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John Ben-Daniel graduated in medicine from Cambridge and London Universities in 1978. He settled in Jerusalem in 1998, where he continues to work as a family physician. For more than 30 years, he has studied the Scriptures, and researched their archaeological and historical background. He attended a course on local archaeology in 2001 and is currently a member of the Enoch Seminar. With his wife, Gloria, he has written *"The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple: A New Approach to the Book of Revelation"* (Jerusalem, 2003), *"St. John and the Book of Revelation: From Essenes to End-Times"* (Jerusalem, 2019). His works can be found at www.newtorah.org and www.academia.edu.

Both Flavius Josephus and Philo of Alexandria described the Essenes as a pious religious movement which flourished during the late Second Temple period. Apart from the contemporary accounts of these two authors, very little was known about the Essenes until the 1950's, when a large collection of their writings was discovered at Qumran. Scholars suspect that these writings were produced by a small, self-segregating community within the Essene movement as a whole, but traces of the other Essene communities have eluded them up to now. This book begins with the discovery of an ancient cave-village with Essene features within the Arbel National Park, close to the Sea of Galilee. By combining evidence from archaeological finds, historical accounts and literary sources, the author builds up a profile of these non-Qumranic Essenes, following them from Mt. Arbel in Galilee to Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, and identifying the Parables of Enoch (*1 Enoch 37-71*) as one of their most influential writings. The influence of this messianic prophecy is then identified among the founders of Christianity—John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth and John of Patmos. The book ends with evidence for Damascus as the birthplace of the Essenes, followed by a broad review of Essene origins and history, from the end of the Babylonian Exile to the First Revolt. Emerging from the mists of time, the larger Essene movement identified in this book could be described as the "missing link" between Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity.

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JOHN BEN-DANIEL * THE ESSENES OF MOUNT ARBEL AND JERUSALEM

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THE ESSENES OF MOUNT ARBEL AND JERUSALEM

Origins, History, and Influence



THE ENIGMA
PRESS

Seven-Minute Presentation to Enoch Seminar, 27.06.23

I would like to talk about our research on the Provenance of the Book of Parables (1En 37-71), which is a chapter in our new publication “*The Essenes of Mount Arbel and Jerusalem: Origins, History and Influence*”(Qumranica Mogilanensia series 20, Mogilany, Poland: Enigma, 2023).

Our project began in August 2019, when my wife and I visited the Arbel National Park, near the Sea of Galilee, 2 kms southwest of Magdala. We were mystified by the ruins of a dense collection of more than 100 caves carved into the cliff, adjacent to a huge natural cave 60 metres long, once protected by an ancient wall. In 1989, Dr Zvi Ilan was the first Israeli archaeologist to investigate the site, which he dated to 100 BCE and called the Arbel cave village. Apart from the many cisterns and *miqva’ot*, he was fascinated by the large cave and intended to excavate it, but he sadly died the following year. Even worse, no other archaeologist has taken up the challenge, and there is still no satisfactory explanation for the existence of the Arbel cave village.

Josephus (JW 1:304-307) tells us an important fact about this area: it was the scene of violent conflict during the Civil War (40-37 BCE), when Herod’s army camped on Mt. Arbel for several months in 38 BCE, in order to expel the cave-dwelling brigands who were making life impossible for the Arbel residents. From this, we learn that Herod had allies in Arbel, although the people of this region were well-known for their loyalty to the Hasmonean dynasty, Herod’s rivals. From the brigandry, we learn there was also a social crisis here—a lack of sufficient resources—even though it was a region blessed with abundant water and fertile land.

From these historical references, and from the results of an important archaeological survey published by Prof. Uzi Leibner in 2009 (*Settlement and History in Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Galilee*), and from our interpretation of certain outstanding features of the site, we have proposed a new hypothesis: that this area was settled and farmed by Essenes, and that the Arbel cave-village itself was built and occupied by a male Essene community from around 100 BCE, at about the same time the Essenes settled at Qumran. All this is presented in the first chapter of our book.

Naturally, we then started to wonder whether there is evidence of scribal activity in the Arbel cave village, as at Qumran. No pens, inkwells or scroll-jars have yet been found, or even looked for, but only 30 kms away from Arbel, Lake Huleh (Semechonitis) was then the largest habitat of papyrus outside Egypt. Could the liberal use of papyrus in this area explain why ‘writing with ink and papyrus’ was included among the teachings of the rebel angel *Penemue*, in 1En 69:8-11? What is more, the text of Parables evokes several other topographical features of the Arbel cave village: the

‘dwellings of the righteous’ in heaven (1En 39:4-5; 41:2; 48:1; cf. 1En 22:1,9; Jn 14,2) could be describing the tightly packed and interconnected rows of hewn habitations in the cave-village, the ‘ropes of the righteous’ as a metaphor for trust in God’s name (1En 61:3; cf. 46:8) seems to have been modelled on the ropes used to reach the higher caves in the cave-village, and the rebel angels’ descent on Mt. Hermon, mentioned twice in the text (1En 39:1-2; 64:1-2), would have been called to mind constantly by the magnificent views of Mt. Hermon 70 kms away.

But there is more compelling evidence that the Arbel cave-village was the home of the author of the Book of Parables. Firstly, the author can be identified as a full member of an Essene community, because his unique literary act of recording and preserving the names of the rebel angels (1En 69:1-12) is the fulfilment of one of the oaths of Essene membership (cf. JW 2:142). Secondly, the author’s description of the eschatological war (1En 56:5 – 57:3) is taken to be based on an eyewitness account of the Civil War projected into the future, and is therefore invoked in dating the text to Herod’s reign. We go on to show how the same tripartite description of the Civil War enables us to locate the author to a place overlooking the Plain of Ginnosar, which perfectly matches the location of the Arbel cave village. Finally, the social crisis leading to brigandage in this area coincides precisely with a rapid doubling of the population in eastern Galilee, between 60 - 50 BCE, as revealed by Uzi Leibner’s Archaeological Survey, which in turn is best explained by massive internal migration and overpopulation caused by the ‘Judaean land settlement’ of Pompey and Gabinius (63-54 BCE). The resulting oversaturation of productive land, coupled with private ownership of large tracts, including the entire plain of Ginnosar, more than adequately explains the social setting of the Parables and its uniquely judgmental stance against ‘the landowners’. All this persuades us that the author of the Book of Parables was an Essene who lived at the Arbel cave village in the latter part of the first century BC. It was a time of great Messianic expectation and what he wrote was a messianic prophecy.

Concerning the immediate influence of this community, and its messianic prophecy, I just want to mention that it was less than a day’s walk from Nazareth and would have received approved youngsters for up to three years before taking the oaths of membership, but that is another chapter in the unfolding story of the *Essenes of Mt. Arbel and Jerusalem*.

John Ben-Daniel
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NB: For private and personal use, the book can be accessed online at
<https://www.newtorah.org/pdf/QM2023protected.pdf>

For a PowerPoint presentation given on 22.02.24, on Arbel and the Essenes (the first chapter of the book), please go to <https://vimeo.com/915933839> and enter the following password: Fra@Lec9