The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran community have historically been interpreted in terms of how they are similar to contemporary Jewish religious groups. In this thesis, I argue that such approaches are in fact inadequate for explaining why the Qumran community often behaved so differently from contemporary Jews. Analysis of contemporary historical accounts, the Scrolls library, and the material record show that Qumran was a community formed for a very specific purpose. The founders of the community conceived of history as a divinely-controlled cycle of blessing, punishment, and rebirth, based upon the adherence to or disregard of the laws of the Israelite covenant. The community's founders, believing that contemporary Judaean worship was no longer valid, was forced to improvise an alternate method of covenant adherence outside the existing Jewish religious framework. This system would allow the community to ensure the perpetuity of the Israelite nation after the eminent eschaton. The creation and maintenance of their community as a covenant remnant was both the motivating force and the primary structural principle of the Qumran community. In particular, the community's self-perception as a remnant lead them to reject the Temple system, to create an elaborate and self-perpetuating method of initiation and education, and to embrace ascetic practices such as poverty and the communal ownership of property.