

DIMANT, D. – History, Ideology and Bible Interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Collected Studies. (Forschungen zum Alten Testament, 90). Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2014. (23,5 cm, XV, 610 Seiten). ISBN 978-3-16-151021-2. ISSN 0940-4155. € 169,-.

Devorah Dimant has been a leading voice in the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls for more than three decades. This book collects twenty-seven of her articles, written between 1979 and 2012 and updated for inclusion in this volume. Some have been translated afresh from the Hebrew. Dimant's introductory essay "The Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls – Past and Present" was composed specifically for this volume. Due to Dimant's reworkings of her earlier work and informed decisions on what to include in this collection, the current volume exhibits an overall sense of unity and is more than just a compilation of earlier work.

The articles in this volume are arranged in four sections: "The Qumran Library" (nine articles); "The History of the Qumran Community" (one article); "Themes in the Qumran Literature" (five articles); and "Texts from Qumran" (twelve articles). Together these four sections provide an excellent overview of Dimant's contributions to the study of the Qumran scrolls. The first part pays particular attention to her work on the collection as a whole and the issue of classification. Also well-represented is Dimant's editorial work on writings such as *Peshar on the Periods*, *Apocryphon of Jeremiah C*, and *Pseudo-Ezekiel*.

The volume yields interesting insights into Dimant's methods, which are characterized by a tendency to combine philological and exegetical scrutiny with an interest in broader-ranging questions on Jewish religion and history. Dimant's

contribution on “Resurrection, Restoration, and Time-Curtailing at Qumran, and in Early Judaism and Christianity,” for instance, includes a detailed analysis of *Pseudo-Ezekiel* (4Q385) I–VI. And her treatment of the idea of the community as a temple is preceded by an edition and analysis of 4QFlorilegium (4Q174) 1 i 1–13 (“4QFlorilegium and the Idea of the Community as a Temple”). This mix of interests and approaches proves effective in Dimant’s hands, and blurs somewhat the distinction between the two final sections in this volume.

The essays in the first part raise the question how the Qumran collection as a whole can be understood and classified. One of the major problems with regard to this topic is the distinction between sectarian writings (presumably written by members of the movement that collected the scrolls) and non-sectarian ones. For Dimant, the presence of community-related terminology in certain writings is the strongest indication of their sectarian character. In addition to sectarian and non-sectarian writings, Dimant recognizes a third category of writings, which “share several traditions and theological views with the sectarian literature,” but do not exhibit “any of the features distinctive of the output of the Qumran community” (113). Thus, Dimant proposes a three-fold classification of the Qumran material and distinguishes: 1. sectarian writings; 2. non-sectarian writings; and 3. writings “between sectarian and non-sectarian.”

Dimant’s classification of the Qumran scrolls is one of the most elaborate ones available and will doubtless set the agenda of much future work on the topic. At the same time, room for such future work surely remains – in particular on the non-sectarian writings. Since Dimant’s system defines these writings in terms of the absence rather than the presence of features (terminology, in Dimant’s case), it

also invites more positive contributions on the contents and significance of the large group of non-sectarian compositions. Dimant herself devotes some articles to the Aramaic Qumran scrolls and pseudepigraphic, apocryphal, and parabiblical writings. Alongside the biblical Qumran scrolls these groups of scrolls must, in Dimant's view, be taken as "non-sectarian" scrolls. Yet, the categories Dimant uses here are not all operative on the same levels and tend to overlap. What is more, these classifications do not cover all non-sectarian compositions, and a substantial part of them finds little room in Dimant's overall system. More work on the non-sectarian Qumran material, the degree of unity within it, and its fluid borderlines with sectarian writings is still necessary.

Throughout her work Dimant tends to embrace a synchronic approach to the material. This perspective puts its stamp on how she conceives the categories "sectarian" and "non-sectarian." For Dimant, there is little room for writings to *become* sectarian. Even when she incorporates diachronic considerations in her argument ("The Composite Character of the Qumran Sectarian Literature as an Indication of Its Date and Provenance"), Dimant proposes that the elaborate Cave 1 versions of the *Hodayot*, the *Community Rule*, and the *War Scroll* "originated in the early phase of the Qumran group" (183), with later copies being abbreviations intended for personal use. Rather than the outcome of a process of literary growth, in which more explicitly sectarian materials were combined with a less sectarian core, the Cave 1 versions of these compositions have, in Dimant's view, always constituted a fully-fledged sectarian text. Such assumptions are not without their problems, though. It seems certain, therefore, that the quest for suitable ways to

understand and classify the Qumran material will continue after Dimant's detailed contributions.¹

The second part of the volume consists of just one article. In "The History of the Qumran Community in Light of New Developments in the Study of the Scrolls," Dimant seeks to characterize the community (note that she does not speak of a "movement," as many other scholars do) behind the scrolls in view of recent advances in the study of the Qumran scrolls and site. These advances underscore the varied character of this community of intellectuals. At the same time, they contradict the notion that this community occupied only a marginal position in Second Temple Judaism. Rather than a marginal group, it appears to have been located closer to the centre of Judaism in this period.

The third part of this volume offers interesting insights into several issues in the history of Judaism. Particularly worthy of note are Dimant's essays on time and interpretation. In "Exegesis and Time in the Pesharim from Qumran," Dimant demonstrates persuasively that the type of interpretation-based-on-revelation one finds in the Qumran commentaries depends on the position in the whole of history

¹ The most radical proposal against Dimant's classification comes from Florentino García Martínez, who suggests abandoning the categories of "sectarian" and "non-sectarian" altogether, as they have little descriptive value and are anachronistic. See Florentino García Martínez, "¿Sectario, no-sectario, o qué? Problemas de una taxonomía correcta de los textos qumránicos," *RevQ* 23/91 (2008): 383–94. Eibert Tigchelaar, "Classifications of the Collection of Dead Sea Scrolls and the Case of *Apocryphon of Jeremiah C*," *JSJ* 43 (2012): 519–50 offers a detailed comparison of Dimant's and García Martínez' approaches.

of the implied commentator in these writings: the Teacher of Righteousness. The Pesharim, Dimant argues, exhibit a view of history similar to that found in many apocalyptic writings. In this perception, time is a sequence of periods, culminating in an end. The Teacher's insight in the meaning and relevance of the words of the ancient prophets must be attributed to the fact that he lived closer to the end of time than the ancient prophets did, and so was able to have a "fuller" overview of history. In "Time, Torah and Prophecy at Qumran," Dimant makes the important point that a similar view on time and history underlies the interpretation of both prophetic and legal texts at Qumran, despite the different vocabulary that is used in these types of exegesis.

The fourth part deals with individual writings from the Qumran collection. Its articles offer meticulous observations on the character and identification of specific Qumran texts. One noteworthy essay is Dimant's "Two 'Scientific' Fictions: The So-Called Book of Noah and the Alleged Quotation from *Jubilees* in the *Damascus Document* XVI, 3–4." In this article, Dimant argues against the existence of "the book of Noah" as a separate composition in Second Temple Judaism. Instead, she holds, we should think in terms of a broad range of Noah-related traditions, which need not have assumed the shape of distinct written texts. Similarly, the reference to "the divisions of times" (מהלקות העתים) in CD XVI 3–4 need not be a quotation from the book of *Jubilees* as we know it. As Dimant points out, many *Jubilees*-related traditions were known in Second Temple times, and this particular expression in the *Damascus Document* may well be "not the title of the book but a description of the topic it covers" (366). Dimant's views are persuasive, even if they will probably not go unchallenged. The strength of this

contribution, however, is that it serves as a continuous reminder that what we have is only a small percentage of what once existed.

In sum, this volume is more than merely a collection of earlier articles. Dimant has made an effort to make this into a meaningful collection in its own right, and she has succeeded admirably. This volume offers a good overview of current debates in the study of the Qumran writings and illustrates Dimant's manifold contributions to them.

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