Amihai Radzyner maintains that the two documents labelled by the principal editor as ‘sales’ are in fact ‘labor-lease agreements’ (‘P.Yadin 21–22: Sale or Lease?’). Yosef Rivlin challenges the view of Reuven Yaron and Ranon Katzoff that P.Yadin 19 is an irrevocable deed of gift in contemplation of death (‘Gift and Inheritance Law in the Judaean Desert Documents’). Lawrence H. Schiffman compares tannaitic law and PHever on a range of legal issues (‘Reflections on the Deeds of Sale from the Judaean Desert in Light of Rabbinic Literature’). And Ze’ev Safrai finds the Jewish society reflected in the documents from the Judaean Desert corresponds well with that presented in Rabbinic literature (‘Halakhic Observance in the Judaean Desert Documents’).

Overall, the contributions are of high quality and this is a rich volume of articles that helps us better understand the documentary texts from the Judaean Desert.

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These are three volumes in the Series of ‘Companion to the Qumran Scrolls’, meant to introduce the reader to the main topics of the ideas and practices as reflected in the Scrolls.

The first volume, written by J. G. Campbell, concerns ‘the exegetical texts’, that is to say texts of an exegetical nature outside the group of the (continuous) pesharim. (The latter have
been dealt with in Volume 3 of the Series.) The texts are eight in number, containing some ‘thematic’ pesharim and closely related documents, all of which seem to interpret Scripture from a sectarian viewpoint. After an introductory chapter and a chapter on Scripture and Interpretation the following texts are dealt with: 4QFlorilegium (4Q174), 4QCatenae A–B (4Q177, 182), 11QMelchizedek (11Q13), 4QAges of Creation A–B (4Q180–181), 4QTanhumim (4Q176), and 4QTestimonia (4Q175). The final chapter, entitled ‘Scripture and Interpretation in the Exegetical Texts’, offers summarizing statements. All texts have in common that they testify to an ‘eschatological’ type of interpretation. All date, roughly speaking, to the same period—125–68 BC.

The volume offers the reader a well-informed and nuanced discussion of the texts just mentioned. Attention is paid to several aspects of the texts, such as the genre, the content, and the exegesis. As to the issue of the relationship between 4Q174 and 4Q177 Campbell points out that the two works are ‘broadly similar, but not identical’ (p. 54). The same conclusion is reached regarding the relationship between 4Q180 and 4Q181 (see p. 71). Two texts, 4Q176 and 4Q175, differ from the rest as they mainly consist of quotations, with hardly any overt interpretation. The label 4QTestimonia is based on the idea that this text provides an example of ‘testimonies’, that is to say, ‘scriptural proof-texts which many scholars believe underlie much of the New Testament’ (p. 90). However, Campbell argues, in line with other scholars, that it is preferable to designate this type of text in a broader way, as ‘scriptural excerpts’, or ‘excerpted texts’ (p. 91).

The second volume, by H. K. Harrington, is about purity and purity texts. It ‘collects the extant data of the Scrolls on purity and discusses them, in Part I, in terms of general concepts and available sources, and, in Part II, by particular impurities: corpse impurity, leprosy, bodily discharges and outsider impurity. Biblical, Rabbinic and other ancient Jewish texts will be utilized throughout to shed light on issues reflected in the Scrolls’ (p. 8). Chapter 1 in Part I offers the reader a clearly written and illuminating treatment of several aspects involved, such as the matter of purity in the setting of the time—the Second Temple period; the definition of purity (purity in relationship to holiness, on the one hand, and to impurity, on the other; ritual purity in relation to moral purity); purity in the scrolls; and the archaeological side of the matter. In the second chapter the sources are introduced and described, the most important being the Damascus Document, the
Temple Scroll, 4QMMT, the Community Rule and related texts, and 4QTohorot. The second part of the volume offers the reader a very instructive discussion of forms of impurity (see above). At the end, two appendices are added, one about purity correlations in the Qumran scrolls, and another containing a comparison of the impurity laws of the Bible, Qumran, and the Rabbis.

As has been pointed out by other scholars, the rules concerning purity in Qumran texts reflect a more stringent approach than in rabbinical sources. The rationale for this is discussed, in a nuanced way, on pp. 36–42. Important aspects are that the group involved was a priestly one, and that in a period of crisis and persecution a group is inclined to emphasize the matter of purity in order to mark its own identity more strongly than before.

The third volume, by J. Duhaime, deals with the War Texts—1QM and related texts. The main topic here is the ‘eschatological war’ to be fought by the Sons of Light, a particular group of Israel which considered itself the faithful remnant of the people, against their enemies. After a description of the discovery, identification, and editing of the War Texts in chapter 1, the sources available are discussed in chapter 2: first of all 1QM, and next copies of a similar recension, copies of other recensions, and versions of a ‘self-glorification hymn’. All copies, most of them preserved rather fragmentarily, can be dated to the first century BC or to the first years of the first century AD. Since 1QM is the most comprehensive text preserved, this work is central to the remaining chapters (3–5), which contain an insightful discussion of the following issues: the composition and genre of that document, its date, and the intertextual relationship between this text and texts in the Hebrew Bible. As to the dating of 1QM questions are given due attention, such as the relationship with Daniel 11–12, the historical references in 1QM 1–2, the identification of ‘the Kittim’ (the Greeks, or the Romans?), and the military equipment and tactics, including the matter of Hellenistic and Roman parallels to the military data in 1QM (see the table on p. 86). Many passages in 1QM draw on texts or motifs in the Hebrew Bible, by way of quotation or of allusion. As an example, the prayer in 1QM 11.1–12 is dealt with in some detail (pp. 104–13).

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