ing activity that followed the conquest of Alexander the Great. He dates the non-sectarian New Jerusalem text to around 200 BCE, and the Temple Scroll, which he believes to be sectarian, to not earlier than the mid-second century BCE. It may be doubted, however, whether the architectural features to which Broshi refers have quite the evidential value for the dating of these documents that he would attribute to them, while there is much else in the Temple Scroll to suggest that it, like the Description of the New Jerusalem, is a non-sectarian work.

The question of the basis on which Qumran manuscripts may be regarded as either sectarian or non-sectarian forms one of the primary concerns of the article by D. Dimant. She has surveyed the entire corpus of Qumran writings and has assigned each to one of three categories: biblical manuscripts; documents employing terminology connected to the Qumran community (= CT); and works which do not contain clusters of terms and ideas related to the Qumran community (= NCT). She has appended to her article a list of the manuscripts divided up among the three groups, and on the basis of her analysis she has some interesting observations to make on the contents of the three groups. However, although Dimant’s criteria for the assignment of texts to her CT category are unexceptionable, not all the texts that she has assigned to this group seem so obviously to belong to it. Alternatively it may be that her CT category is too widely drawn to be really useful if it can properly include works such as the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice or the Wisdom Text with Beatitudes (4Q525) along with works that are much more obviously sectarian. This is a subject on which the last word has certainly not been spoken.

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This book claims to expose the secrets of the sect behind the DSS and links them to matters of virginity and purity. The authors suggest that two secret rituals were conducted to rid the sect of pollution: (1) the “Angelical Sabbath” ritual for the castration of those men desiring maximum holiness and (2) the ritual of “Immaculate Conception” in which a man’s semen was artificially inseminated into a virgin who conceived while retaining her virginity, i.e. without sexual intercourse. These conclusions are reached by using ancient mythology and medical records.

Due to the fragmentary nature of the texts found at Qumran as well as their esoteric character there is room for speculation on the total picture of the sect’s ideology. The authors correctly identify purity as the overriding
concern and the issue which separated the sect from other Jews. Nevertheless, serious questions arise concerning the authors’ interpretation of scripture and the compatibility of their theory with this stringent Torah community.

Some of the biblical interpretations provided in *Truth about the Virgin* are questionable. For example, the authors claim that the sectarians identified themselves as a “holy brotherhood” of Nazirites who wished to release themselves from all sexual desire. However, the Torah does not forbid sexual activity to Nazirites. Samson was clearly not celibate and Samuel fathered two sons. Furthermore, the holiest man in Israel, the high priest, is not celibate. To the contrary, he must engage in sexual intercourse with his wife in order to produce the next high priest.

Another model for the sect’s supposed purity rituals is the Bible’s miraculous births since they were facilitated by supernatural means. However, in all of these cases, the child was still “born of a woman” and subjected to the impure blood flow present at birth (cf. Luke 2:22). The stories of angels cohabiting with women are supposedly prime models for “Immaculate Conception.” The authors discuss, among other examples, the birth of Cain and the union of angels and women in Genesis 6. Nevertheless, in both cases, however one interprets the text, the resulting seed was wicked, hardly an ideal for the Torah community at Qumran.

Often the authors’ identification of sexually implicit language in the Bible is not supported by the literary context and sometimes these interpretations are contradictory. For example, the authors’ claim that “living water” is a code name for semen in the Bible must be reconciled with the levitical emphasis that semen is a source of impurity and that purification from sexual discharges is achieved only by “living water” (Lev. 15:13)! Additionally, are the fruit and delights of the Garden of Eden symbols for sensuality and pleasure (p. 35) or for innocence and virginity (p. 103)?

Some of the claims the authors make about the sect directly contradict biblical laws; this seems inappropriate for the conservative Torah-minded community described in the DSS. For example, the authors claim the sectarians were familiar with horse breeding techniques of artificial insemination which they used on women. However, horse breeding (not in evidence at Qumran) is emphatically discouraged by the Torah (Deut. 17:16).

This dissonance with clear biblical principles is perhaps most striking when the authors’ theory is set alongside the Torah’s purity system. The notion that a man’s sexual discharges are impure is relatively ignored. Nevertheless, according to Leviticus, a man who emits semen is impure until he bathes and waits for sunset, whether or not a woman was involved (Lev. 15:16-18). Thus, even though the bridegroom in the “Ritual of Immaculate Conception” never approaches the virgin he marries, his semen defiles him to the same degree as during sexual intercourse. Artificial insemination does not resolve the issue of impurity.