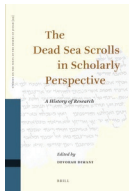


# BOOKS TO DIG INTO

## The Dead Sea Scrolls in Scholarly Perspective: A History of Research



Edited by **Devorah Dimant**. STDJ 99.  
Leiden: Brill, 2012. Pp. xxii + 684. Hard-  
back, \$273.00. ISBN 9789004208063.

This hefty volume consists of a series of 28 essays surveying major themes and developments in Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship since the inception of the field in the 1950's. The essays, authored by some of today's leading scholars from around the globe, are organized according to the three most important geographical centers of research, America (nine articles written by North American scholars), Israel (eight articles written by Israeli scholars), and Europe (ten articles written by European scholars). The articles concerning research in America and Israel are almost all focused on specific themes in Qumran scholarship (e.g., "Rewritten Bible' in North American Scholarship" by Sidnie White Crawford, or "Israeli Research into Hebrew and Aramaic at Qumran" by Steven Fassberg). By contrast, and sensibly, given the diverse academic cultures and approaches represented in Europe, the contributions pertaining to European scholarship are almost all focused on covering the history of research in particular countries or regions (e.g., "Dead Sea Scrolls Scholarship in the United Kingdom" by George Brooke, or "Qumran Research in Nordic Countries" by Sarianna Metso). A brief introductory essay by the editor, Devorah Dimant (an Israeli scholar who prepared the book for publication as a Fellow at the Lichtenberg-Kolleg of the Georg-August-Universität in

Göttingen, Germany), serves to bind the collection together by noting some of the salient themes and developments in Scrolls scholarship that have transcended geographical borders.

The underlying inspiration for this ambitious undertaking is revealed in the editor's preface, which laments the loss of precious details pertaining to the peculiar history of the publication and interpretation of the Scrolls engendered by the passing of most of the members of the first international team of editors. "The present volume was conceived from the urgent need to preserve whatever information has been garnered and kept by scholars of the second generation" (xi). Since many of the contributors are themselves later appointees of the international editorial team who enjoyed close personal contact with the original members, they are uniquely qualified for the task at hand. The result of their collaborative efforts is an exhaustive history of research unprecedented in its richness of detail, attention to regional developments, and multi-national perspective.



**Figure 5.** The Great Isaiah Scroll, the best preserved of the biblical scrolls found at Qumran.  
Photographs by Ardon Bar Hama. Wikimedia Commons.

Beyond the expected tracing and evaluation of previous research trajectories and comments about future directions, the book teems with a wealth of historical and biographical tidbits further illuminating the often confusing and sometimes strange tale of Scrolls scholarship. In this connection, readers will be grateful for an index of modern scholars with special notation facilitating



# HEBREW AND ARAMAIC TEXTS

the location of biographical material. Useful indices of sources and names and subjects are also included.

The volume's organizational structure naturally serves to spotlight the distinct profiles of scholarship and unique contributions emerging from specific regions. Thus, there is due appreciation, for example, for the special role of American scholars in the editing of the Hebrew Bible manuscripts (Eugene Ulrich, "Biblical Scrolls Scholarship in North America"), Israeli research on matters of Jewish law (Aharon Shemesh, "Trends and Themes in Israeli Research of the Halakhah"), and the development of basic research tools and the method of material reconstruction by scholars from German-speaking countries (Annette Steudel, "Basic Research, Methods and Approaches to the Qumran Scrolls in German-Speaking Countries"). The greatest advantage of such an approach is how it allows for a more profound appreciation of the different political, religious, social, and, sometimes, personal circumstances that shaped the contours of research in

fled Scrolls scholarship there for decades. Jörg Frey ("Qumran Research and Biblical Scholarship in Germany") notes how the particular organization of the German academic system led to a primary focus on the relevance of the Scrolls for early Christianity "guided by a Christian perspective" (530). Together, the whole collection of articles illustrates how, to varying degrees, local circumstances such as these shaped the present global picture.

When this collection is read as a unit, a number of historical events and circumstances emerge as formative in the macro-history of Scrolls scholarship—for example, the nature of the finds from cave 1, their relatively quick publication and subsequent domination of scholarly discussion, the insistence of the Jordanian government on the exclusion of Israeli and Jewish scholars from the editorial team during the early years, and the reorganization of the team in the early 1990's followed by the quick publication of all of the Scrolls. While none of such details are particularly novel in a survey of Scrolls research, the unique mode

of presentation allows one to appreciate more profoundly their influence within local contexts and from multiple perspectives. In addition, the foundational accomplishments of scholars such as Frank Moore Cross, Józef T. Milik, Yigael Yadin, and others of the first generation are put into global perspective and duly honored.

The most significant potential drawback of the book's regional focus—the tendency to artificially divorce the history of local developments from the international dialogue that has characterized Scrolls scholarship at all stages—was not unnoticed by the contributors. Hence, in his article entitled "The Scrolls and Christianity in American Scholarship," John

Collins warns that "none of the issues discussed in this essay is peculiarly American; all have involved international discussion" (215). Aharon Shemesh, in his survey of Israeli research on Jewish law in the Scrolls, goes so far as to call the distinction between Israeli and non-Israeli scholars "irrelevant." For him, "the proper distinction is between scholars trained and not trained in Talmudic studies" (349). Indeed, to the credit of the authors, the individual essays are not overly isolated from developments in



any given location and, in turn, contributed to the world scene. For example, Hanan Eshel ("Excavations in the Judean Desert and at Qumran under Israeli Jurisdiction") illustrates how complex factors such as the shifting geo-political situation and interactions with the Bedouin affected Israeli archaeological research at Qumran and elsewhere in the Judean desert. Ida Fröhlich ("Qumran Research in Eastern and Central Europe") demonstrates how communist ideology in the Eastern bloc sti-

# BOOKS TO DIG INTO

the international arena. As a perusal of the footnotes throughout the volume testifies, the authors are perfectly willing to “cross borders” when suitable, and there is ample engagement with the relevant scholarship, regardless of its place of origin.

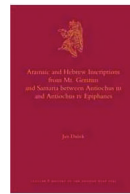


Figure 6. Cave 4 of the Qumran Caves in the Judean Desert. [Wikimedia Commons.](#)

The overall portrait to emerge from this volume is one of a field of research that has struggled to overcome the formidable obstacles of its infancy—the process of identifying, editing and publishing the many thousands of Qumran fragments. The history of this struggle is certainly not perfect and there are some dark moments, many of which may serve as lessons for scholars today. With the publication of the entire Scrolls corpus, the continuing development of new and improved methods of analysis, and ever-improving international collaboration, the field has matured. Scholars are better poised today than ever to appreciate the complexity of the Scrolls and determine their true significance for illuminating the history and literature of Second Temple Judaism. This volume represents a landmark contribution to Scrolls research. It serves not only as a comprehensive record of the road already travelled but also as a sign post for future directions. It will stand as a significant point of reference for scholars for decades to come.

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## Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions from Mt. Gerizim and Samaria between Antiochus III and Antiochus IV Epiphanes



By Jan Dušek. *Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 54*; Leiden: Brill, 2012. Pp. xix + 200. Hardback \$135.00. ISBN 9789004183858.

In 2004, Y. Magen, H. Misgav, and L. Tsfnia published the *editio princeps* of the Aramaic and Hebrew inscriptions from Mount Gerizim (*Mount Gerizim Excavations I* [Jerusalem, 2004]). The volume under review attempts to situate these inscriptions within their appropriate social and economic setting by attending to the complex interactions between paleography, identity, and political history. Dušek approaches each of these three fields of study in a separate chapter.

After a short introduction laying out the basic structure of the book, Dušek undertakes a detailed study of the paleographic information provided by the inscriptions from Mount Gerizim. There are three formal variants in use in these inscriptions: an Aramaic Cursive script, an Aramaic Monumental, and a so-called “Mixed Script” (i.e., a mixture of the Aramaic Cursive and paleo-Hebrew scripts). When describing each of the first two variants, Dušek provides a thorough discussion of the significant morphological variants of each grapheme. In the case of the Aramaic Cursive script, he also evaluates the distribution of medial vs. final forms, when a distinction exists (no such distinction exists in the Aramaic Monumental script). Dušek then evaluates these two parameters to determine what kind of information they might provide concerning the inscriptions’ date(s): in short, do morphological variance and various distributions of medial vis-à-vis final letter forms compel a diachronic analysis? The author concludes that neither criterion justifies viewing these inscriptions as products of a long-duration occupation at the site. Instead, Dušek tentatively locates both sets of inscriptions in the period “between the beginning of the 3rd century and the end of the 2nd century” (a judgment made specifically with respect to the Cursive style on p. 21; see also p. 37 for the Monumental style). This date is further refined to roughly “the first decades of the 2nd century BCE” and “perhaps...the end of the 3rd century BCE” (p. 37) through a detailed, well-informed comparison with other Aramaic epigraphic corpora. A much shorter evaluation of the Mixed script inscriptions suggests a contemporaneous dat-