

SASA: The Ancient Library of the Dead Sea Scrolls



Welcome:

So you heard about these strange Dead Sea Scrolls, but you aren't quite sure what they are or why they are so important? Then this reading group is for you!

The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) were discovered in remote caves in the Judean desert in the 1940's and have changed our understanding of ancient Judaism forever. They contain texts written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, and include some of the oldest known manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament). But, that's just the beginning. Other scrolls include texts ranging from rare messianic documents, to esoteric religious calendars, to the first texts that interpret the Hebrew Bible. These ancient texts are still the topic of much scholarly debate, as scholars try to decipher the unique themes and ideas presented in the texts and try to understand the people who collected and wrote these texts and then hid them in inaccessible caves for eons.

In this reading group, we will explore a variety of DSS texts in English translation from a historical-critical perspective to get a general impression of the content of this broad archive. Special attention will be paid to the archaeological context of the scrolls and their interactions with broader Judaism at that time. Through our discussions, we will become more acquainted with ancient Judaism and their literature from around 300 BCE to 100 CE.

Your SASA Education Ambassador:

My name is Tine Rassalle and I will be your Educational Ambassador for this reading group. I am a PhD candidate of Ancient Mediterranean Religions in the Religious Studies Department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I have a BA and MA in archaeology of Ancient Near East from Gent University (Belgium) and an additional BA in Hebrew and Aramaic languages from Leiden University (the Netherlands). I have been living in North Carolina for 6 years now and I am working on my dissertation which focuses on coin hoards found under ancient synagogue floors in Israel. Every summer, I travel to Israel to excavate; there I try to learn more about the historical context of ancient Judaism through the material culture of that world. I look forward going through this reading group together with all of you!

Dates (8 weeks):

June 18 - August 6, 2020, Thursday at 3pm EST

Location:

Meeting Room: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88074455302>

Structure:

In each week's meeting we will discuss the readings given in the previous week. The meeting is entirely discussion based, so you are expected to do the reading and be prepared to discuss any aspect of it in the meeting (of course, things sometimes come up. Meetings are laid back and you are free to discuss as much or as little as you want) The readings will be English translations of texts originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. Of course, I do not expect you to know all these original languages! Our discussions will be focused on content and context, so any questions surrounding the Dead Sea Scrolls are oke!

Useful Textbooks:

- VanderKam, James C., and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (HarperCollins, 2002):
<https://archive.org/details/B-001-001-901/page/n19/mode/2up>
- García-Martínez, Florentino. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*. Translated by Wilfred G. E. Watson. (Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996):
https://www.preteristarchive.com/Books/pdf/1994_martinez_dead-sea-scrolls-in-english.pdf
- Vermes, Geza, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, (Penguin Books, 2011):
<https://archive.org/details/gezavermesthecompletedeadseascrollsinenglishpenguin2004>
- Collins, John J. and Daniel C. Harlow, eds. *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012): [pdfs will be provided when needed](#)
- Magness, Jodi, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Eerdmans Publishing, 2002): [pdfs will be provided when needed](#)
- Brooke, George J. and Charlotte Hempel, eds., with the assistance of Michael DeVries and Drew Longacre. *T&T Clark Companion to the Dead Sea Scrolls*, (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018): [pdfs will be provided when needed](#)

Schedule:

Meeting 1: Introduction and Cultural Background (June 18)



Texts to read:

- Biblical Training: <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/dead-sea-scrolls>
- VanderKam, James C., and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (HarperCollins, 2002):
Ch. 2: Dating the Dead Sea Scrolls (pp. 20-33)
<https://archive.org/details/B-001-001-901/page/n19/mode/2up>
- Collins, John J. and Daniel C. Harlow, eds. *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012)
Ch. 2: Judaism in the Land of Israel (pp. 94-117) (pdf will be provided)

Questions and topics to discuss:

- Any words that are unclear? Any historical questions?
- Why do you think the scrolls have often been called “mysterious”?
- Why was the discovery of the DSS so important for biblical studies?

Further information:

- Wikipedia on DSS: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls
- The Digital DSS: <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/>
- The DSS online (YouTube clip):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rYj_0foJYA&feature=emb_logo

- New initiative to bring the DSS online:
https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/german-israeli-project-to-bring-the-dead-sea-scrolls-alive-on-the-screen-628716?mc_cid=9ef94bdc17&mc_eid=ed307b8831
- García-Martínez, Florentino. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*. Translated by Wilfred G. E. Watson. (Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996):
Ch. II: History of the Qumran Finds and their publication (p. Xxvi -xlviii)
https://www.preteristarchive.com/Books/pdf/1994_martinez_dead-sea-scrolls-in-english.pdf
- Brooke, George J. and Charlotte Hempel, eds., with the assistance of Michael DeVries and Drew Longacre. *T&T Clark Companion to the Dead Sea Scrolls*, (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018):
Debel, Hans, Ch. 1: Discoveries: (pdf will be provided)

Meeting 2: Who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls and Why? (June 25)



Texts to read:

- VanderKam, James C., and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (HarperCollins, 2002):
Ch. 10: Identifying the Group associated with Qumran (pp. 239-254)
<https://archive.org/details/B-001-001-901/page/n19/mode/2up>
- Josephus on the Essenes (*The Jewish War*, Book II, Chapter 8):
<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-artifacts/dead-sea-scrolls/josephus-on-the-essenes/>
(For Josephus in original Greek, see here and following:
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0147%3Abook%3D2%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D8%3Awhiston%20section%3D2>)
- Pliny the Elder on the Essenes (*Natural History*, Book V, chapter 17 (footnote 29):
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0137:book=5:chapter=15&highlight=essenes>
Also look at the reference in Matthew 19:12 and 1 Maccabees 2:42.
(For Pliny in original Latin, see here:
<http://perseus.uchicago.edu/perseus-cgi/citequery3.pl?dbname=PerseusLatinTexts&query=Plin.%20Nat.%205.17&getid=0>)

Questions and topics to discuss:

- Do you agree with the interpretation that the people living at Qumran are the Essenes?
- What kind of life did the Essenes live? Are any acts or beliefs similar to other groups you know, ancient or modern?

Further information:

- Wikipedia on the Essenes: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essenes>
- Wikipedia on Qumran: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qumran>
- Virtual Tour of Qumran (flash required): <http://virtualqumran.huji.ac.il/index.htm>
- Jewish Encyclopedia on the Essenes:
<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5867-essenes>
- Qumran reconstructed (with video clips):
<https://www.livescience.com/24595-qumran-dead-sea-scrolls.html>

Meeting 3: The Community Rule (July 2)



Texts to read:

- Vermes, Geza, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, (Penguin Books, 2011):
1Qs: The Community Rule, Chapter I-XI (p. 97-117)
<https://archive.org/details/gezavermesthecompletedeadseascrollsinenglishpenguin2004>
(For the original Hebrew, see Charlesworth, James (ed.), *The Dead Sea scrolls: Rule of the community. Photographic Multi-Language Edition* (The Continuum Publishing Company, 1994)
Color photographs of 1QS with transcriptions (pp. 31-53) (pdf will be provided))

Questions and topics to discuss:

- What are the rules that sect members needed to follow, and the punishments if they did not?
- Why do you think were these rules in place?

Further information:

- The Digital Community Rule: <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/community>
- Community Rule in Ancient Jew Review:

<https://www.ancientjewreview.com/articles/2017/1/25/the-community-rule-manuscript-tradition-from-qumran-and-the-growth-of-ancient-jewish-texts>

- Schiffman, Lawrence H., *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls* (1995):

Ch. 6: The Character of the Community (pp. 97-112)

<https://archive.org/details/reclaimingdeadse00schi/page/96/mode/2up>
<https://archive.org/details/reclaimingdeadse00schi/page/96/mode/2up>

- Wise, Michael, Martin Abegg Jr., and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2005):

1QSa: "Charter for Israel in the Last Days" (pp. 112-136)

<https://archive.org/details/deadseascrollsne00wise/page/119/mode/1up>

- Qumran and the caves: a 2015 flyover (YouTube):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qr020JwgLrU>

Meeting 4: Differences between the DSS and the Masoretic Text (July 9)



Texts to read:

- Exodus 1:1-7 in Masoretic Text: <https://biblehub.com/nasb/exodus/1.htm>
- Exodus 1 in different version of the DSS: <http://dssenglishbible.com/scroll4Q13.htm>
- “All of Jacob’s Descendants Numbered Seventy-Five”: The Opening of Exodus in the Dead Sea Scrolls: <https://www.thetorah.com/article/all-of-jacobs-descendants-numbered-seventy-five-the-opening-of-exodus-in-the-dead-sea-scrolls>
- Searching for the Better Text: <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/bible-interpretation/searching-for-the-better-text-2/>

Questions and topics to discuss:

- Why are there variations between different versions of the same biblical text in different communities?
- How important are those differences? Do they alter our theology?

Further information:

- The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hebrew Bible:
<https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/places/related-articles/dead-sea-scrolls-and-the-hebrew-bible>
- 4QExod^b fragment:
<https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/image/B-365625>
- All variations in the DSS compared to the World English Bible:
<http://dssenglishbible.com/index.htm>
- Wikipedia on Masoretic text:
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masoretic_Text#:~:text=The%20Masoretic%20Text%20\(MT%20or%20accentuation%20known%20as%20the%20Masorah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masoretic_Text#:~:text=The%20Masoretic%20Text%20(MT%20or%20accentuation%20known%20as%20the%20Masorah)
- Wikipedia on Septuagint: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint>

Meeting 5: The Cemetery at Qumran (July 16)



Texts to read:

- Magness, Jodi, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Eerdmans Publishing, 2002): the Cemetery, pp. 168-174
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015055891942&view=image&seq=7>
- Schultz, Brian, 2006, "The Qumran Cemetery: 150 Years of Research." in: *Dead Sea Discoveries*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 194–228. (pdf will be provided)
- Sheridan, Susan Guise, 2005, "A Reconsideration of the Human Remains in the French Collection from Qumran," in: *The Site of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Archaeological Interpretations and Debates: Proceedings of the Conference held at Brown University, November 17-19, 2002*, pp. 195-212. (pdf will be provided)
- New skeletal evidence could put decades-old debate over Qumran settlers to rest:
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/new-skeletal-evidence-could-put-decades-old-debate-over-qumran-settlers-to-rest/>

Questions and topics to discuss:

- How does the cemetery connect to the Essenes?

- What could explain the female skeletons being present in the cemetery?

Further information:

- Hachlili, Rachel, 2000, "The Qumran Cemetery: A Reconsideration," in: *Schiffman et al., The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years after their Discovery 1947–1997*; proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20–25, 1997, pp. 661-672. (pdf will be provided)
- Rohrer-Ertl, Olav, 2006, "Facts and Results Based on Skeletal Remains from Qumran Found in the Collectio Kurth: A Study in Methodology" in: *QSDSS*, pp.181-193. (pdf will be provided)
- Wikipedia on Qumran cemetery: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qumran_cemetery
- Virtual Qumran: the cemetery: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdq1L-Tonbw>
- A tour of the cemetery by Jodi Magness (YouTube, low quality): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qjll81skQd0&list=PLhc6cM_akfogdmdTXFHohJdWuLQAsrdKX&index=4

Meeting 6: The Temple Scroll (July 23)



Texts to read:

- Vermes, Geza, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, (Penguin Books, 2011):
The Temple Scroll (p. 191-220)
<https://archive.org/details/gezavermesthecompletedeadseascrollsinenglishpenguin2004>

Questions and topics to discuss:

- Why is the Temple Scroll important? What did it add to our knowledge of ancient Judaism/the beliefs of the Essenes?
- Biblical sacrifice in general
- Purity: why is it important to the Essenes? Where else can we see this importance at Qumran/in other scrolls?

Further information:

- Wikipedia on the Temple Scroll: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_Scroll
- The Temple Scroll in the Dead Sea Scrolls collection:
<http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/temple>
- Scientific research conducted on the parchment of the Temple Scroll:
<https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/5/9/eaaw7494>

- Yigal Yadin, "The Temple Scroll—The Longest and Most Recently Discovered Dead Sea Scroll", in: *The Biblical Archaeology Review* 10, pp. 33-49 ([pdf will be provided](#))
- Book: Yigal Yadin, *The Temple Scroll: The Hidden Law of the Dead Sea Sect* (Random House, 1983-1985, 3 Vols.), contains transcription in Hebrew and plates:
<https://www.amazon.com/Temple-Scroll-Hidden-Dead-Sect/dp/0394544986> and <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015012156298&view=image&seq=7>
- Book: Johann Maier, *The Temple scroll : an introduction, translation & commentary* (Sheffield Academic Press 1985)
https://www.amazon.com/dp/1850750033/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1

Meeting 7: Poetry in the Dead Sea Scrolls (July 30)



Texts to read:

- Vermes, Geza, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, (Penguin Books, 2011): The Thanksgiving Hymns (pp. 249-305). Just SKIM!
<https://archive.org/details/gezavermesthecompletedeadseascrollsinenglishpenguin2004>
- Kim, Angela, "Authorizing Interpretation in Poetic Compositions in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Later Jewish and Christian Traditions", in: *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Authorizing Texts, Interpretations, and Laws at Qumran (Brill, 2003), pp. 26-58 (pdf will be provided)

Questions and topics to discuss:

- What are the characteristics of Hebrew bible poetry?
- What are the topics of the Thanksgiving Hymns?
- How do these topics fit into the religion/culture of the Essenes as we have seen it?

Further information:

- Wikipedia on Biblical Poetry: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_poetry
- Wikipedia on Hodayot or Thanksgiving Hymns: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thanksgiving_Hymns
- Photos of the Thanksgiving Scroll: <http://orion.mscc.huji.ac.il/cave/megila4.shtml>

- More bibliography on the Thanksgiving Scroll:
<https://web.archive.org/web/20080526073530/http://www.princeton.edu/~aamihay/Hodayot.html>
- Jewish Virtual Library on the Thanksgiving Hymns:
<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-thanksgiving-psalms>
- Book on Hebrew Poetry: Watson, Wilfred G. E., and Wilfred G E Watson. *Classical Hebrew Poetry : A Guide to Its Techniques*, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2009.
<https://www.amazon.com/Classical-Hebrew-Poetry-Techniques-Testament/dp/0567540898>
- Book on Hebrew Poetry: Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, Basic Books, 2011.
<https://www.amazon.com/Art-Biblical-Poetry-Robert-Alter/dp/0465022561>

Meeting 8: The Copper Scroll (August 6)



Texts to read:

- Vermes, Geza, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, (Penguin Books, 2011):
The Copper Scroll (3Q15) (pp. 625-631)
<https://archive.org/details/gezavermesthecompletedeadseascrollsinenglishpenguin2004>
- Watch some of the clips on the Copper Scroll on the Smithsonian website (full episode can be watched if you have a subscription to any of the channels they mention; which I do not :-())
<https://www.smithsonianchannel.com/shows/secrets/the-copper-scroll/1003102/3431530>

Questions and topics to discuss:

- How does this scroll fit into the other works of the Qumran community?
- Do you think the treasure hunt is a hoax? Why (not)?
- Concluding remarks at the end of this reading group!

Further information:

- Wikipedia on the Copper Scroll: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copper_Scroll
- Joan Taylor, 2019, "Secrets of the Copper Scroll," in: *Biblical Archaeology Review* 45, pp. 72-78 (pdf will be provided)
- Treasure hunters are using Dead Sea 'copper scroll' map to find ancient Jewish loot worth \$1BILLION – but it might already be stolen (2019)
<https://www.thesun.co.uk/tech/9047757/dead-sea-copper-scroll-ancient-treasure/>
- The copper scroll...and all its conspiracies (watch the video :-p)
<https://copperscrollproject.com/breaking-news/>