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Review

**Grossman, Maxine L., ed.,
*Rediscovering the Dead Sea Scrolls:
An Assessment of Old and New
Approaches and Methods* (Grand
Rapids, MI/Cambridge: Eerdmans,
2010). Pp. xiv + 318. Paperback. US
\$28.00. ISBN 978-0-8028-4009-7.**

This collection of essays “bring[s] together a range of diverse perspectives on and scholarly approaches” to the Dead Sea Scrolls (p. 1). Each essay introduces and illustrates a unique approach. The volume positions itself as both an introductory work for advanced undergraduate and graduate students and as a compendium of current research by experts in the field:

“Contributors have been careful to define their terms and outline their questions in ways that will be inviting to new readers without being off-putting to those with more scrolls experience” (p. 2). With the needs of students in mind, each essay defines unfamiliar terminology, provides a clear outline of its methodology, illustrates that methodology with one or more relevant examples from the scrolls, and evaluates both the strengths and weaknesses of its given approach. Experienced researchers will likewise benefit from the volume, as several essays succeed in producing innovative or unexpected results. Together, these essays encourage “interdisciplinary and self-consciously

methodological discussions,” and also “invite new conversations across lines of interest, discipline, and scholarly subfield” (p. 4).

Following an introduction by Grossman, Metso's essay encourages reconsideration of old assumptions in scrolls research. The remaining essays are grouped loosely into four categories. The first group examines the evidence of the manuscripts themselves (Tigchelaar, Abegg, and Zuckerman). The second explores archaeological and historical issues surrounding the Qumran community and the scrolls (Magness, Lapin, and Davila). The third focuses on scribal culture and text-critical issues (Ulrich, Hempel, and Delamarter). A final group approaches the scrolls from rhetorical, sociological, and religious perspectives (Newsom, Kugler, Grossman, Jokiranta, and Klawans).

“Constructing, Deconstructing and Reconstructing Fragmentary Manuscripts: Illustrated by a Study of 4Q184 (4QWiles of the Wicked Woman)” by Eibert Tigchelaar is one of the more pedagogically attuned and engaging essays for students and scholars alike. At the outset, he cautions that “one can benefit fully from reading this chapter only if one also examines the publicly available images of the fragments” (p. 26). Throughout the remainder of the essay, Tigchelaar assumes that his readers are actually looking at the PAM photographs of 4Q184. While more demanding for the reader, this choice produces an interesting and interactive experience as the reader identifies,

along with Tigchelaar, various features of the fragments, and is able to engage, first hand, in the process of critically assessing “the constructions and reconstructions of manuscripts by editors” (p. 28). The essay explains how to access images of the fragments using the best available tools (pp. 28–29), delineates the criteria used by editors of the scrolls to construct and reconstruct a manuscript (p. 30), and points out various “red flags” that may help to identify questionable reconstructions (p. 31). The chosen example, 4Q184, nicely illustrates how to spot “red flags” as well as how several of the criteria can be used to propose a more precise reconstruction. In the end, Tigchelaar's argument is compelling and suggests that this most fundamental form of scrolls research remains a viable and worthwhile line of inquiry.

“Counterfactual History and the Dead Sea Scrolls” by James R. Davila is one of the more surprising and refreshing contributions. Unlike the majority of the essays which aim to demonstrate how a particular methodology, whether traditional or experimental, “might aid our understanding of the scrolls” (p. 215), Davila demonstrates how the scrolls might aid our understanding of other ancient texts, and perhaps even our understanding of the processes and presuppositions of modern historiography itself. His creative approach sets out to write a “history of what might have happened but did not” (p. 129). He carefully imagines an “alternate history” (p. 142) in which the text of

the *Hodayot* was translated into Greek, then into Syriac, then lost entirely, except in a single Syriac manuscript. What might modern scholarly techniques tell us about the provenance and character of such a text? Davila devises and follows a strict set of methodological guidelines in order to keep his alternate history “as plausible as possible” (p. 130). He then shows that if such a scenario were real, scholars might well conclude that the *Hodayot* were originally called the *Odes of Isaiah*, and composed in Syriac during the 2nd–4th centuries by the proto-monastic Christian group called the *בְּנֵי הַבְּרִית* (“sons of the covenant”). All of this intends to show that our traditional approaches to historiography are not nearly as certain as we would like to believe they are.

“Of Calendars, Community Rules, and Common Knowledge: Understanding 4QS^e-4QOtot, with Help from Ritual Studies” by Robert Kugler is one of the more conversational and reflective chapters. He begins with a “confession,” (p. 220) which affords the reader a unique insight into the collaborative process through which this book was produced, as well as the unexpected ways in which his own research evolved. Students who desire to “engage in these procedures themselves” (p. 28) will find this brief discussion beneficial. The essay draws from a recent “rational-functional” approach to ritual studies and attempts to explain certain peculiar features of 4QOtot. The primary thrust of the essay, however, may be found in its epilogue. Here,

Kugler suggests three ways “we might position ourselves relative to the resources other disciplines offer” (p. 215). He urges the reader to allow the “nature of the evidence” (p. 227) in order to determine which methods are employed, to be aware of “variant approaches within unfamiliar disciplines” (p. 227), and “to remain open to the use of multiple disciplines in combination with one another” (p. 228). Although two essays remain, these remarks effectively function as a conclusion to the book as a whole.

Overall, this volume is a fascinating look at recent research on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Its primary strength is its explicitly methodological focus. Each approach is presented with exceptional clarity and the deliberate use of concrete examples brings each method to life. Also significant is its implicit call for greater diversity in the study of the scrolls and for further collaboration among practitioners of distinct approaches. The volume excels in both areas. It would perhaps have benefitted from some added means of dialogue among the authors beyond the simple juxtaposition of contrasting essays. Overall, the reader is left with the general impression of a fairly united attempt to understand the scrolls. While major disagreements are not intentionally downplayed, neither are they probed to any significant degree. Likewise, the reader is left to decide for him or herself how these approaches might best be put to use in conjunction with one another. Nevertheless, this volume will undoubtedly prove

beneficial for students and scholars looking for greater exposure to current issues and debates in the field, for those who want to reexamine and reevaluate the methodological basis of their own research, and for those interested in discovering exciting new ways to approach the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

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