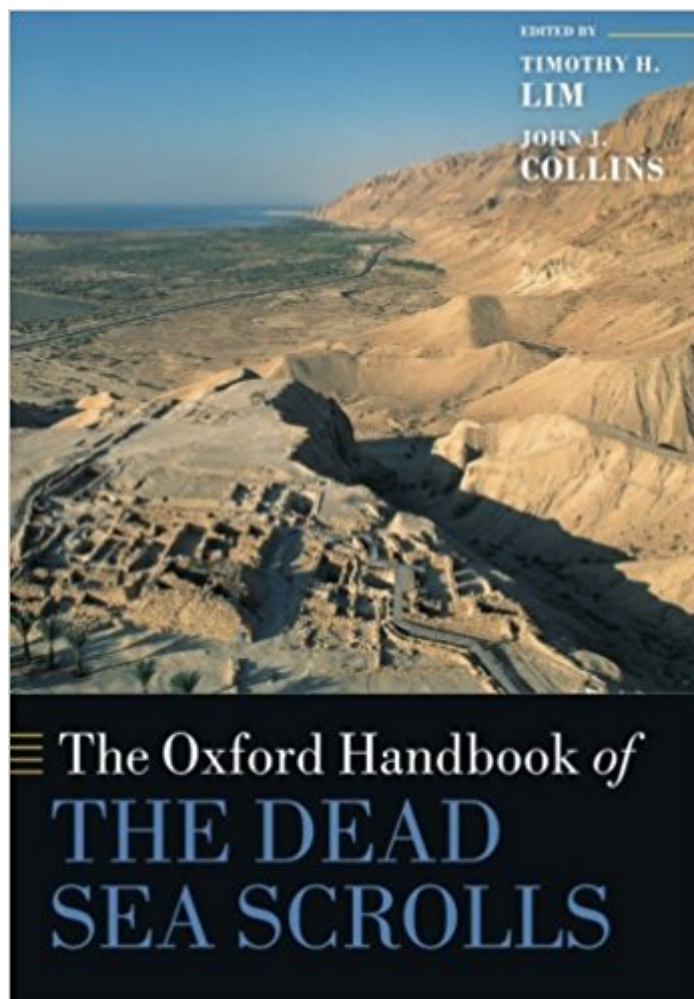


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# The Oxford Handbook Of The Dead Sea Scrolls (Oxford Handbooks)



## Synopsis

In 1946 the first of the Dead Sea Scroll discoveries was made near the site of Qumran, at the northern end of the Dead Sea. Despite the much publicized delays in the publication and editing of the Scrolls, practically all of them had been made public by the time of the fiftieth anniversary of the first discovery. That occasion was marked by a spate of major publications that attempted to sum up the state of scholarship at the end of the twentieth century, including *The Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (OUP 2000). These publications produced an authoritative synthesis to which the majority of scholars in the field subscribed, granted disagreements in detail. A decade or so later, *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls* has a different objective and character. It seeks to probe the main disputed issues in the study of the Scrolls. Lively debate continues over the archaeology and history of the site, the nature and identity of the sect, and its relation to the broader world of Second Temple Judaism and to later Jewish and Christian tradition. It is the Handbook's intention here to reflect on diverse opinions and viewpoints, highlight the points of disagreement, and point to promising directions for future research.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Those looking for a thorough and up-to-date analysis of the complex discussion on the Scrolls will want to consult these essays as a clear and helpful guide."--*Interpretation* "An invaluable resource for the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls...an extraordinary collection of articles that meets its objective

to reflect diverse viewpoints, highlight ongoing issues, and direct future research. Students, scholars, novices, and specialists will find the OHDSS a welcome introduction and companion to DSS research with its succinct yet comprehensive history of research, expert yet accessible evaluations of critical issues, and nuanced yet uncomplicated methodologies."--Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament

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Several fine scholars participated in this collection of essays that provides mostly good assessments and information, information largely already available elsewhere, but in scattered publications. The editorial process, apparently, was lengthy; some important relatively recent developments go unnoticed. For example there's a very clear account of the legal issues raised by the 4QMMT text copyright case, but no mention of the convictions (now on appeal) in the Golb sockpuppet identity theft and harassment case. Scientific research is unfortunately underrepresented, e.g., missing is notice of Ira Rabin et al. DSD 2009, 97-106, showing the ink of 1QH has high bromine levels characteristic of the Dead Sea region, indicating the ink was mixed and penned near the Dead Sea. Also missing, e.g., is the DNA evidence that some skin used for writing surface was from the Nubian ibex, native to the Dead Sea region, but not to Jerusalem. Of course many scrolls were brought to Qumran (probably from Jerusalem and elsewhere)--as was always recognized--but attempts to separate the scrolls from the caves and the settlement are mere distortions of history. Speaking of history, Maxine Grossman has an essay that follows a good contribution by Carol Newsom, both theory-oriented. Max offered a sentence (p. 719) that puzzles: "Where we leave the story will depend on the particular evidence for any given scenario and our reading of it; the result is not as some critics would have it, a relativistic soup (Magnez, forthcoming), at least not by the time the project is complete." When "the project is complete"--what does that mean in this context?--and you have history to offer, Max, please drop me a line. Perhaps the most overreaching and unreliable essay is by Michael Wise. It confuses the worldview in which God raises one or another individual or group to mete out wrath with admiration for that deliverer. This mixes up views on the Lion of Wrath (Jannaeus, also, pace Wise, the Wicked Priest), the Romans, Nebuchadnezzar et al. Wise also offers two scenarios: 2nd century BCE (which he rejects) or 1st century BCE (which he promotes), an anachronistic, false dichotomy, either/or oblivious to (or

obscuring) Jannaeus, his brother Absalom, and Judah the Essenes, all three contemporaries, who were born in the former century and died in the latter one. (Absalom was probably brother of Jannaeus, and not as Wise gives, brother of Alexandra Salome.) Wise does not adequately distinguish historical allusions relevant to the Teacher from those afterward. MMT as putatively sent to Hyrcanus II and ignoring his mother, Queen, while it asks the recipient (a priest and King? like Jannaeus) to remember the kings of Israel... remember David? Wise is correct that (the first) Jonathan is too early to be Wicked Priest, but overreacts to pose a too-late and too-small candidate. For an alternative proposal see my online paper "Jannaeus, His Brother Absalom, and Judah the Essene." [...] Stefan Reif makes excellent observations: (p. 657) "Caution must also be exercised in the use of the term *\_halakhah\_* to refer to non-rabbinic legal traditions...." Yes. And (p. 659, my emphasis) "There is also a prayer for the welfare of \*or possibly aimed against,\* 'King Jonathan' [Jannaeus]. Would that more scholars see these. Martin Goodman notes which sources do or do not mention Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. Then (p. 84) he continues: "In light of this it is more probable than not that the sectarian scrolls were produced by a group or groups of Jews unattested in any of these later sources...." Unless that sentence were revised to read "it is possible" would it properly be considered a non sequitur? Then, if one considers the size of the remaining scroll collection and the severe initiation requirements (in 1QS and War 2) might one consider writing "it is possible though not probable"? The etymology of "Essenes," though important, receives inadequate attention (p. 177), leaving unmentioned the fact that several now consider the Qumran Hebrew self-designation *'osey hatorah*, observers of torah, as giving its Hebrew origin; in fact, some scholars wrote this before the scrolls were discovered, their observation then confirmed in scrolls (e.g. *pesharim*) recognized on other grounds as Essene. But anyone interested in Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship will find some essays of considerable interest here.

'When the project is complete' could mean when we have plausible explanations for the actual meanings of the various controversial scrolls. To date there is no consensus on the dozens of subriquets, as highlighted in *Black Holes in the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Robert Feather

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