

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Faculty Publications, Classics and Religious
Studies Department

Classics and Religious Studies

2000

Review of *Masada VI: Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963–1965. Final Reports: Hebrew Fragments from Masada, by Shemaryahu Talmon; and The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada, by Yigael Yadin.*

Sidnie White Crawford

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, scrawford1@unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/classicsfacpub>



Part of the [Classics Commons](#)

Crawford, Sidnie White, "Review of *Masada VI: Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963–1965. Final Reports: Hebrew Fragments from Masada, by Shemaryahu Talmon; and The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada, by Yigael Yadin.*" (2000). *Faculty Publications, Classics and Religious Studies Department*. 107.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/classicsfacpub/107>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Classics and Religious Studies at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications, Classics and Religious Studies Department by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Published in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 319 (2000), pp. 81–82.
 Copyright © 2000 American Schools of Oriental Research.

Masada VI: Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963–1965. Final Reports: Hebrew Fragments from Masada, by Shemaryahu Talmon; and The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada, by Yigael Yadin. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1999. [viii] + 252 pp., 20 illustrations, 3 tables, 8 plates, 1 unnumbered table and black-and-white photograph. Cloth. \$80.00.

This is the sixth volume of the final report of the late Yigael Yadin's excavations on Masada from 1963–1965. The trustees of Yadin's literary legacy, the late N. Avigad, J. Amiran, and A. Ben-Tor, are publishing not only the final reports on Masada, but also on Hazor and Nahal Hever. They are to be commended for the fine quality of their work. The present volume includes the publication of the fragmentary Hebrew manuscripts found on Masada, which Yadin entrusted to Prof. Shemaryahu Talmon of the Hebrew University before his death in 1984. These documents include seven biblical manuscripts: one manuscript of Genesis (MasGen), two manuscripts of Leviticus (MasLev^a & ^b), one of Deuteronomy (MasDeut), one of Ezekiel (MasEzek), and two of Psalms (MasPs^a & ^b). Also included are two manuscripts of what Talmon refers to as "Bible-Related Compositions" (MasapocrGen, which is not related to the Qumran Genesis Apocryphon, in spite of its title, and MasapocrJosh), four "Fragments of Extra-Biblical Works" (MasJub, MasShirShabb, and two unidentified works), and one papyrus document, "A Text of Samaritan Origin." The chapter on MasShirShabb or "Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice" is a reprint of the original publication by Carol Newsom and Yigael Yadin. Finally, the volume issues a revised edition of Yadin's original *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada* (Jerusalem, 1965), with updated "Notes on the Reading" by E. Qimron and a bibliography by F. García Martínez.

This is an important contribution to the corpus of the texts from the Judean desert, and the student of the late Second Temple period will find much of interest. Talmon begins with a general introduction, in

which he discusses the circumstances of the manuscript finds (loci and dates), their physical condition, the writing material, scripts (including dates), scribal customs, and language. He ends with a brief excursus on the use of parchment and papyrus in the ancient world. Two statements stand out. First, the palaeographical date of all the manuscripts is Herodian, with the exception of the Ben Sira scroll, which is Hasmonaeian (p. 20). This indicates a limited period of collection, very different from the situation of the Qumran manuscripts. Second, according to Talmon, all of the Masada biblical fragments adhere to the textual tradition of the MT (p. 25). This is important further evidence for the triumph of the proto-MT or proto-Rabbinic textual tradition of the Hebrew Bible in the late first century C.E. While the Qumran biblical manuscripts exhibit a variety of textual types, with no single version favored over the others, the evidence from Masada, Wadi Murabba'at, and Nahal Hever shows that by the end of the first to the beginning of the second century C.E. the proto-Rabbinic or proto-MT version had become the standard text, pushing the other versions out of circulation in the Jewish community.

The bulk of the volume is the actual edition of the fragmentary manuscripts. All of the fragments are transcribed, and photographs are provided. Talmon follows the conventions of many other editions of Hebrew manuscripts, most notably those of *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* (Oxford University Press): lines are numbered, brackets indicate reconstructed text, a dot over a letter indicates a partially preserved letter, an open circle over a letter indicates traces of a letter, etc. The text accompanying the transcriptions and photo-

graphs provides a wealth of information concerning the manuscripts. However, I did find the organization of Talmon's text somewhat less than "user-friendly." The presentation and organization of the information varied from manuscript to manuscript, and the type of information given for each manuscript was not uniform. For example, some of the biblical manuscripts were given a text-critical commentary while others were not. Sometimes a manuscript had both a transcription and a reconstructed text, sometimes only a transcription, and sometimes only a restored text. There was not always a translation given of a non-biblical text, although this would have been helpful. Finally, some of the photographs were reproduced smaller than their actual size, making them difficult to read. This changing organization from manuscript to manuscript made it at times hard to locate information. This stands in sharp contrast to the uniform organization of the *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* volumes, or to Yadin's own publications of the Ben Sira and Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice manuscripts in this

same volume. However, this complaint about organization is not meant to diminish the fine and careful work Talmon has done on these manuscripts, which is of the highest standards.

The reprints of Yadin's publication of the Ben Sira scroll and the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice manuscript (with C. Newsom) were included to put all the manuscripts from Masada in one easily accessible volume. What is striking is how Yadin's publications have stood the test of time. As Qimron says concerning Yadin's edition of the Ben Sira scroll, "His research is still the cornerstone for the study of the original text of this work" (p. 227). This volume is yet another testimony to the depth and breadth of Yadin's legacy in the fields of archaeology and biblical studies, and occupies a worthy place in the ongoing Masada publications.

Sidnie White Crawford
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
scrawfordl@unl.edu