit parallel to this Qumranic conception one can find in the text of *BJ*, II, 154, in which Josephus Flavius notes that the Essenes believe that the souls, "when they are set free from the bounds of the flesh", "rejoice and mount upwards" (see further: *BJ*, II, 153–158, and especially, 153; *Antt.*, XVIII, 18). Hippolytus of Rome writes in his *Philosophumena* (IX, 27), that the Essenes

admit that the body will resurrect and remain immortal, exactly like the soul which is already immortal, and, separated (*sc.* from the body. — *I. T.*), rests till the Judgment in a pleasant and effulgent place, which the Hellenes would call, had they heard (about it), the Islands of the Blessed".

Judging by Philo of Alexandria (*DVC*, II, 11–13), the Therapeutae (dwelling mostly in Egypt; see below) practiced mystical heavenly "voyages" in a certain ecstatic state:

Let the genus of the Therapeutae, constantly accustoming itself to contemplation, aspire to consider the Being, ascend above the visibly perceived sun... Like frantic Bacchantes and Corybantes,⁴⁴ they are seized with an exaltation till they see what they long for.

* * *

However, searching for certain possible parallels and sources of the Qumranites' and the Essenes' views concerning the ascent of the departed righteous members of their community to the heavens and their transition into the category of "gods", *i.e.* the angel-like beings, one should primarily pay attention not to the

⁴¹ Cf. the passage *BJ*, II, 142, in which Josephus notes that the Essenes keep secret "both the books belonging to their sect and the names of the angels" — probably in order to prevent the possibility of their unauthorized invoking by uninitiated outsiders. (Cf., *e.g.*: *Gen.* 32:30; *Judg.* 13:17–18; cf. also: *1 Sam.* 28:8–14.)

⁴² Cf.: *Dan.* 12:3; cf. also, *e.g.*: *1 Enoch* 39:6–41; ch. 102–104.

⁴³ See also: Tantlevskij 1994, 236–241, 275; *Idem* 1997b, 193–213. Cf., *e.g.*: Fletcher-Louis 1998, 367–399; *Idem* 2000, 292–312; *Idem* 2002.

⁴⁴ Cf., *e.g.*, Plato's treatises *Banquet*, 218b; *Phaedrus*, 253a; *Ion*, 533e. (Corybantes were the priests of the Phrygian Great Mother Cybele, whose cult was notable for its licentiousness and state of frenzy.)

corresponding Hellenic/Hellenistic (or Iranian) religious views, but rather to the relevant local old Canaanite/Ugaritic and old Israelite-Judahite people's beliefs and practices associated with the cult of the dead.⁴⁵ It is natural to suppose *a priori*, that some of these traditions and practices still existed in certain heterodox (esoteric) Judaeon circles during the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods, or, at least, could be revived and modified among them in one or another form (as, for example, the Qumranites and the Essenes seem to have employed old solar calendar, used in the pre-Exilic epoch, in its somewhat remodeled form⁴⁶). For instance, one can see certain points of contiguity between the corresponding views and lifestyles of the Qumranites/Essenes and the old Canaanite/Ugaritic and Israelite-Judahite conception of the so-called *rēfā'îm* (or rather *rōfē'îm* [Ugaritic *rp'um*; Phoenician *rp'm*], i.e. "healers", sc. "benefactors"⁴⁷; see below), who are referred to as "gods"⁴⁸ in ancient sources, and their mystic and esoteric cultic associations, crystallizing around the cult of a god or a hero, called, in particular, *marzēhîm* (Hebrew, sg. *marzēh*; Ugaritic *marzaḥu* or *marziḥu*).⁴⁹ In all probability, the departed ones continued to be considered the members of the *marzēhîm* and hence were invisibly "present" at their communal sacred meals, funerary rites, religious feasts, etc. (Cf., e.g., the Ugaritic text *KTU* 1.161 ["On the Rephaites"], 2–10, according to which the spirits of the deified ancestors were invited to the house of *marzaḥu* during the New Year festival.) Such cultic associations are also attested in later cultures in the region of Syria-Palestine.

Along with the "rephaites of old" (divine ancestors), dwelling in the other world, – this could be the heavens or/and the netherworld⁵⁰ – the existence of the "rephaites of earth ('arṣ'⁵¹; or 'land', 'country') is attested in some Ugaritic texts. These are likely to have been called also the "gods of earth" ('ilm 'arṣ). The "earthly" rephaites (as well as the "sons of the rephaites"; cf.: 2 *Sam.* 21:16, 18 and

⁴⁵ See, e.g.: Tanlevslij, 1997b, 193–213; *Idem* 2004, 67–79; *Idem* 2012, 313–346.

⁴⁶ Cf., e.g.: Tanlevslij 2004, 69; Ben-Dov 2008.

⁴⁷ Cf.: Köhler, Baumgartner 1996, III, 1274f.

⁴⁸ In some Ugaritic texts, the rephaites dwelling in the abode of gods, including spirits of the departed kings and heroes, the righteous and wise, were called, e.g.: "star-gods", "those-of-the-stars" "in the heavens", "divine ancestors", "protectors". See, e.g.: Tantlevskij 2004, 71.

⁴⁹ On the *marzēhîm* see, e.g.: Assen 1996, 73–87; Maier, Daenfus 1999, 45–57; McLaughlin 2001.

⁵⁰ Cf., e.g.: Tantlevskij 2013a, 372–401; *Idem* 2014e, 142–145.

⁵¹ According to an alternative supposition, the expression *rp'i 'arṣ* in *KTU* 1.15:iii.3, 14 should be interpreted as "the rephaites of the underworld" (see, e.g.: Toorn 1996, 210 and n. 14). Cf., e.g.: *Ps.* 16:3.

20; 1 Chr. 20:4 and 6, 8), *i.e.* probably those, who live on earth,⁵² seem to have been the *liminal* personalities, who acquired special initiation and consecration — which apparently presupposed the experience of mystical death and subsequent rebirth to a new life in the process of accomplishment of a ritual act — and through this also sacral knowledge opening the way during a lifetime into spheres usually accessible only for the dead — into the other world — and drawing nearer to the association of “gods”, *i.e.* the other world beings.⁵³ There was a belief that they could periodically come into contact with the other world, and probably even visit it in a certain ecstatic state. Their connection with the other world has been reflected, in particular, in the fact that the terms used for their designations coincided with the denominations of the other world dwellers, with whom they associated; cf., *e.g.*, in the Hebrew Bible: the other world and the earthly *rēfā’îm*/[*rōfē’îm*]-“healers”; the knowing spirits and those (witch doctors), who invoke the knowing spirits — *yiddē’ônîm*; the ancestors’ spirits and those, who invoke the ancestors’ spirits — *’ôbôt*.

Some basic aspects of the rephaites’ conception appears to have been distorted in, and in many cases deleted from, the Jewish orthodox written records extremely negative towards the cult of the departed and contacts with them in any form.⁵⁴ On the same plane one should consider the Masoretic vocalization of the very word for spirits of the dead — *rp’yim* — as *rēfā’îm*, “impotent ones”, instead of the most probable original *rōfē’îm*, “healers”. This is corroborated, for instance, by the fact that the Septuagint translates the term *rp’yim* in *Isa.* 26:14 and *Ps.* 88:11 as *ἰατροί*, *i.e.* reads it as *rōfē’îm*. On the other hand, in *2 Chr.* 16:12, — where it is said of King Asa’s “seeking” help from the *rōfē’îm*, *i.e.* “healers”, and not from the Lord, — the former seem to be none other than spirits of the dead. The vocalization *rēfā’îm*, “impotent ones”, “powerless”, — instead of the original *rōfē’îm*, “healers”, “benefactors”, — could arise as a polemical and simultaneously pejorative reaction to the designation of the worshipped ancestors (primarily, the prominent ones; cf., *e.g.*: *Lev.* 24:15; *1 Sam.* 28:13) by the term *’ēlîm/’ēlôhîm* (“gods”), meaning literally “powerful”, “strong”, “potent ones”.

⁵² In particular, the “earthly” rephaites were the heroes of the Ugaritic epos *Dannillu* and *Karatu* (cf., *e.g.*: KTU 1.15:iii.2–4 = 13–15). Cf.: *Deut.* 3:11–13; *Josh.* 12:4–5, 13:12 about Og, King of Bashan.

In the Hebrew Bible, the term of the same consonant spelling — *rp’yim* (Masoretic vocalization: *rēfā’îm*) — is also used several times as a general term for the designation of some Canaanite and Transjordanian peoples of giants.

⁵³ Shifman 1999, 198, 242–244.

⁵⁴ Cf.: Toorn 1996, 225.

Philo of Alexandria called the Essenean communities *thiasi* (a designation of Greek cultic associations), including *syssitia* (sc. communal meals).⁵⁵ The term θίασος could well be correlated with the Hebrew *marzēh*^a (see, e.g.: *Jer.* 16:5 [LXX]), resp. Aramaic *marzēhā*, for, in particular, both associations included cultic banquets connected with cult of the departed (cf., e.g.: *Deut.* 26:14; *Judg.* 9:26–29 (cf. also: 9:9, 13); *Isa.* 65:4; *Ps.* 106:28). Josephus Flavius compares the Essenes' mode of life with that of the Pythagoreans (*Antt.*, XV, 371),⁵⁶ probably implying thus an esoteric character of their associations. Both Philo and Josephus, depicting the Essenes, hint at the sacral character of their meals and liturgy; exactly the same one can say about the Therapeutae's practice in Philo's description of them.

In the light of what was said above concerning the rephaites and the mystical beliefs and practice of the Essenes and the Qumranites, it seems plausible to suppose that the sectarians' aloofness from this world and their striving for contacts and relations with the other world could be a reason, by which they came to be nicknamed (probably, with a tinge of irony) after the designation of *rēfā'im*/resp. *rōfē'im*, lit. "healers", whom they really recalled in some key aspects. In this case, the designation θεραπευταί, "healers", — applied in Jewish Hellenized circles,⁵⁷ primarily, in Egypt, to the members of the (*ex hypothesi*) Essenean communities of mystic-"gnostic" trend, to which the Qumran community appears to have appertained as well, — could be in fact a Greek translation of the Hebrew term *rōfē'im*. It also seems natural to assume that this designation of the sectarians could be interpreted/translated by the word 'āsāyā'/'āsēn, meaning "healers", "physicians" (with a connotation: "thaumaturges"; cf., e.g.: *Y. Yoma*, III, 40^d, bottom of page), in the Aramaic-speaking milieu of the region of Syria-Palestine.⁵⁸ NB: Both Greek and Aramaic translations of the sectarians' designation could be made by uninitiated outsiders without any connection with the special "mystical" connotation of the Hebrew term *rp'ym* — it could simply be a *literal* translation of this word.

Whether or not the Essenes and the Therapeutae were healers in actual fact, is unknown. In Philo's opinion, the Therapeutae were not physicians in the proper sense, for they cured not bodies, but souls — from their passions and vices (*DVC*,

⁵⁵ *QOPL*, XII, 85f.; *Apologia*, (5) [in: Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, VIII, 11].

⁵⁶ Cf.: Hyppolitus, *Philosophumena*, IX, 27.

⁵⁷ Cf., e.g., Philo, *DVC*, III, 21: "This genus lives everywhere, for it is incumbent on both Hellas and barbarians to join the perfect virtue...".

⁵⁸ Etymology of Ἐσσαῖοι/Ἐσσηνοί from 'āsāyā'/'āsēn had been proposed before the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls. Cf., e.g.: Jastrow 1926, 93. Selective bibliography on this etymology see, e.g., in: Tantlevskij 2004, 79, n. 259.

I, 2).⁵⁹ The presence of women-Therapeutrides in the community also corroborates this conclusion. (On the other hand, judging by, e.g., 1 Sam. 28:3, 7, 9, women were among those, who practiced communion with spirits of the departed.) Josephus' remark that the Essenes "inquire after such roots and medicinal stones as may cure distempers" (*BJ*, II, 136), probably, means simply that they didn't consult actual physicians. The Dead Sea scrolls remain silent of medical activity of the Qumran sectarians. Thus, if the Essenes-Qumranites were in fact called *rōfē'im* by Hebrew-speaking outsiders, this term implied, in all probability, that they were "healers" *out of this world*, like the rephaites of former times, whom they strikingly resembled. In conclusion, let us mention that, judging by the *Panarion*, XXIX, 4, 9–10, Epiphanius of Salamis knew a tradition, according to which the designation Ἱεσσαῖοι (= Ἑσσαῖοι) had been eventually derived from the word, meaning "in Hebrew" θεραπευτής/ιατρός, lit. "healer"/"physician".

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⁵⁹ Cf. also: Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II, 17, 1–24.

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