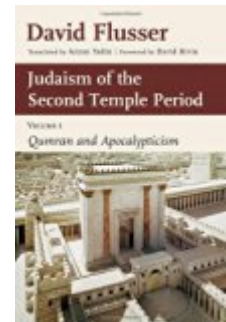


David Flusser. *Judaism of the Second Temple Period: Qumran and Apocalypticism.* Translated by Azzan Yadin. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. xiii + 356 pp. \$36.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8028-2469-1.



Reviewed by Alex Jassen

Published on H-Judaic (July, 2008)

David Flusser (1917-2000), professor of early Christianity and Second Temple Judaism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, was a prolific author in several languages. The vast majority of his scholarship was in Hebrew, and he is well known in the Israeli academy for his research on the New Testament and early Christianity as well as further interests in Second Temple Judaism and the Dead Sea Scrolls, rabbinic Judaism, and the medieval Hebrew chronicler Josippon. English readers were introduced to Flusser's research on early Christianity through the translation (from German) of his seminal work *Jesus* (1969), which was revised in 1997 and reprinted in 2007 as *The Sage from Galilee: Rediscovering Jesus' Genius*, and later a collection of essays entitled *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (1988). The present volume introduces English readers to the rich world of Flusser's scholarship on Second Temple Judaism. The essays, translated by Azzan Yadin, were originally gathered together by Serge Ruzer (in consultation with Flusser) and published in their original Hebrew in 2002 as the first of two volumes on Second Temple Judaism: *Yahadut Bayit sheni: Kumran ve-apokaliptikah*. [1] It is not clear if the

publishers intend to publish a translation of the second volume (*Yahadut Bayit sheni: hakhameha ve-sifrutah*) as well.

The present volume contains twenty-two essays (two were cowritten with Shmuel Safrai). The primary objects of inquiry are the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran community (identified by Flusser as the Essenes). The theme of apocalypticism is found in many of the essays. Three indices (name, subject, and ancient sources) aid the reader in navigating the vastness of the subject matter contained in the essays. No indication is made by the editors or translator that any of the essays have been modified in any way. The one editorial incursion—for which readers should be eternally grateful—is the systematic citation of the Dead Sea Scrolls according to Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar in the two volumes of *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (1997-8).

The twenty-two essays are diverse in their scope and inquiry. Several seem to have been originally written as synthetic presentations of critical issues in the study of the theological world of the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g., "The Dead Sea Sect

and Its Worldview," "The Essene Worldview," and "Apocalyptic Elements in the War Scroll"). Others examine specific texts (e.g., "The Apocryphal Psalms of David") or individual issues in Qumran scholarship (e.g., "The Eschatological Temple"). Two central elements pervade many essays: an attempt to situate the Dead Sea Scrolls in their larger context of Second Temple Judaism and as part of the prehistory of rabbinic Judaism; and a careful philological and historical exposition of the texts. Regarding the first theme, Flusser concludes his study of the idea of an eschatological temple in Second Temple and rabbinic texts by asserting: "we have further evidence for a position that should have been clear long ago, namely, that many issues that are attested only post-70 need to be dated to Second Temple times" (p. 212). This precise formulation could very well sum up many of his essays. For example, in "The 'Book of Mysteries' and the High Holy Days Liturgy," Flusser examines shared language regarding evil and the hope for its obliteration in 1QMysteries and the third benediction of the Rosh Ha-Shanah Amidah. While most of Flusser's readers will likely not be convinced of his claim that the former directly influenced the latter (his only such claim for direct influence in the book), he certainly succeeds in demonstrating that the world of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the world of the rabbinic sages are much closer than once thought. As such, this book should be viewed as complementary to his many studies on Jesus and early Christianity that likewise sought to locate them in the larger context of Second Temple Judaism. Four essays in this volume represent Flusser's use of the Dead Sea Scrolls in this endeavor ("The 'Flesh-Spirit' Dualism in the Qumran Scrolls and the New Testament," "The Jewish Origins of the Early Church's Attitude toward the State," "The Isaiah Peshier and the Notion of Twelve Apostles in the Early Church," and "The Half-shekel in the Gospels and the Qumran Community"). Several additional essays on the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testa-

ment already appeared in Flusser's *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*.

Flusser wrote the essays over a long period of time. They, therefore, reflect the state of Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship across a wide temporal landscape. For example, Flusser wrote the first essay, "The Dead Sea Sect and Its Worldview," very early in the history of Qumran research (1954). He, therefore, draws exclusively on the Cave 1 scrolls to outline the theology of the Qumran community. In contrast, several essays were written in the 1990s and interact with a wider corpus of Qumran texts and engage with a larger bibliography of recent Qumran scholarship. Unfortunately, the volume does not contain any list of when the essays were originally published. While the aforementioned essay on the worldview of the Dead Sea Sect is highly illuminating (and no doubt groundbreaking in its own time), it can hardly be regarded as a systematic assessment of the worldview of the Dead Sea Sect. At the same time, several of Flusser's earlier essays remain required reading for all students and scholars of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This volume contains Flusser's influential "Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes in Peshier Nahum" (previously available in both Hebrew and German). This essay, originally published in 1970, carefully deciphers the historical references in Peshier Nahum and decodes the numerous sobriquets alluding to the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. It greatly advanced the earlier work of John Allegro, Andre Dupont-Sommer, and Iosef Davidovich Amusin on the subject, and many of its assertions remain influential in the study of the Pesharim and their historical allusions and exegetical technique.

Readers will find this volume to be a wealth of creative and erudite scholarship on the Dead Sea Scrolls. This book will be extremely beneficial to students and scholars who do not read Modern Hebrew. Yadin has produced a lucid translation of the Hebrew original. The publishers are to be congratulated for their part in making Flusser's schol-

arship more widely available. The otherwise high quality appearance of the book, however, is marred by numerous errors that appear in the Hebrew type (generally metathesis of letters or word inversion at line breaks).

Note

[1]. The volume under review was published by Eerdmans in conjunction with the Hebrew University Magnes Press (Jerusalem) and Jerusalem Perspective (Jerusalem).

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-judaic>

Citation: Alex Jassen. Review of Flusser, David. *Judaism of the Second Temple Period: Qumran and Apocalypticism*. H-Judaic, H-Net Reviews. July, 2008.

URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=14735>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.