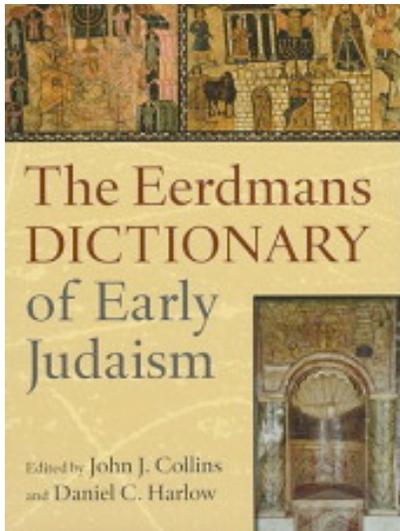


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**Collins, John J., and Daniel C. Harlow, eds.**

***The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism***

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It gives me great pleasure to review this excellent resource. The *Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (hereafter *EDEJ*) bills itself as “the first reference work ever on Judaism in the Greco-Roman age” (back sleeve). The question before us is not so much the veracity of that claim but more whether *EDEJ* has any advantages over its multivolume predecessors, such as *The Cambridge History of Judaism* and *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*. *EDEJ* has two main advantages: first, it is a single, very affordable volume; second, it is up to date. Despite the corollary that the level of coverage is not as detailed as those older, multivolume works, *EDEJ*’s quality of scholarship and well-organized structure means it is likely to become the first point of reference for all those interested in early Judaism.

*EDEJ* opens with thirteen major essays by leading specialists that provide an excellent synthesis of current scholarship: “Early Judaism in Modern Scholarship,” by John J. Collins; “Jewish History from Alexander to Hadrian,” by Chris Seeman (“From Alexander to Pompey”) and Adam Kolman Marshak (“From Pompey to Hadrian”); “Judaism in the Land of Israel,” by James C. VanderKam; “Judaism in the Diaspora,” by Erich S. Gruen; “The Jewish Scriptures: Texts, Versions, Canons,” by Eugene Ulrich; “Early Jewish Biblical Interpretation,” by James L. Kugel; “Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha,” by Loren T. Stuckenbruck; “The Dead Sea Scrolls,” by Eibert Tigchelaar; “Early Jewish Literature Written in Greek,” by Katell Berthelot; “Archaeology, Papyri, and Inscriptions,” by Jürgen

K. Zangenberg; “Jews among Greeks and Romans,” by Miriam Pucci Ben Zeev; “Early Judaism and Early Christianity,” by Daniel C. Harlow; and, finally, “Early Judaism and Rabbinic Judaism,” by Lawrence H. Schiffman. At 290 pages, this substantial opening section showcases all that is excellent in the field and in itself makes owning *EDEJ* worthwhile.

*EDEJ* then continues with the dictionary section proper—over one thousand pages containing 520 entries covering a rich range of subjects from “Aaron” to “Zerubbabel.” The primary focus is on the period from Alexander the Great to Hadrian, although relevant aspects of the Persian period and early rabbinic Judaism are also included. The entries fall into the following broad topics (number of entries): Apocrypha (16), archaeological sites (10) and artifacts (24), Bibles (6), daily life (28), Dead Sea Scrolls (60), Greco-Roman writers (7), Hebrew Bible (17), historical figures (22), Jewish revolts (4), Josephus (4), languages (8), literary genres (19), modern scholars (12), mythical motifs (26), nations and other groups (32), New Testament (10), Philo (6), places (37), practices (34), Pseudepigrapha (44), rabbinic literature (7), reception of biblical figures (19), religious beliefs (60) and institutions (4), and social groups (4).

In addition to the opening essays and the dictionary entries, the editors have been careful to provide a series of features that further enhance the utility of *EDEJ*. The system of cross-references employed throughout is extremely helpful, and the provision of both an alphabetical and a topical list of entries shows that the editors have very much taken a user-orientated approach to assembling *EDEJ*. There are twenty-four maps, a chronological outline (538 B.C.E.–200 C.E.), numerous clear black and white photographs, and some other rather nice surprises (e.g., the chart of Philo’s works on 1066–67).

There is no doubt that the publication of *EDEJ* is a really big moment in the hitherto short history of early Jewish studies. One particularly gratifying aspect of *EDEJ* is the number of comparatively young scholars who have contributed to it, thus demonstrating that the field is vibrant and has a bright future. In addition to its excellent production quality, high scholarly standard, and thoughtful design, there is one more reason to praise this volume: its price. For what it is, the official price is certainly modest. Also, a certain popular Internet shopping outlet has it listed for around two-thirds of the publisher’s price, making it a realistic acquisition for every graduate student—I hope that future editions maintain this feature.

Given how vibrantly the field is developing, it will probably be necessary for a second edition to be produced in the not-too-distant future. With this in mind, I offer the following remarks. (1) The entry on “Ethiopic” opens with the following statement (609): “Ethiopic is a Semitic language formally spoken in Ethiopia and still used in the liturgy of

the Christian church in Ethiopia. The language has two principle dialects: North Ethiopic and South Ethiopic. The oldest northern dialect is Ge'ez, which is regarded as Classic Ethiopic. Among early Jewish writings preserved in Ethiopic are....” It should read “Ge‘ez” rather than “Ge’ez” (i.e., with ‘*ayin* rather than ‘*aleph*), and “Classical” rather than “Classic,” and, given the imprecise use of the term “Ethiopic,” would be best corrected to something along the following lines (compare, e.g., W. Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Ge‘ez [Classical Ethiopic]* [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991], ix):

Ethiopic is a subgroup of languages within the Semitic language family whose northern forms include Tigre and Tigrinya and whose southern forms are Amharic, Argobba, Harari, Gafat, and Gurage. Classical Ethiopic, referred to as Ge‘ez, is a member of the northern branch and was the official language of the Aksumite Empire that adopted Christianity in the fourth century. Among early Jewish writings preserved in Ge‘ez are....

(2) The entry on “Targum” states (1278): “The term ‘targûm’ is based on the quadriliteral verbal root *trgm*, which has cognates in other Semitic languages but is likely to have had an Indo-European origin.” This seems to be based on Rabin’s attempt to derive the term from the Hittite verb *tarkummâi*- “to announce, report” (see Ch. Rabin, “Hittite Words in Hebrew,” *Orientalia* 32 [1963]: 135). This suggestion, however, is not widely accepted (see, e.g., M. E. J. Richardson, trans. and ed., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000], 1787, which states “but that is further removed from Heb. than the Akk. and as such is not really to be accepted”). It is likely that the root RGM is Common Semitic, with a wide semantic development across the various languages (e.g., Akkadian “to cry out, bring an accusation”; Arabic and Ge‘ez, “to curse”; Aramaic and Ugaritic, “to speak”), with a t-stem having the meaning “to translate.”

(3) The problematic use of the term “Job Targum” to refer to 4Q157 and 11Q10 (e.g., 362 and 816) is at odds with Tigchelaar’s correct statement that “it has few, if any, of the features typical of the later rabbinic targumic tradition, so it should be classified as a translation rather than as a precursor of the rabbinic targums” (817). In view of this, I would suggest two things: we should use a term along the lines of “Aramaic Job from Qumran”; and, despite Tigchelaar’s statement, with which I am in complete agreement, some reference should be made to the fine paper by Sally Gold that attempts to argue a contrary view and, in the process, broadens our understanding of this text (see S. L. Gold, “Targum or Translation: New Light on the Character of Qumran Job (11Q10) from a Synoptic Approach,” *Journal for the Aramaic Bible* 3 [2001]: 101–20).

(4) The entry on “Satan and Related Figures” (1196–1200), includes a discussion on “Belial,” which also has its own entry (435–36). The former should probably be cross-

referenced to the latter. Similarly, I think the entry on “Art” (381–86) should be cross-referenced to the entry on “Synagogues” (1260–71), as the latter discusses art at some length.

(5) Unfortunately, the entry “Parthians” (1027–29) is entirely focused on the political and military history of the Parthians in respect of the Seleucids and the Romans—information that is readily available elsewhere. Readers of *EDEJ* would certainly expect the entry to discuss the relationship between the Parthians and the very important Jewish communities that fell under their control. Turning to the entry on “Mesopotamia, Media, and Babylonia” (935–37), I was disappointed once again. The section on “Jews under Persian and Parthian Rule” (935–36) has nothing about the Jews under the Parthians, save for the following observation: “During the Second Temple period the Jews in Mesopotamia were under Parthian rule much of the time.” The rest of the section deals with the evidence for exiled Jews under the Achaemenids. Given the importance of the Jewish communities under Parthian control and the significance of the period, this omission needs to be resolved. As it stands, both entries are flawed, and the title of the second entry is very misleading in that the entry neglects to discuss Media altogether. Furthermore, given that Babylonia is part of southern Mesopotamia, it should simply be titled “Mesopotamia.”

(6) As noted above, *EDEJ* includes twelve entries on important modern scholars (such as Robert Henry Charles, Martin Hengel, and Emil Schürer), including two who are still alive (Jacob Neusner and E. P. Sanders). Obviously, this is one aspect that will require constant updating. I think it would be useful to have entries for Daniel Boyarin, Gershom Scholem, and Geza Vermes, who, in quite different ways, have made extremely important contributions to the study of early Judaism.

(7) Similarly, the scope of *EDEJ* will naturally expand as successive reviewers and users suggest other subjects for entries. Two that come to mind immediately are the second-century B.C.E. sage “Joshua bar Peraḥia,” for whom the most recent treatments are either unpublished (M. J. Geller, “Joshua b. Peraḥia and Jesus of Nazareth: Two Rabbinic Magicians” [Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1974]) or in Hebrew (M. D. Herr, “Joshua ben Peraḥya,” *Encyclopaedia Hebraica* [1968] 19:245–46), and the first-century C.E. rabbi “Hanina ben Dosa” (see G. Vermes, “Hanina ben Dosa,” *JJS* 23 [1972]: 28–50; 24 [1973]: 51–64).

(8) Finally, I do not think that a reference work such as *EDEJ* should serve as a platform for an individual to grind a particular axe. In this regard, the section on “Neo-Babylonian History in the Book of Daniel” (412) is not suitable. It ignores a large body of scholarship that addresses this subject, leaving the uninitiated reader with the impression that

contrary or more-balanced views do not exist. Unfortunately, the same contributor is responsible for the entries criticized above in number 5.

On the whole, the quality of scholarship on display in *EDEJ* is excellent, although, as number 5 above demonstrates, the treatment of matters Mesopotamian and further east could be strengthened. This is probably indicative of the current state of early Jewish studies, so it would be unfair to criticize *EDEJ* for simply reflecting its field. As I mentioned at the start of this review, *EDEJ* bills itself as covering “Judaism in the Greco-Roman age.” Actually, it does much more than this, but the use of the term “Greco-Roman” betrays the Western bias that often pervades the field. At some point we shall have to look eastward much more seriously. In the meantime, I am very pleased to have *EDEJ* in my library.