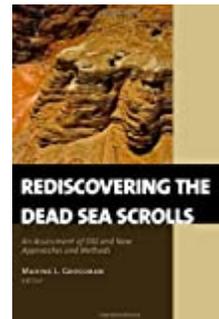




**Maxine L. Grossman, ed.** *Rediscovering the Dead Sea Scrolls: An Assessment of Old and New Approaches and Methods*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2010. xiii + 318 pp. \$28.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8028-4009-7.



**Reviewed by** Jean Duhaime (Université de Montréal)

**Published on** H-Judaic (July, 2011)

**Commissioned by** Jason Kalman (Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion)

## Old and New Tools at Work on the Dead Sea Scrolls

This book is the result of a few years of collaborative work between the authors in order to produce a volume that would “bring together a range of diverse perspectives on and scholarly approaches” to the Dead Sea Scrolls (p. 1). The contributors were asked to provide an introduction to an approach to the scrolls and an example of it, but also a “more self-reflective assessment” (p. 1) of its limits and the potential pitfalls associated with it. The book consists of an introduction, “Tools for Our Work,” by Maxine L. Grossman, and fifteen chapters clustered according to their contents.

In the first essay, “When the Evidence Does Not Fit: Method, Theory, and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” Sarianna Metso demonstrates that, for anyone who attempts to understand Second Temple Judaism, “a broad range of methodological and theoretical questions” are raised or need to be raised by the new evidence from the scrolls (p. 25). She illustrates her point by discussing the three basic concepts of biblical texts, *halakhah*, and history. The next three chapters deal with the manuscripts themselves: their material reconstruction, the practices of the scribes,

and the technological tools used to enhance their reading. Eibert Tigchelaar (“Constructing, Deconstructing and Reconstructing Fragmentary Manuscripts”) draws attention to the requirement to consider “how and why editors assembled specific fragments into manuscripts” and, as an example, argues that it is far from certain “that all the fragments assigned to 4Q184 belonged to one and the same manuscript” (p. 47). Martin G. Abegg Jr. provides a primer to “The Linguistic Analysis of the Dead Sea Scrolls” and its five components (paleography, orthography, phonology, morphology, and syntax), focusing namely on what they reveal about the scribal practices and the evolution of the Hebrew language during late Second Temple period. Bruce Zuckerman’s contribution, “The Dynamics of Change in the Computer Imaging of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Inscriptions,” shows how new technologies have improved the decipherment and analysis of the scrolls; he also calls for the making of new images which, if properly done, “will reveal yet a good deal more” (p. 88).

Chapters 5 to 7 deal with archaeology and history.

After a basic introduction to archaeology, Jodi Magness (“Methods and Theories in the Archaeology of Qumran”) discusses the interpretation of the Qumran settlement, better understood in relation to the scrolls: in her view, features like the large number of *miqva’ot*, the cemetery, the communal dining rooms, etc. are striking physical expressions of the priestly lifestyle and peculiar halakhah of the community who lived there. Hayim Lapin (“Dead Sea Scrolls and the Historiography of Ancient Judaism”) demonstrates how historians interpret limited and fragmentary data “to produce knowledge about the past” (p. 110) by sketching a social-historical investigation of Qumran material which highlights “property ownership, literacy, and אֵלֵי elite taste” (p. 121) and reveals a peak of activity during the first century BCE, a view compatible with a version of the “Essene Hypothesis.” Using the *Hodayot* Scroll from Cave 1 as a test case and “templates” such as the translation techniques found in the Greek version of Ben Sira, James R. Davila (“Counterfactual History and the Dead Sea Scrolls”) imagines how modern scholars would interpret this document if it were preserved only through a single Syriac manuscript based on a Greek rendering; this exercise in “alternate history” points to the limits of the critical tools available to scholars who study the transmission of the Old Testament pseudepigrapha and similar texts.

Three chapters are devoted to a textual analysis of the scrolls. Eugene Ulrich first provides a series of “Methodological Reflections on Determining Scriptural Status in First Century Judaism,” strongly advocating that, instead of viewing the Qumran scriptural scrolls from our present understanding of what the Bible is, “we immerse ourselves in the first centuries,” observing and discussing them “according to the understanding the people had then and the reality they knew” (p. 151), and classifying the text types for each book “according to the successive editions for which we have evidence” (p. 159). Drawing her examples mostly from several copies of the *Community Rule*, Charlotte Hempel (“Sources and Redaction in the Dead Sea Scrolls”) illustrates how the material evidences provided by the scrolls are contributing to our understanding of the genesis and development of ancient Jewish texts in general, including the biblical ones. Steve Delamarter (“Sociological Models for Understanding the Scribal Practices in the Biblical Dead Sea Scrolls”) builds on comparative evidence to suggest as probable that manuscripts displaying features other than the ones specific to the Qumran scribal practice identified by E. Tov “were produced by different communities in different places and only secondarily brought to Qumran by

persons who joined the community” (p. 193).

The last five chapters apply rhetorical and social sciences models, as well as comparative data, to the study of other aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Carol Newsom introduces the reader to “Rhetorical Criticism and the Dead Sea Scrolls” by listing a series of basic questions that rhetorical critics ask of a text and providing examples of how the crafted language of the *Damascus Document*, the *Community Rule*, and the *Hymns* “aided in transforming outsiders into insiders, gave a sense of identity and purpose to members, and was a means of addressing and transforming conflicts” (p. 214). In his essay “Of Calendars, Community Rules, and Common Knowledge,” Robert Kugler builds on the “rational ritual” theory of M. S. Chwe to suggest that the sectarian calendar witnessed by 4QOtot was first shared in the public recitation of an early recension of the *Community Rule* (4QS<sup>e</sup>), then only alluded to in the latest recension of this text (1QS), but still copied to be preserved in written form. Maxine L. Grossman (“Women and Men in the Rule of the Congregation”) concentrates her attention on a controversial passage about women as witnesses (1QSa 1:11) to demonstrate how feminist research can help Qumran scholars “to make sense of ‘confusing’ or ‘anomalous’ data, through a process of rethinking the basic cultural frames through which that evidence has been interpreted” (p. 238). Jutta Jokiranta (“Social-Scientific Approaches to the Dead Sea Scrolls”) makes the point that, from a sociological perspective, a sectarian movement could be aptly described by its degree of tension towards the larger society, measured by such criteria as *difference*, *antagonism*, and *separation*; she also introduces the social identity approach and illustrates how it could help to penetrate more deeply the sectarian interpretation of Scriptures found in the *pesharim*. Finally, Jonathan Klawans (“The Dead Sea Scrolls, the Essenes, and the Study of Religious Belief”) claims that religious studies, by providing larger comparative material such the Calvinist theology of predestination, may help to clarify the simplified statements of Josephus about the beliefs of Jewish parties and the apparently inconsistent affirmations in the scrolls of predetermination and free will.

In spite of a few tensions between the views adopted by their different authors, these essays are much more unified than one might have expected in a book with such a wide range of methodological approaches. The result is a collection which perfectly fits what it was aimed to be: an introduction to and an illustration of the diversity of old and new tools which allow Qumran scholars to “rediscover” the Dead Sea Scrolls and to better understand

their contribution to our knowledge of ancient Judaism.

The targeted audience of this book is firstly “serious undergraduate students in courses on the scrolls, and those whose interest in the scrolls comes out of their work on other areas of study” and, secondly, “senior graduate students and scholars well established in the field” who could also learn from it (p. 2). This volume may indeed introduce new ways of looking at the Dead Sea Scrolls, but also stimulate the methodological reflection of any student of religion, keeping in mind the three

concluding remarks of Robert Kugler: 1) it is “the *nature of the evidence*” that should prompt us to use a methodological approach derived from a specific discipline; 2) it is “the *nature of the questions* we ask from our evidence” that should determine our choice of approaches within this discipline; and 3) “we do well to remain open to the use of multiple disciplines in combination with one another to answer the *questions* we ask of the evidence” (pp. 227-228). A useful cumulative bibliography and two indexes (“Subjects,” “Ancient Texts and Manuscripts”) complete this very well done book.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-judaic>

**Citation:** Jean Duhaime. Review of Grossman, Maxine L., ed., *Rediscovering the Dead Sea Scrolls: An Assessment of Old and New Approaches and Methods*. H-Judaic, H-Net Reviews. July, 2011.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=31109>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.