
The Dead Sea Scrolls and Contemporary Culture is a superb collection of essays that makes original contributions to the understanding of the scrolls on the 60th anniversary of their discovery. The volume focuses on progress made in research over the last decade and highlights promising areas for future research. The book is highly recommended to all those interested in the DSS, the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Judaism, early Christianity, and rabbinic Judaism. It would be especially useful for graduate students in the fields listed above since it provides broad insights into recent research as well as timely advice on which questions might be most promising to pursue in the future. The book is a model for the type of rich, interdisciplinary interactions that many colleges and universities yearn to foster in the humanistic disciplines.

Emanuel Tov opens the volume with a review of some aspects of the history and current status of the DJD publication project. The first section addresses “Identity and History of the Community.” Florentino García Martínez revisits the Groningen hypothesis and suggests that it can still help us explain the textual data from Qumran. Charlotte Hempel examines 1QS 6:2c-4a and suggests that when it is read in light of CD 13:2b-3a, one must conclude that S’s use of the preposition מ (indicating the existence of a larger or parent group) is a later development or interpolation in the text. Eyal Regev compares features of the Yaḥad with modern religious sects such as the Quakers, Shakers, Hutterites, Mennonites, and Amish in order to suggest several likely (and unlikely) characteristics of the Yaḥad. James VanderKam reassesses the early or pre-history of the people associated with the scrolls. He reaches the sober conclusion that we can know very little about the community described in CD 1 and finds no evidence that the Qumran group began or existed as a splinter group that broke away from the group described in CD 1 (à la the Groningen Hypothesis).

Section 2a examines scriptural texts. Jonathan Ben-Dov compares scribal practices for writing the divine name in the Elohist Psalter (Psalms 42-89) and in the DSS and suggests a common explanation for the phenomenon. Peter Flint provides a careful summary of non-masoretic variant readings in 1QIsab and finds that while the majority of the 622 variants are minor and of little consequence, around ten percent (66) are significant and involve clear changes in the meaning of the text. His results overturn preliminary descriptions of 1QIsab as an exemplar of the Proto-Masoretic text. Eugene Ulrich summarizes some contributions of the study of the DSS for understanding the Bible. If the reviewer might be so bold, I suggest that Ulrich’s essay should be required reading for anyone who presumes to study the
Bible: from undergraduates to senior scholars. The essay attempts to clarify what kinds of questions might be asked of the scrolls without privileging familiar ideas and concepts that are demonstrably later than the scrolls. Ulrich points out that it is only natural to analyze newly discovered texts with familiar categories. But he suggests that we now know enough to add considerable precision to our categories. We know that, “Every source of evidence we have for the nature of the biblical text in the Second Temple period—the Qumran scrolls, the SP, the LXX, the NT, and Josephus—demonstrates that the biblical text was pluriform and dynamically growing, with variant literary editions for many of the biblical books.” Such a statement has only recently been possible and it is only because of data from the DSS that we can be finally certain of it. Indeed, Ulrich suggests that the very terms “biblical” and “non-biblical” are highly problematic and almost always privilege the medieval MT as “Bible.”

Section 2b addresses an area of Scrolls research that has perhaps accounted for the most research and most fruitful results in the last decade: scriptural interpretation. Moshe Bernstein provides an admirably concise history of research into biblical interpretation at Qumran. He suggests that the term parabiblical is used too widely and that some methodological issues are clarified if one acknowledges that a “Bible” or “Scriptures” existed at the time the scrolls were written. His proposition is almost certainly correct, but the reviewer would suggest that the “if” is a very big “if”. James Charlesworth asks what is unique about the exegesis found in the Pesharim and, by extension, what is unique about the exegetical methods of the Qumran Essenes. He concludes that, above all else, the writers of the Pesharim applied a hermeneutic of exclusivism. Esther Eshel suggests a new understanding of the narrative shape of the Genesis Apocryphon. She suggests a new three-fold organization: an Enoch cycle, a Noah cycle, and an Abraham cycle. She argues that the three cycles are structured around three major figures by creating intertextual connections and secondary characters between the three major ones. Armin Lange argues that the method of isolation and recontextualization found in, e.g., Pesharim, testify to a view that scriptural texts have a double meaning. This method can be distinguished from the methods of, e.g., the chronicler (excise objectionable material) because, “If texts carry an openly accessible surface meaning and a hidden deeper meaning, rewriting them would carry the danger of losing their hidden meaning.”

Section 2c engages the intersection of sectarian and non-sectarian texts. John J. Collins offers an assessment of the notion of Enochic Judaism. He finds the most basic proposal of the theory to be reasonable, i.e., that the “chosen righteous from the chosen plant of righteousness” described in 1 Enoch constituted a Jewish sect. But he offers several critiques of more specific aspects of the theory. For example, the evidence that the Enoch tradition was part of the early Essene movement suffers from several problems, not least of which is the fact that it is not concerned with the Mosaic Torah. Devorah Dimant investigates fine distinctions between