

Book Review

Jodi Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran & The Dead Sea Scrolls*. Second

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The Archaeology of Qumran is written by Jodi Magness: Magness obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Her Ph.D. in Classical Archaeology from the University of Pennsylvania. She later served as a professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and was later appointed as the Kenan Distinguished Professor for Teaching Excellence in Early Judaism at the same university. She has excavated extensively at Qumran, the site where the Scrolls were discovered, and has made significant contributions to our understanding of the settlement and the culture of the people who lived there. Through her research, she has shown that the Qumran community was not a monolithic group, but rather a diverse sect with a range of beliefs and practices.

One of Magness's most important contributions to the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls is her work on the pottery found at the Qumran site. She has shown that the pottery was produced locally and is consistent with the time period in which the Scrolls were written. This has helped to establish a more accurate dating system for the Scrolls and has shed new light on the history of the Second Temple period. Magness's work has also challenged many of the prevailing theories about the Qumran community and the production of the Scrolls. For example, she has argued that the community was not an isolated and self-sufficient group but rather has connections with other Jewish groups in the region. She has also questioned the idea that the Scrolls were produced solely by the Qumran community, arguing that they may have been written by other groups as well.

In chapter 6 Magness studied the communal meals, toilets, and sacred spaces at the Qumran. Her research has shed new light on the daily lives of the Essenes, a Jewish sect that lived in Qumran around 2,000 years ago. Communal meals were an integral part of life. The table was in the dining hall, which was a large rectangular room with benches along the walls. The food was prepared in a separate area near the dining hall and was then brought to the table. Magness

suggested the communal meals were a way for the Essenes to strengthen their bonds as a community. Toilets at the Qumran were relatively primitive, according to Magness's research. The Essenes used a simple pit latrine system, where waste was collected in a hole in the ground. There were no individual toilets or even partitions separating the users. Magness has suggested that this was a deliberate choice by the Essenes, who valued simplicity and communal living. The latrines were located outside the living quarters and were cleaned out regularly to prevent disease. Sacred space at Qumran was a complex issue. The Essenes believed that they were the righteous remnant of Israel, and they were living in the end times. They saw themselves as a separate and holy community, and they built a series of ritual baths or mikvahs to cleanse themselves before entering the sacred spaces. The most sacred space at Qumran was the temple, which Magness has suggested may have been used for religious ceremonies and communal meals.

In Chapter 8 Magness provides a comprehensive analysis of the archaeological finds of Qumran and their significance for our understanding of Second Temple Judaism. Magness discusses the possible function of the site, the cultural context in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were produced, and the implications of the scrolls for our understanding of the canon of the Hebrew Bible and Jewish identity. Magness notes that the site of Qumran, which was discovered in the 1940's has been subject of much speculation and debate. Some scholars have argued that Qumran was a monastery or a sectarian community, while others have suggested it was a fortified stronghold or farmhouse. Magness examines the evidence for each of these hypotheses, concluding that Qumran was likely a settlement of Essenes, a sect of Judaism known for its ascetic practices and strict adherence to Jewish law. She also goes on to discuss the cultural context in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were produced. The scrolls, which were found in caves near Qumran, include a variety of texts, such as biblical manuscripts, apocryphal works, and sectarian writings. Magness emphasizes the scrolls provide a window into the diversity of Jewish beliefs and practices during the Second Temple period.

The cemetery at Qumran is located near the Dead Sea and has been the subject of much archaeological research. This cemetery contains the remains of hundreds of individuals who lived during the Second Temple period, including women. Magness has been particularly interested in the way women were treated in this society and their role in burial practices. Her research has shown that women were accorded the same level of respect in death as men and were buried with similar funeral rites. One of the most significant discoveries that Magness made was the presence of a separate burial area for women at the cemetery of Qumran. This area was separate from the main burial site and contained the remains of approximately 150 individuals. Magness has argued that this separate burial area indicates that importance that was placed on the treatment of women's bodies in death. She has also suggested that the presence of this separate area may indicate that women played a more significant role in the society than previously thought.

Magness has also studied the objects that were buried with women at the cemetery of Qumran. She has found that women were often buried with objects that were significant to their daily lives, such as cooking utensils or jewelry. This suggests that women played an active role in the household and were valued for their work. Additionally, Magness has found evidence of mourning practices among women. She found that women would often wear black clothing and would shave their heads as a sign of mourning.

In chapter 9, The Temple Tax, Clothing, and the Anti-Hellenizing Attitude of the Sectarrians are three interconnected aspects of the Jewish religion during the Second Temple period. Magness explains the Temple Tax was a mandatory contribution to the Second Temple in Jerusalem, which was used to support its upkeep and maintenance. The tax was required of every Jewish person in the empire, regardless of their status or location. This tax was one of the most contentious issues in the Jewish community, as many saw it as a form of oppression by the Roman empire. Clothing was another significant aspect of Jewish identity during this period. The Torah has specific rules about what Jews could and could not wear, and these restrictions continued to influence Jewish fashion throughout the centuries. In the Second Temple period, clothing was a way for Jew's to distinguish themselves from members of other religions and cultures. Jewish clothing was often simple and plain, emphasizing modesty and humility.

Magness's research has revealed that the anti-Hellenizing attitude of the sectarians was manifested in various ways. For example, the sectarians refused to participate in the Hellenistic games, which were popular among the Jewish population at the time. They also rejected the use of Greek language and literature, preferring to use Hebrew and Aramaic exclusively. Additionally, the sectarians were strict in their adherence to Jewish law, particularly with regards to purity and dietary laws, which they believed set them apart from the non-Jewish world. The significance of the anti-Hellenizing attitude of the sectarian rejection of Greek influence set the stage for the emergence of Rabbinic Judaism, which emphasized the study of the Torah and interpretation of Jewish law. The sectarians' desire to maintain their Jewish identity and purity also paved the way for the emergence of religious groups such as Pharisees and Essenes, who were similarly committed to Jewish law and tradition. The anti-Hellenizing attitude of the sectarians was not exclusive to them. Other Jewish groups, such as the Samaritans and the Zealots, also rejected Greek culture and influence. However, the sectarian rejection of Hellenism was particularly strong and uncompromising, and their influence on the development of Judaism cannot be overstated.

Jodi Magness has made a tremendous contribution to our understanding of the archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Her work has helped to fill in many of the gaps in our knowledge of the ancient Middle East, and has provided new insights into the religious, cultural, and political history of the region. Her contributions will undoubtedly continue to be studied and admired by scholars of years to come.

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