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Introduction

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This thematic issue is exploring gender in the Dead Sea Scrolls and introducing recent developments in gender studies of which Scrolls scholars should be aware of—even for the sake of their students and teaching purposes, who are living with the new “waves” of gender studies. One obvious change that has taken place in scholarship relating to gender is investigating “gender” in the first place, rather than studying “women” or doing a “feminist” reading. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that create a given configuration of gendered practice. There are societal expectations related to gender, which often manifest into constructions and expectations of femininities and masculinities, although the binary male/female often fails to account for more nuanced gender identifications. During recent years, masculinity studies, as well as queer and LGBTQ readings, have been quickly growing in biblical studies, which is seen also in Scrolls studies.

Feminist approaches are presently variously understood. On the one hand, feminist/gender approaches may signify close investigations into the ancient sources’ constructions of gender, without necessarily identifying those constructions as “problematic,” or in need of repair, similarly as one would not justify any other ancient system (e.g., economics, god-beliefs), which are different from ours.¹ On the other hand, perhaps more often a feminist (-critical) approach functions as an umbrella category for perspectives giving voice to the (silenced) “other,” aiming to properly appreciate the socially constructed and culturally contingent nature of gender and the involved (implicit or explicit) power dynamics, which also can have political and hermeneutical motives for today’s communities (where women often still are underrepresented). Such feminist movements would often underline the significance of the gender of the researcher or investigator, making claims for the need of diversity within Academia for studying any topic.

¹ Tal Ilan, *Silencing the Queen: The Literary Histories of Shelamzion and Other Jewish Women*, *Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum* 115 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 277, also criticizes the way in which first-wave feminist who studied women in the ancient world are being ignored when the focus is moved to studying “gender” and perceptions of women (by men), rather than women *per se*.

Putting together a thematic issue on the topic of gender has two risky aspects. First, gender is involved in all of what humans study and do, and extracting it as a theme of its own makes it also easier to dismiss it as something in which few scholars specialize. Rather than a target of investigation, one might desire to see gender questions posed *within* all investigations: How are ancient constructions of any belief system or practice gendered? How do scribes maintain or challenge prevalent gender expectations, and what are those expectations? How do ancient editors of texts, for example, change the representations of gender in their editing or rewriting of texts?² How is prophecy a gendered practice, for example?³ Our hope is that readers of this issue do not get the impression that gender studies are an isolated or highly specialized field but would rather feel encouraged to think of the questions related to gender in their own research, whichever topic they are studying.⁴ Also, various theoretical perspectives presently used and developed in gender studies may offer fresh ways to problematize the concepts and assumptions we have.

Secondly, one thematic issue is necessarily selective and partial, and we can hardly offer any comprehensive collection of worthwhile aspects in relation to gender and Dead Sea Scrolls. The themes were designed to address a variety of textual corpora (Qumran texts and other Dead Sea Scrolls); both masculinities and femininities in the Scrolls; the relation between sexuality and gender; material and embodied aspects of gender. Many more questions could have been explored.⁵ Another area that would benefit from active engagement with interdisciplinary research with gender is a comparative approach, for instance: How does the Scrolls collection as a whole appear in relation to other collections (such as Mesopotamian or Rabbinic material)?⁶ How do the Scrolls' representation of gender hierarchy compare to other historical hierarchical constructions, for example during the time of the Hasmonean rulers and the role that a female queen occupied?⁷ How has scholarship changed in terms of translating the Scrolls: Are there more gender-inclusive translations? What do we learn from archaeology and material evidence, not only in Judea but elsewhere about gendered practices?

² As explored by Tal Ilan, "Canonization and Gender in Qumran: 4Q179, 4Q184, 2Q18 and 11QPsalms^a," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Contemporary Culture: Proceedings of the International Conference Held at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (July 6–8, 2008)*, ed. Adolfo D. Roitman, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and Shani Tzoref, STDJ 93 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 513–45.

³ E.g., contributions in *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 6/3 (2015): "The Image of Female Prophets in Ancient Greek and Jewish Literature."

⁴ Gender perspective can also be something additional, as exemplified by including the contribution by Claudia V. Camp, "Feminist- and Gender-Critical Perspectives on the Biblical Ideology of Intermarriage," in the volume *Mixed Marriages: Intermarriage and Group identity in the Second Temple Period*, ed. Christian Frevel, LHBOTS 547 (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 303–15.

⁵ For example, for a queer reading where the societal categories of the perceived "normal" are questioned, see Maxine L. Grossman, "Queerly Sectarian: Jewish Difference, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Marital Disciplines," *Journal of Jewish Identities* 11 (2018): 87–105.

⁶ E.g., Géza G Xeravits, ed., *Religion and Female Body in Ancient Judaism and Its Environments*, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies 28 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015). William Loader has explored "sexuality" in different corpora in his various publications. Sexuality does not seem to be theorized but rather functions as a term to cover all topics related to sexual relations and attitudes, e.g., his *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Sexuality: Attitudes towards Sexuality in Sectarian and Related Literature at Qumran* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

⁷ Cf. Ilan, *Silencing the Queen*; Katell Berthelot, *In Search of the Promised Land? The Hasmonean Dynasty between Biblical Models and Hellenistic Diplomacy*, trans. Margaret Rigaud, JAJSup 24 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018).

The issue first contains an overview of gender studies within biblical studies by **Katie Edwards** and **Johanna Stiebert**. After providing a working definition of what gender and sex are and the differences therein, the chapter splits into two main areas of thought, one entitled “The Past” and the second “The Present.” The Past reviews biblical interpretation of gender, with its first and second “waves” of feminism up to the end of the twentieth century, while The Present reviews the scene today and how it has transgressed, especially through the inclusion of intersectionality and academic activism. The Dead Sea Scrolls’ voice on the topic of gender has been largely absent in biblical studies, as investigations are almost always framed along canonical “Bibles,” and the scrolls and other non-canonical literature have not played a central role. Edwards and Stiebert also observe that feminist scholars challenge methodological “canons” and hope that the contributions here will begin to breakdown the gendered boundaries.

One of the themes that has been unfairly looked at as a threat posed by mainly women is impurity. To understand purity from both the male and the female perspective, **Jessica Keady** has worked with various Qumran texts in her monograph *Vulnerability and Valour*,⁸ and uses here 4QTohorot A (4Q274) as a case study to challenge the common assumption that purity rules affected women’s everyday life only. The text contains several interpretative cruxes and Keady argues that the text presents both men and women as equally capable of transmitting impurity, but also equally able to purify and be active in the purification process. Keady briefly introduces one central theory of masculinity, that of Raewyn Connell who distinguished between hegemonic, complicit, subordinate, and marginal masculinities. Along this line of thought, the practice of separation of both the female body and the male body while impure suggests that both sexes were constructed in 4QTohorot A as subordinate and disempowered whilst impure; men and women have become equally positioned within society as problematic. A gendered look at 4Q274 demonstrates that the Qumran communities did not seem to segregate female blood to the realm of immorality or abnormality; rather it was a means for maintaining the sanctified order. The gendered equality in impurity reveals the impure male’s vulnerability since his perspective, his societal power, his patriarchy and his gendered performance have become subordinate to the hegemonic masculinised ideal.

One of the strongest ways in which gender plays a role in the everyday is to ascribe certain accepted displays, emotional expressions, and manners to those who have status and power and deny them from others. **Ari Mermelstein**’s article considers the sectarian constructions of masculinity/masculinities as it pertains to the emotion of anger. Mermelstein reviews how the expressions of anger amongst the sectarians of Community Rule (1QS) is a hierarchical emotion, bound up in power relations. Comparative evidence shows that anger, especially in the sense of passing judgement over others, is connected to masculinity. As Mermelstein demonstrates, anger toward outsiders is not only permitted but expected amongst the communities, and consequently the sect navigates a fine line between assertions of power and an acknowledgement that their power ultimately is attributable to God. Anger towards the ingroup members, on the other hand, even in situations of reproof and jurisdiction, is inappropriate since the members’ relations should be characterised by love and respect for high-status members. A true member knows in which situations anger is to be encouraged and in which repressed. The character of the Maskil is shown to be important, and his model

⁸ Jessica M. Keady, *Vulnerability and Valour: A Gendered Analysis of Everyday Life in the Dead Sea Scrolls Communities*, Library of Second Temple Studies 91 (London: T&T Clark, 2017).

is enforced by having the first-person speech in 1QS 10 reflect the rules for the Maskil in 1QS 9. Mermelstein's gendered reading also raises important questions about the possibility of such an ideal sectarian presentation to have competed with potential other constructions of masculinity that may have existed in the members' world.

Sexuality and marriage in the Dead Sea Scrolls have been extensively discussed in the past, and many scholars have started to speak about married, family life as the norm in the Qumran movement, rather than assuming any celibacy of the Josephus's Essenes. The binary of marriage versus celibacy is not a fruitful starting point, since the Scrolls do not (explicitly) describe or prescribe celibacy, although this is arguably still the standpoint adopted by many Scrolls scholars. **Maxine Grossman** carves out sectarian marital life, based on the ideology of perfection. The various restrictions that govern that marital life, such as temporary abstention from sex, no possibility to marry when widowed, or limited number of suitable candidates for marriage, suggests in her view that an overarching sex-positive attitude is too simplistic in connection to Judaism. Instead, sectarians (both men and women?) may have come to cherish and allow for the possibility of unmarried life, not because marriage or women were connected to sin or impurity, but because sectarian marital life as a way to perfection set the bar quite high.

Lastly, **Philip Esler** opens up a legal perspective into married life, including dowry, possession rights, inheritance, and financial transactions in two significant corpora found by the Dead Sea: Babatha and Salome Komaise archives from the end of the first and beginning of the second century CE. This article also includes a useful review of past scholarship on women and female agency from historical perspective, drawing on from both literary and epigraphic evidence. Whereas literary evidence has a complex relation to the social world of their time, epigraphic evidence refers to specific moments in specific individuals' lives but they too require the researcher's active engagement in understanding the value of the evidence. Esler outlines the methodology, "archival ethnography," for revealing the stories of social relations, structure and conflicts of the humans involved in the reasons why these papyri exist. These documents reveal that dowries were also as loans by wives to their husbands, and Esler reconstructs the value of their dowries and income from date industry and sales. Female agency is shown not only in the resources and cash that these women had but also in the ways they protected their wealth and their offspring's future, and negotiated their own rights even in situations where more than one legal wife laid claims to the husband's possession. The guardianship of men over women is shown to be more varied than often thought and also changing over time.

We are privileged to have **Eileen Schuller** and **Cecilia Wassén** to contribute to the issue with their response of the articles and reflections on the state and future of scholarship. Schuller is known within the Scrolls field to be one of first scholars to pay attention to women in the Scrolls and insist on not silencing them from the sources, and Wassén has done extensive work, not only on women, but on sectarian family identity and the role of purity rules in the everyday life. Their responses raise helpful questions for future work and show how much more comparative work awaits to be done and new scholarly voices are needed in the field.

Schuller's and Wassén's contribution brings to light once more the important question of which kind of communities we imagine these texts attempted to control and maintain—did they include women in the audience, and if yes, which status did these women have? We only

have our imagination, as few texts contain explicit information about the implied audience, but to entertain only one possibility (i.e. male audience) should no longer be seen as acceptable either, unless it is argued for.

A final reflection could be made on gender in the fields of Qumran and Dead Sea Scroll studies. Do the fields encourage a gender balance? Do they invite methodologically plural approaches? Are the fields appreciated in the academic recruitments and programs? The study of non-canonical literature has often been marginalised in biblical studies departments, and this othering may be even more serious for those with other minority positions. Studying gender and being informed of gender theory can ideally facilitate discussion on such issues and make scholars aware of unconscious and conscious choices in the planning for the future.

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