Short Notices


Few areas of recent scholarly investigation have been conducted as vigorously, vehemently, and at times even viciously, as the history of ancient Israel. This volume provides a clear and balanced introduction to the issues at the forefront of this debate. Grabbe is well-placed to offer such an advanced introduction since he has played a major role in trying to promote serious debate by founding the European Seminar in Historical Methodology just over ten years ago and by having been a major contributor to the scholarly debate both as author and editor of important publications in this area. The volume falls into three parts. The introduction (Part I) lays out the methodological aspects of the study of the history of ancient Israel. Part II (‘Historical Investigations’) takes the reader from the second millennium BCE to the decline of Judah in the 6th century BCE. Each period is discussed under three sub-headings: Sources, Analysis, Synthesis. The subsection on sources deals with the pertinent available evidence from archaeological remains to inscriptions and other extra-biblical literary accounts to, finally, the biblical text. The ‘analysis’ subsection pinpoints major historical issues that emerge from the evidence and its scholarly investigation. The treatment of each chronological period is rounded off by a ‘synthesis’ in which the author offers his own usually balanced conclusions on the historical picture that derives from the preceding sources and analysis. The volume closes with a full bibliography. The book is intended for a non-specialist scholarly readership as well as a wider audience and provides an extremely useful and timely resource. The inclusion of a number of maps and a selective number of illustrations would have been the icing on the cake. Readers familiar with Grabbe’s prolific literary portfolio will recognise familiar features that have been tried and tested in a number of his earlier publications.

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This electronic database of the non-biblical texts from Qumran replaces an earlier database published by Brill in 1999 (E. Tov, ed., The Dead Sea Scrolls Database, Non-Biblical Texts). Both projects are the outcome of a long and fruitful collaboration between the editor-in-chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls publication project Emanuel Tov (Hebrew University, Jerusalem), the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) represented by academics and researchers based at Brigham Young University, Provo, and Martyn Abegg (Trinity Western University, Canada), a scholar who has been at the forefront of electronic publishing for a long time. The database includes all the non-biblical texts from Qumran in Hebrew and Aramaic as well as CD (the Cairo Damascus Document found in mediaeval form in the Cairo genizah and in the form of ancient manuscripts at Qumran). No images of the mediaeval manuscripts accompany the edition and translation of CD, however. The texts can be viewed in transcription with or without accompanying English translations, and a simple click of the mouse also reveals an image of the original manuscript or fragment in question. The texts and translations represent an updated version of the editions recently published by Don Parry and Emanuel Tov in a 6-volume series The
Dead Sea Scrolls Reader (DSSR), also published by Brill. This multi-volume DSSR comprises the editions of the non-biblical Dead Sea Scrolls published in the longstanding Series Discoveries in the Judaean Desert (Clarendon Press, Oxford) as well as a number of texts that were published outside of this series. The DSSEL is more up-to-date than the DSSR. It contains, for instance, a number of texts published in 2004 and 2005 by Eibert Tigchelaar (cf. Revue de Qumran 21 [2004] 477–85; 643–8) and Esther and Hanan Eshel (cf. Dead Sea Discoveries 12 [2005] 134–57.) DSSEL is also ahead of most recent developments concerning the DJD Series since it includes a number of new editions of texts published in DJD V which are currently part of a work in progress to supplement the DJD Series.

Both the booklet accompanying the software and the CD ROM are presented with great clarity, and the editor and his team have gone to great length to ensure the scholars responsible for transcriptions, translations, and the sources of the images are readily identified. In addition to viewing the transcriptions and images with or without accompanying English translations, scholars are able to undertake sophisticated searches for words in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and English. Each word in the database is ‘tagged’ offering morphological analysis. Finally, the database is Unicode compatible which means it allows users to cut and paste material into Microsoft Word, for instance. The possibilities this opens up for teaching and research are endless. The team behind this monumental electronic resource deserve great credit for making all the non-biblical scrolls marvellously accessible and portable.

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This volume offers a welcome English translation of the first or two volumes of the late David Flusser’s essays on Second Temple Judaism that originally appeared in Hebrew in 2002. A brief introduction by Flusser on ‘Qumran and the Essenes’ is followed by twenty-two essays dealing with various aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls and their wider milieu written between the early 1950s and the late 1990s. A key interest of the author is the worldview and ideology reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls, themes explicit in the title of three essays but which figure prominently in a great many more. Other prominent topics dealt with in several essays are the ancient roots of Jewish liturgy, apocalypticism, as well as comparative analyses of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the New Testament and the early church. The latter area of the Jewish matrix of the origins Christianity is, of course, a field for which Flusser is perhaps best known, and a number of his most influential studies have been available in English (and indeed many other languages) for some time. The volume helpfully closes with indices of names, subjects, and sources. It is a great pity the original publication details, in particular the year of publication, of the individual essays have not been included—a small detail that would have enhanced the usefulness of this valuable collection. As it stands, one gains some insights about the context of each publication from the primary and secondary sources referred to within it. Overall, the publishers and the translator have rendered an extremely useful service to the scholarly community in making this collection of remarkably broad and learned studies available in English to a much wider readership.

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