

Book Reviews

A Guide to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature. By Joseph A. Fitzmyer. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. Paperback. Pp. 248. US\$ 24.00. ISBN 9780802862419.

What Are the Dead Sea Scrolls and Why Do They Matter? By David Noel Freedman and Pam Fox Kuhlken. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. Paperback. Pp. 131. US\$ 10.00. ISBN 9780802844248.

The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Short History. By Weston W. Fields. Leiden: Brill, 2006. Paperback. Pp. 128. US\$ 19.95. ISBN 9789004157606.

The work entitled *A Guide to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature* is the successor to Fitzmyer's *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Major Publications and Tools for Study* (SBS 28; Scholars Press, 1975), which was revised and expanded in 1990. As Fitzmyer notes in the Preface to this work, the enormous amount of activity in the fields of DSS study since 1990, including the near completion of the Discoveries in the Judaean Desert series, necessitated not only an updated bibliography but also the reorganization of the text presentation according to the now widely accepted numbering system (e.g., 1Q20 instead of 1QapGen).

This “guide” is a wonderfully helpful tool. Chapter I provides a quick, easy-to-use reference to the sometimes bewildering abbreviations used to refer to the scrolls. Chapter II begins with a general introduction to the DJD series, followed by a brief discussion of the series as well as references to various sources for full lists of the Scrolls, collections of photographs, and other valuable primary research tools. The second part of Chapter II, “B. Major Publications (according to Sites),” is the heart of this book. Not only is each text (from Qumran as well as the other find-sites in the Dead Sea region) presented in order with the *editio princeps* and other primary sources, but Fitzmyer also often includes valuable information, such as a list of the biblical passages covered in the texts or a basic orientation to the nature of non-biblical texts.

Chapters III–XIV are lists of studies, from basic, categorized bibliographies (III, X), concordances, dictionaries, and grammars (VI), and modern language translations (VIII), to a few outlines of the primary DSS that Fitzmyer has constructed (IX), electronic resources (XIII), and an index of modern authors (XIV).

For a list of research tools, I actually found this volume fun to read. Even in the list of texts there is the odd and valuable nugget. Moreover, with the proliferation of DSS studies in the last two decades, I find it hard to fathom how any serious student of the Scrolls can do without this resource on the shelf. It has become the first thing I suggest to students starting research on the Scrolls.

The anticipation set up by the catchy title *What Are the Dead Sea Scrolls and Why Do They Matter?* and the achievements of the first author of this short volume are matched only by its shortcoming. This volume by David Noel Freedman and Pam Fox Kuhlken is, regrettably, a disappointing work.

The preface indicates that this book was born out of a conversation, whether in person, by email, or in writing, between Kuhlken, who “didn’t know a lot about the Dead Sea Scrolls” (x) and Freedman, who was as close to the Scrolls from the beginning as one could get without actually being in Jerusalem. The resulting question-and-answer format provides 117 exchanges grouped into thirteen sections. The book is aimed at the “public” and so the language of the Q&A exchanges is colloquial (e.g., “Show Me the Money” is one of the sectional titles).

Aside from whether one likes a colloquial writing style or not, the looser style seems to have bled into the organization and editing. Organizationally, there is little rhyme or reason to the division or ordering of the sections. (I cannot call them “chapters,” since my understanding of “chapter” involves a significantly greater degree of internal coherence than these divisions exhibit.) Moreover, some Q&A exchanges present only partial answers (see, e.g., pp. 12, 19), some are arguably irrelevant to anything the “public” needs or would want to know about the Scrolls (e.g., the discussion of the JEDP documentary hypothesis on pp. 72–77), and some contain no reference to the Scrolls (e.g., the discussion of textual criticism and the Bible on pp. 57–62).

There are also a few notable factual errors, e.g., the Tetragrammaton is spelled with a final ך instead of a ך (25); ךֿֿֿֿ is never *translated* as “Jubilee” (29) by any translation I consulted; there is no evidence to connect Qumran with Gomorrah (39). And to top it off is the occasional mind-boggling question, such as “Will the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls lead to a more accurate, more intelligible Old Testament in its pre-Christian state?” (70)—the implications are, of course, that there is a “post-Christian” state of the Hebrew Bible, that the Christians distorted the actual text of the Hebrew Bible (what happened to the venerable Jewish Masoretic tradition?), and that the Old Testament as we have received it is inaccurate and unintelligible (again, what about the accuracy of the Jewish scribes, who product we have been using for centuries?). The answer does nothing to address the misleading question.

It is unclear to me whether a revision or complete reworking could have saved this book. Regardless, it is certainly not representative of the stellar quality of David Noel Freedman’s (ךך) impressive scholarly achievements.

The third and final book reviewed, Weston W. Fields' *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Short History*, was thoroughly enjoyable to read. Although introductory books on the Dead Sea Scrolls are increasingly filled with eye-candy, Fields' volume is a step above, with numerous high-quality photographs that I, at least, had not yet seen. And yet, the quality of the illustrations holds little over the strength of the narrative. The book is well-organized and the writing is clear and fluid—the occasionally folksy or journalistic style is especially fitting for the intended audience of “non-specialists.” Fields structured his brief introduction in five chapters (see below), interspersed with photographs and short text selections of major Scrolls: the “Great Isaiah Scroll” (1QIsa^a), the “Habakkuk Commentary” (1QpHab), the “Manual of Discipline” (1QS), “Testimonia” (4Q175), the “Rule of the Congregation” (1QSa), and 11QPsalms. Although it is doubtful the non-specialists could read from the photographs, they will no doubt appreciate the stunning clarity, showing, among other details, the stitching at the seams, the lines used as writing guides, and the various forms of damaged suffered by the Scrolls.

The first chapter, “Discovery and Purchase of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” is without a doubt the narrative highlight of this volume. At thirty-eight pages it is also the longest chapter, and combined with the natural continuation of the second chapter, “Study and Publication” (26 pages), constitutes the heart of the work. The information in both chapters flows from the “more than forty interviews” that Fields carried out with the first generation of Scrolls scholars and the “several archives of personal letters and papers, most of which have never been published” (13). Thus, both chapters present episodes, or versions of episodes, that have never been told to the general public. For those readers (specialists and nonspecialists alike) who are intrigued by the twentieth-century history of the Scrolls, these two chapters alone make the cost of the volume worth every penny. The only glaring omission that I could find was the complete lack of any mention of the “boot-leg” copy of the Scrolls pieced together from the concordance that Strugnell distributed; since this part of the drama in the early 1990s figures in almost every other discussion, I am at a loss to explain its omission in Fields' narrative.

Chapters 3–5, where Fields discusses the relationship of the Scrolls to the Bible, to Judaism and Christianity, and Qumran and the Essenes, respectively, are understandable necessities given the purpose of the volume. However, each chapter would have benefitted greatly from a few more pages. For instance, the six pages given to the implications of Scrolls research for the Bible is woefully inadequate, even for a brief introduction. One example (the missing “nun” verse for Ps 145 that is absent from the MT but present in 11Q5) does not suffice to illustrate to the nonspecialist how the Scrolls have changed biblical studies. Moreover, the use of terms like “textual stream” and quick reference to the Council of Jamnia will, no doubt, lose the majority of readers that fit the intended audience. A second example that I found mildly irritating was the absence of any explicit

citations for the classical sources (i.e., Josephus, Philo of Alexandria, Pliny the Elder) that Fields used to describe the Essenes in Chapter 5.

Fields concludes this volume with a timeline of events, many of which were covered in Chapters 1–2, but some of which were not. I found the timeline to be interesting and helpful and of great potential as a future teaching resource. (In fact, I wish I had used it for the summer course on the Scrolls that I recently taught.) In contrast, the glossary is a hit-and-miss resource, since it contains too little for the truly uninitiated. The suggestions for further reading are adequate.

Overall, I highly recommend this book. Even for the specialist (in this case, a language specialist on the margins of Scroll research), taking the two hours to enjoy this book was a guilty pleasure. In the best way, this book seems like a cross between a typical brief introduction to the Scrolls and the kind of coffee-table book that has for so long the domain of the wonders of ancient Egypt.

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