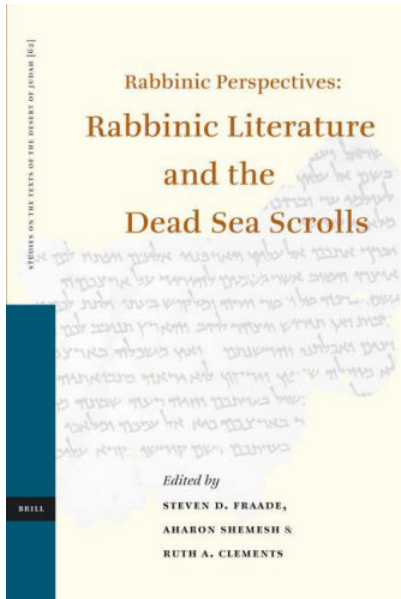


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Rabbinic Perspectives: Rabbinic Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls (Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 7–9 January, 2003)

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As all students of the Dead Sea Scrolls know, the Scrolls do not constitute an independent field of academic research, although it sometimes may appear that way to the nonacademic public (and perhaps sometimes to the academic nonspecialist as well). Scholars are often described as specialists in the Dead Sea Scrolls, as if they studied or were expert in all facets of that “discipline.” The Scrolls, of course, furnish indispensable primary material for the study of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, of Hebrew and Aramaic, of Jewish history in classical antiquity, and of rabbinic Judaism. The discovery of the Scrolls, however, and the ensuing discussions over the next sixty years have furnished far more than new textual material for the study of these disciplines and have served to prompt the search for new ways of thinking, novel modes of comparison, and innovated paradigms in many of these fields that had been studied, quite literally, for centuries or even millennia.

Scholarly activity, however, is governed by forces that are not always rational, and not all of the disciplines in the constellation of the Scrolls have received equal treatment over the years. It may nevertheless perhaps be surprising to some readers that this symposium and volume are “the first such conference and volume devoted to the relation of the Scrolls to early rabbinic Judaism” (vii). After all, within five years of the discovery of the Dead Sea

Scrolls, the late Professor Saul Lieberman had published two articles (“Light on the Caves from Rabbinic Sources,” *PAAJR* 20 [1951]: 395–404; and “The Discipline of the So-Called Manual of Discipline,” *JBL* 71 [1952]: 199–206) that have since become classic, demonstrating the reciprocal benefit that could accrue to students of those newly found documents and of rabbinic literature from comparative reflection on the two corpora. The reason for the neglect of this area is probably the fact that most Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship in the early decades was done by Christian scholars who were ignorant of rabbinic literature and furthermore not particularly interested in the Jewish matrix of the scrolls that knowledge of such material might have provided. The slow pace of publication of the legal texts from Qumran, whose ultimate completion served as the impetus for this conference, was symptomatic of that lack of scholarly interest in Jewish legal traditions and halakah. But the neglect of rabbinic material was found in the area of haggadah as well, perhaps due to the lack of a strong connection, textual or chronological, between the two corpora of Qumran and rabbinic biblical interpretation. Regardless, the fact is that the comparative investigation of Qumran and rabbinic material was not carried out in a systematic fashion.

There were certainly exceptions to the preceding generalization, and two of the participants in the volume under review, Joseph M. Baumgarten and Lawrence H. Schiffman, have consistently treated both Qumranic and rabbinic material in their ongoing work on Qumran law. Other scholars, too, when touching upon Qumran legal texts, often found it valuable and productive to draw rabbinic material into the discussion. It is unsurprising that interest in Qumran law and its interface with rabbinic law has been largely the provenance of Jewish scholars, especially those trained and working in Israel, and a glance at the demography of this volume will confirm that fact: five of the nine essays were written by Israeli scholars, three of them affiliated with Bar Ilan University.

Comparative work between Qumran texts and nonhalakic rabbinic material has been carried out even less systematically. Whereas in legal areas, the available comparative material in antiquity for the Qumran scholar is virtually limited to the book of Jubilees and rabbinic halakah, in the area of “biblical interpretation,” which is loosely parallel to rabbinic haggadah, there are many other early texts that can be brought to bear, such as the works included in the Apocrypha, pseudepigraphic compositions, Philo, and Josephus. Since those are all closer in time to the Qumran corpus, they preempted later rabbinic midrash, perhaps appropriately, so that the rabbinic and Qumran material were not often seen to be mutually enlightening. In a sense, then, the imbalance of this volume in treating halakah and haggadah, with Fraade’s essay the only one to deal with the latter, is perhaps typical of the way this aspect of the field has developed.

This collection of these studies in a single volume can serve as a very useful introduction to the variety of ways in which comparative study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and early rabbinic literature is being practiced today, but it is much more than that. In keeping with the tradition of five of the previous Orion symposia to be published, the title's employment of the term "perspectives" allows for a breadth of treatment that creates an overarching unity for the volume. The result is that virtually anyone concerned with possible connections between the Qumran scrolls and rabbinic literature will find one or more of these pieces valuable. All of the participants in this volume have made contributions to the interface between Qumran and rabbinic literature in the past, and several build on their previous research in these essays. Within the realm of halakah, the essays cover a spectrum of perspectives and issues, ranging from the narrowly focused to the broadly theoretical, from technical halakah to social history.

Scholarship, on the whole, has tended to focus on the divergences between the Qumran and rabbinic legal systems for good and obvious reasons. Differences are much more noticeable than similarities, and they provide much more grist for the analytical mill of scholarship. They allow us to probe that which characterizes each group as unique and to highlight those differences. Nevertheless, good methodology demands that we expend effort on similarities and analogies as well. Joseph Baumgarten shows that there was a good deal held in common by the two traditions, even in areas such as purity law and the calendar, which have always been pointed to as focal points of disagreement. In a somewhat different vein, Vered Noam, following up on her earlier research, notes that there were halakic tendencies within the rabbinic world that resembled those of the Qumran sectarians and that internal rabbinic polemics resembled those between the Qumran sect and their presumed opponents, the Pharisees. Focusing on R. Eliezer, a well-known disciple of the Shammaite tradition, she shows clearly that a variety of his legal stances in diverse areas of halakah were consonant with those found in the Qumran scrolls.

Lutz Doering's and Eyal Regev's essays are the most theoretical in the group, and both draw from the methodology and terminology of the social sciences in their treatments. Regev begins with comparison of specific halakic controversies between the Qumranites and the rabbis but does not limit himself to listing and analyzing the details of the dichotomies. He goes further than such "standard" modes of evaluation in attempting to extrapolate divergent conceptions of holiness from their disputes about the temple, sacrifices, and purity. He believes that the "distinction between their general halakhic approaches ... [is] rooted in a religious concept that many scholars of religion and anthropology have tried to elucidate: holiness" (88). It is likely that Regev's overall perspective is fundamentally accurate, but it appears at times that he pushes the details too far. Theoretical conceptual models always run the risk of overstating their cases, and

Regev's attempt is no exception. He minimizes other features of the Qumran-rabbinic dispute, such as exegesis, in order to emphasize the overarching model. There are some small errors and larger debatable issues in Regev's overall treatment, but it can furnish a useful starting point for further discussion of the Qumran-rabbinic divide over these lines.

Doering's discussion, "Parallels without 'Parallelomania': Methodological Reflections on Comparative Analysis of Halakhah in the Dead Sea Scrolls" (13–42), on the other hand, is virtually completely theoretical and, as such, will probably not be as valuable to students of Qumranic or rabbinic halakah. His title (echoing Sandmel's famous essay in *JBL* 1962) indicates a reaction to attempts to find too much in common between Qumran and rabbinic literature. The warnings that he presents, however, embedded in the language of postmodern academic discourse, are probably somewhat overstated. The jargon of contemporary trends in cultural studies produces sentences such as, "With the notions of 'cultural codes,' 'horizon of expectations,' and 'intertextuality' we are now in a position to appreciate more aptly the formative role of the Hebrew Bible in the development of halakhah, without, however, falling back on a simplistic 'exegetical' understanding of halakhah." The danger of uncared historical analysis is well-known to virtually everyone who works in the field of Qumran halakah, but I remain unconvinced that novel methodologies of the history of religion or comparative religion schools are the most appropriate for application to the study of halakah at Qumran. The analysis of Qumran halakah and the use of rabbinic material for comparison certainly must be carried out while paying attention to the literary history of all of the texts involved, but the adoption of a hypercritical, fragmenting approach to both Qumran texts and rabbinic texts is virtually guaranteed to produce nonresults. I confess to preferring the more hazardous (according to Doering) and bolder employment of all possibly relevant material, bearing in mind many of the caveats that he has suggested, while not abandoning a methodology that, in my view, has been shown to be productive by scholars from Baumgarten to Schiffman to Shemesh, to mention only three scholars whose work is to be found in this volume.

The title of Fraade's essay, "Looking for Narrative Midrash at Qumran" (43–66), consciously echoes his "Looking for Legal Midrash at Qumran," presented several years earlier in the same venue (*Biblical Perspectives: Early Use and Interpretation of the Bible in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Proceedings of the First Orion Symposium for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 12–14 May 1996* [ed. M. E. Stone and E. Chazon; STDJ 29; Leiden: Brill, 1998], 59–79). In a variety of ways, although he is dealing with nonlegal midrash in this essay, Fraade's careful method can serve as a counterexample to the strictures expressed by Doering. Without the employment of the postmodern rhetoric, he sets out "the guiding principles of the comparative enterprise"

(44–45), stressing, among other things, that “similarity and dissimilarity are mutually instructive,” “as much comparative insight can be gained from difference as from similarity.” He stresses the need “to attend not only to ... *contents*, but also to ... textual *forms*, hermeneutical *strategies*, and rhetorical *functions*; that is, not only to the shared traditions, but to the *morphological* means by which those traditional understandings of Scripture are ... connected to Scripture and communicated to their respective studying communities” (emphases original).

Fraade’s emphasis on this significant dichotomy in comparing Qumran and rabbinic exegetical texts should be noted: “Although they [the rabbinic texts] share interpretive traditions, hermeneutical presuppositions, terminology and exegetical methods with the Dead Sea Scrolls and Second Temple Jewish writings more generally, their formal and rhetorical modes of communication, in particular their explicit employment of dialogical and intertextual commentary, differentiate them from their extant antecedents” (63). His careful distinction between form and content is one that is not acknowledged often enough, and heeded even less often, and points toward the need for scholars working on Second Temple and rabbinic material to develop distinctive generic terminology in order to avoid the need for this point to be repeated over and over.

The breadth of the volume could just as easily have been characterized by a full discussion of the other four papers. Schiffman’s and Shemesh’s essays represent two different models of how to compare Qumran and rabbinic halakah. Schremer notes the analogies between the Qumran group’s laws of separation from other Jews and those held by the rabbis, proceeds to stress the differences between them, and finally draws conclusions from them for understanding the social power of the rabbis. Finally, Werman discusses the single and dual, written and oral, Torah theories found at Qumran, and among the Pharisees and Tannaim, a topic that falls neatly neither under halakah nor haggadah, but might be labeled more broadly theology.

Although some familiarity with both Qumran and rabbinic literature is necessary to appreciate the material in this collection to its fullest extent, specialists in either field as well as those who work in other aspects of Jewish history in this era will find much of interest and value in this slim volume.