

## What's The Big Deal About the Dead Sea Scrolls?

Remember the Communication Game? How you would whisper something in someone's ear and then that person would pass that information on to someone else? If you have played that game, you know that it doesn't take long for the message to totally take on a different meaning. This has been the argument for those who say the Bible has not been preserved accurately and has changed from its original writings. The Dead Sea Scrolls are the most significant find in archeological history because they filled a thousand year gap from our previous oldest Hebrew manuscripts. Once again, proving that God has preserved His Word for us over the centuries.

Only Caves 1 and 11 have produced relatively intact manuscripts. Discovered in 1952, Cave 4 produced the largest find. About 15,000 fragments from more than 500 manuscripts were found. In all, scholars have identified the remains of 800 to 930 separate scrolls depending on who is counting them.

In the initial find by Muhammad Edh Dhib, there were seven complete scrolls discovered. During the next several years more complete scrolls were discovered bringing the total to only 12 (so far). Eleven of these are leather scrolls and one is a copper scroll.

### **Leviticus 21:16 - Leviticus 21:24 (NKJV)**

*<sup>16</sup>And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>17</sup>“Speak to Aaron, saying: ‘No man of your descendants in succeeding generations, who has any defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God. <sup>18</sup>For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long, <sup>19</sup>a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, <sup>20</sup>or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch. <sup>21</sup>No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the LORD. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God. <sup>22</sup>He may eat the bread of his God, both the most holy and the holy; <sup>23</sup>only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he has a defect, lest he profane My sanctuaries; for I the LORD sanctify them.’”*

*<sup>24</sup>And Moses told it to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel.*

The Old Testament Picture was to focus on God's holiness and perfection especially in the context of rewards in keeping the Law. Thus the priesthood was to reflect this picture to the people of God and the world. God's purpose was to prick mankind's consciences into asking the questions, "Who is perfect but God?" Any logical, rational, practical and truth seeking person knew that any sacrifices made unto God from men are imperfect.

Thus God is gracious to receive them in our place for payment for our sins. This was all symbolic to tutor us until God would reveal His greater plan of redemption.

This scripture above and others like it motivated some Jews to strive for perfection especially when it came to preserving their holy writings. The Essenes took these scriptures above to their extreme end forbidding any man with a notable defect to join their community. In their writings they stated that the blind could not be accepted because they could not see if they touched anything that was defiled, the deaf were excluded because they could not properly hear the Torah being read, and the lame were excluded because they would scare the angels away.

If a man in the community committed a serious sin, he would be excommunicated without food and water to wander in the desert and die. However, they would not have to die in the desert unless they chose to do so. Jerusalem was about a day's journey west from Qumran and Jericho was only about a two hours walk north.

Some scholars believe the Essenes perished in the Jewish Rebellion in 70 A.D. when Titus destroyed the temple and much of Jerusalem. Josephus records that 1,000,000 Jews were killed during that time. Other scholars believe that the Essenes fled to Masada and held out for a season until ultimately they took their own lives to keep the Romans from capturing them. Whatever theory is more correct, we still do not know for sure. What we do know is that they mysteriously disappeared from history around 70 A.D. and were not rediscovered until 1947.

The New Testament Picture is a picture of mercy and grace because Christ kept the law for us. Now we see God says we are all priests and priestesses even with our greatest shortcomings. We no longer offer the sacrifices of animals who in a sense were a symbol of our repentance to God and the atonement for our sin. These offerings are now all completed through Christ's atonement. We now all offer ourselves to God as living sacrifices daily, made perfect symbolically because of the Christ's perfect sacrifice.

There were the three types of writings found at Qumran; Hebrew Bible, Apocryphal & Pseudepigrapha (*sue-duh-pig-ruh-fuh*) and Sectarian Rules. But there are really only two divisions of writings as far as Christians are concerned. Those that are Biblical and those that are non-biblical.

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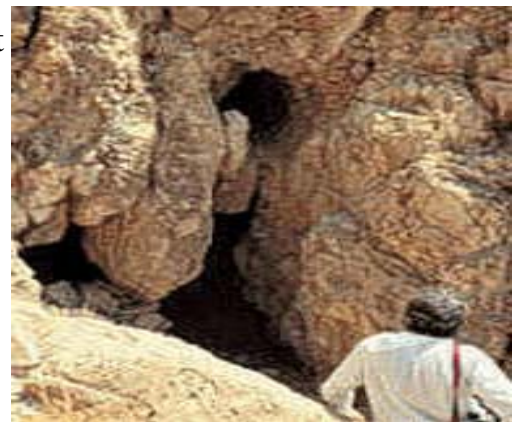


1. The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in eleven caves along the northwest shore of the Dead Sea between the years 1947 and 1956. The area is 13 miles east of Jerusalem and is 1300 feet below sea level. The mostly fragmented texts, are numbered according to the cave that they came out of. They have been called the greatest manuscript discovery of modern times. See a [Dead Sea Scroll Jar](#).

2. Only Caves 1 and 11 have produced relatively intact manuscripts. Discovered in 1952, Cave 4 produced the largest find. About 15,000 fragments from more than 500 manuscripts were found.

3. In all, scholars have identified the remains of about 825 to 870 separate scrolls.

4. The Scrolls can be divided into two categories—biblical and non-biblical. Fragments of every book of the Hebrew canon (Old Testament) have been discovered except for the book of Esther.



5. There are now identified among the scrolls, 19 copies of the Book of Isaiah, 25 copies of Deuteronomy and 30 copies of the Psalms .

6. Prophecies by Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Daniel not found in the Bible are written in the Scrolls.

7. The Isaiah Scroll, found relatively intact, is 1000 years older than any previously known copy of Isaiah. In fact, the scrolls are the oldest group of Old Testament manuscripts ever found.

8. In the Scrolls are found never before seen psalms attributed to King David and Joshua.

9. There are nonbiblical writings along the order of commentaries on the OT, paraphrases that expand on the Law, rule books of the community, war conduct, thanksgiving psalms, hymnic compositions, benedictions, liturgical texts, and sapiential (wisdom) writings.



10. The Scrolls are for the most part, written in Hebrew, but there are many written in Aramaic. Aramaic was the common language of the Jews of Palestine for the last two centuries B.C. and of the first two centuries A.D. The discovery of the Scrolls has greatly enhanced our knowledge of these two languages. In addition, there are a few texts written in Greek.

11. The Scrolls appear to be the library of a Jewish sect. The library was hidden away in caves around the outbreak of the First Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66-70) as the Roman army advanced against the rebel Jews.

12. Near the caves are the ancient ruins of Qumran. They were excavated in the early 1950's and appear to be connected with the scrolls.

13. The Dead Sea Scrolls were most likely written by the Essenes during the period from about 200 B.C. to 68 C.E./A.D. The Essenes are mentioned by Josephus and in a few other sources, but not in the New testament. The Essenes were a strict Torah observant, Messianic, apocalyptic, baptist, wilderness, new covenant Jewish sect. They were led by a priest they called the "Teacher of Righteousness," who was opposed and possibly killed by the establishment priesthood in Jerusalem.

14. The enemies of the Qumran community were called the "Sons of Darkness"; they called themselves the "Sons of Light," "the poor," and members of "the Way." They thought of themselves as "the holy ones," who lived in "the house of holiness," because "the Holy Spirit" dwelt with them.

15. The last words of Joseph, Judah, Levi, Naphtali, and Amram (the father of Moses) are written down in the Scrolls.

16. One of the most curious scrolls is the Copper Scroll. Discovered in Cave 3, this scroll records a list of 64 underground hiding places throughout the land of Israel. The deposits are to contain certain amounts of gold, silver, aromatics, and manuscripts. These are believed to be treasures from the Temple at Jerusalem, that were hidden away for safekeeping.



17. The Temple Scroll, found in Cave 11, is the longest scroll. Its present total length is 26.7 feet (8.148 meters). The overall length of the scroll must have been over 28 feet (8.75m).

18. The scrolls contain previously unknown stories about biblical figures such as Enoch, Abraham, and Noah. The story of Abraham includes an explanation why God asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac.

19. The scrolls are most commonly made of animal skins, but also papyrus and one of copper. They are written with a carbon-based ink, from right to left, using no punctuation except for an occasional paragraph indentation. In fact, in some cases, there are not even spaces between the words.

20. The Scrolls have revolutionized textual criticism of the Old Testament. Interestingly, now with manuscripts predating the medieval period, we find these texts in substantial agreement with the Masoretic text as well as widely variant forms.

21. Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls actually appeared for sale on June 1, 1954 in the *Wall Street Journal*. The advertisement read — "The Four Dead



Sea Scrolls: Biblical manuscripts dating back to at least 200 BC are for sale. This would be an ideal gift to an educational or religious institution by an individual or group. Box F206."

22. Although the Qumran community existed during the time of the ministry of Jesus, none of the Scrolls refer to Him, nor do they mention any of His follower's described in the New Testament.

23. The major intact texts, from Caves 1 & 11, were published by the late fifties and are now housed in the *Shrine of the Book* museum in Jerusalem.

24. Since the late fifties, about 40% of the Scrolls, mostly fragments from Cave 4, remained unpublished and were unaccessible. It wasn't until 1991, 44 years after the discovery of the first Scroll, after the pressure for publication mounted, that general access was made available to photographs of the Scrolls. In November of 1991 the photos were published by the *Biblical Archaeological Society* in a nonofficial edition; a computer reconstruction, based on a concordance, was announced; the *Huntington Library* pledged to open their microfilm files of all the scroll photographs.

25. The Dead Sea Scrolls enhance our knowledge of both Judaism and Christianity. They represent a non-rabbinic form of Judaism and provide a wealth of comparative material for New Testament scholars, including many important parallels to the Jesus movement. They show Christianity to be rooted in Judaism and have been called the evolutionary link between the two.

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# Copper Scroll

## The Copper Scroll (3Q15)

"In the fortress which is in the Vale of Achor, forty cubits under the steps entering to the east: a money chest and it [sic] contents, of a weight of seventeen talents." So begins the first column of the Copper Scroll, one of the most intriguing, and baffling, scrolls to be found among the collection known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Sounding like something out of an Indiana Jones movie, the text of the Copper Scroll (3Q15) describes vast amounts of buried treasure.

It was found in 1952 in Cave 3 at Khirbet Qumran on the shores of the Dead Sea, one of the few scrolls to be discovered in the place where it had lain for nearly 2,000 years. Most of what are called the "Dead Sea Scrolls" were found by Bedouin and sold through antiquities dealers, but this one was actually discovered by archaeologists--a rare occasion during those years. In ancient times the text of the document had been incised on thin sheets of copper which were then joined together. At the time it was found, however, the document was rolled into two separate scrolls of heavily oxidized copper which was far too brittle to unroll. For five years scholars and experts discussed ways of opening the scroll. Finally, they decided to cut the scroll into sections from the outside using a small saw. Working very carefully they cut the scroll into 23 strips, each one curved into a half-cylinder. Before it was cut, one scholar thought he saw words for silver and gold and suggested that the scroll was a list of buried treasure. Sure enough, when it was deciphered that scholar turned out to be right!

What about all that treasure? What is it? Has anyone found it? The answer to the last question is, no, at least that they are telling.

The treasure described in the Copper Scroll consists of vast quantities of gold and silver, as well as many coins and vessels. It is difficult to assess the value of what is described, since we are not sure what the weights in the scroll are actually equivalent to, but it was estimated in 1960 that the total would top \$1,000,000 U.S.

With this great treasure list, you may ask, why isn't everyone out looking for the treasure? (And why hasn't Stephen Spielberg made a movie out of it?) The truth is, some people are looking for it, but it is not all that easy. To begin with, we do not know what all the words in the text mean. The text is in Hebrew, which is certainly a known language, but most ancient Hebrew texts that we have are religious in nature, and the Copper Scroll is anything but religious. Most of its vocabulary is simply not found in the Bible or anything else we have from ancient times.



[Click the image to view an enhanced version.](#)

Not only is the vocabulary of the scroll very technical, some of the geographical locations are unknown after so many years, many are too specific and some refer to places that no longer exist. Take some of the following examples:

"In the gutter which is in the bottom of the (rain-water) tank..."

"In the Second Enclosure, in the underground passage that looks east..."

"In the water conduit of [...] the north[ern] reservoir..."

There are those who have suggested that the treasure never actually existed, that the Copper Scroll is simply a work of fiction. Even if the treasure did exist, we do not know where it came from or who it belonged to. Some believe the scrolls refer to Temple treasure, hidden for safekeeping before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 C.E. Others believe the treasure belonged to the sect that lived at Qumran, a sect usually identified with the Essenes, a Jewish group mentioned in the work of the Jewish historian Josephus, who wrote in the 1st century C.E. However, these are just educated guesses. Who the treasure belonged to, and what happened to it, we may never know.

Photograph by Bruce and Kenneth Zuckerman, West Semitic Research, in collaboration with the Princeton Theological Seminary. Courtesy Department of Antiquities, Jordan.

Commentary by Marilyn J. Lundberg.

# The Dead Sea Scrolls Trivia Test (answers)

What year were the Dead Sea Scrolls found? 1947

Who found the scrolls? A Bedouin Shepherd boy named Muhammad Edh Dhib

How much were the first three scrolls sold for? 7 Pounds / or \$10.91 American

How much were the last four scrolls sold for? \$250,000

Who is believed to have hidden the scrolls? Essenes

What was the name of their city? Qumran

What did they call the war that made them loose their lives? Children of Light against the Children of Darkness.

Who were the Children of Darkness? The Romans

What is the cave # that had over 500 different texts in it? Cave 4

How many of those texts are currently published? 100

What scroll has made the most impact on the Christian community and Why? Isaiah Because it was very close to our oldest manuscript proving that the Bible has not changed since the time of Jesus.

What year is this scroll dated? 125 BC

What are the names of the museums that the scrolls have been kept in? Rockefeller and The Shrine of the Book.

Up to the time that the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, what year was our oldest Hebrew manuscript dated? 900 AD

What were the favorite books of the Bible for the Essenes? Genesis, Deuteronomy, Psalms and Isaiah.

Fragments of all the Old Testament books but one were found. Which book was missing? Esther

Why do you think this book was not important to the Essenes? **Perhaps because it does not mention the name of God.**

How many fragments of text have been found? **40,000**

How many books have been constructed out of these fragments? **500**

The Dead Sea Scrolls are dated between what period of time? **200 BC to 68 AD**

Of the Biblical material found, what percentage of text agrees with what we had previously? **95%**

Why were the Dead Sea Scrolls discoveries important? **Because it closed a 1,000-year gap that proved the Old Testament Scriptures were accurately copied before the time of Jesus to our time.**

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The Dead Sea Scrolls – Rose Publishing

## WHAT'S NEW(S) ABOUT THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS?

By Daniel J. Harrington

Scholarly squabbles and radical revisionism make headlines, but new understandings of Christian origins and the formation of the Judaic canon are the deep religious contribution of the scrolls.

The "news" and the "new" are not always identical. The "news" is what every day we read in our newspapers, hear on our radios, watch on our television sets, and (if we are truly people of the 1990s) call up on our computer screens. The "news" is chiefly about events and personalities. It thrives on conflicts, scandals, the overturning of orthodoxies, and the embarrassment of apparently powerful persons and institutions (with care, however, not to offend too many patrons, advertisers, and the truly powerful).[1]

The "new" in the present context refers to what may be genuinely important in the long run, to the significant and epoch-making. The "new" may first appear in technical journals and monographs; its repository is the handbook or encyclopedia. In everyday life the "new" has a lasting and widespread effect long after what constituted "news" is forgotten. The "new" changes how we look at or do things.

In the nearly fifty years since their first discovery the Dead Sea scrolls have provided both "news" and the "new." Their discovery and subsequent study have produced colorful characters, weird events, and plenty of conflicts. They have challenged (and enriched) conventional understandings of both Judaism and Christianity. At the same time, the Dead Sea scrolls have given us "new" ways of looking at the Hebrew Bible and early Christianity that will outlive the "news" about the scrolls.

The basic information about the Dead Sea scrolls and the people behind them is familiar to most readers. The term "Dead Sea scrolls" refers to the series of manuscript finds in Palestine near the Dead Sea beginning in 1947. The first and most important discoveries took place at Wadi Qumran where scrolls and manuscript fragments written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek were found in eleven caves between 1947 and 1956. Other texts and documents were found near Qumran at Wadi Murabba'at (1951), Khirbet Mird (1952), Wadi Seiyal/Nahal Se'elim (1952), and Wadi Habra/Nahal Hever (1960-61). Although these secondary sites have yielded very important materials, the term "Dead Sea scrolls" often refers more narrowly to the larger and richer Qumran discoveries.

What did the eleven caves at Qumran yield? Their most familiar contents are texts of the Hebrew Bible-texts (mainly quite fragmentary) for every book but Esther. There are also works based on or related to the Hebrew Bible, sometimes called the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. Among them are Hebrew and Aramaic texts of works transmitted in secondary versions (1 Enoch, Jubilees, Sirach), as well as previously unknown works (Genesis Apocryphon, "pesharim" or biblical commentaries on the Prophets and Psalms, targums of Job and Leviticus). Moreover, there are many previously unknown "rules" for community life (Community Rule), for the eschatological battle (War Scroll), and for the ideal-temple city (Temple Scroll). Finally there are poetic and liturgical pieces (Thanksgiving Hymns, Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice), wisdom instructions, legal rulings (4QMMT), horoscopes, and even a treasure map (Copper Scroll).[2]

Who were the people behind the Qumran scrolls? The language and contents of the scrolls establish that they were Jews. That they lived at Qumran between the second century B.C.E. and the late first century C.E. (with some interruption) is indicated by the archaeological excavations of the main buildings at the

site, the palaeographical analysis of the scripts in which the scrolls were written, the allusions to historical figures and events, and the results of Carbon 14 tests.

An early and still widely accepted hypothesis is that the people behind the Dead Sea scrolls were Essenes—a Jewish sect that originated or took shape in the dispute over the Jewish high priesthood and the control of the Jerusalem Temple under the Maccabean leaders Jonathan and Simon in the mid-second century B.C.E. The figure known in several scrolls as the "Teacher of Righteousness" may have been the rightful claimant to the high priesthood. The move of the group to Qumran might have been a protest against the Maccabean usurpation of the priesthood and the Temple. The Community Rule (or, Manual of Discipline), one of the first texts discovered and published, is often considered to have been the rule followed by the Essenes at Qumran. If that is so, it is not surprising that scholars quickly began describing the group behind the scrolls as "monastic," since the text envisions a community life devoted to prayer and biblical study.[3]

### **What's "News"?**

Since their discovery in the late 1940s, the Dead Sea scrolls have excited the popular imagination and gained the attention of the media.[4] Perhaps one of the reasons for this was the fact that they were found near the Dead Sea—the lowest place on earth, where nothing lives. Perhaps it was the early association with the Essenes—a mysterious Jewish religious brotherhood described by Philo and Josephus, and the subject of speculation concerning Christian origins even before the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered. Perhaps it was that the discovery of the scrolls coincided historically with the birth of the State of Israel and the absorption of Arab Palestine into Jordan—a time of political confusion and intrigue that influenced the story of the scrolls from the start. Perhaps it was the 1955 New Yorker report on the scrolls by critic Edmund Wilson, a famous literary figure of the 1950s and 1960s, and its subsequent appearance in book-form.[5]

An aura of mystery has surrounded the Dead Sea scrolls from 1947 onward. Before their discovery it was a commonplace among biblical scholars and archaeologists that such a find was impossible. They believed that the conditions of soil and climate in Palestine rendered unlikely the preservation of written materials such as had been found in great abundance in Egypt during the late nineteenth century. But the accidental discovery of Qumran Cave 1 by the Bedouin shepherd "Mohammed the Wolf" in 1947 proved the experts wrong.

The rapid publication of the scrolls from Qumran Cave 1 confirmed the importance of the discovery and whetted the popular appetite for more. There were two copies of the book of Isaiah, a commentary on the book of Habakkuk, an expansive paraphrase of parts of Genesis in Aramaic, a hitherto unknown Community Rule, a War Scroll outlining the final battle between the forces of light and darkness, and a collection of Thanksgiving Hymns. These texts (apart from the Genesis Apocryphon) were quite well preserved, and it was relatively easy to publish photographs and transcriptions of them. The discovery of further texts in other caves at Qumran, the archaeological excavation of the site, and the exploration of other sites in the Dead Sea area added to the popular interest and enthusiasm.

Although many scholars accepted the hypothesis that the scrolls from Qumran Cave 1 were part (indeed the core) of the library of an Essene community who lived at the site, a few doubted the antiquity of the Qumran scrolls, assigning them to the Middle Ages. Some contended that Qumran was a Zealot military camp—the training ground for a revolutionary Jewish movement defeated by the Romans in the Jewish Revolt of 66-73 C.E. Still others who accepted the Essene hypothesis speculated that John the Baptist

and Jesus had once been members of this community. Some even contended that allusions to Jesus and early Christian figures could be detected in the scrolls. Such claims proved irresistible to newspaper and magazine writers in search of their annual Christmas and Easter/Passover "religion" stories.

The early days of Dead Sea scrolls research featured some colorful characters: William Foxwell Albright, the polymath professor of oriental studies at Johns Hopkins University, who proclaimed the antiquity and importance of the scrolls; the Syrian Metropolitan Samuel, who brought some scrolls to the USA and offered them for sale through an advertisement in *The Wall Street Journal*; Yigael Yadin, the young Israeli general turned archaeologist, who enlisted Professor Harry Orlinsky under the disguise of "Mr. Green" to verify the authenticity of the archbishop's scrolls; Pere Roland de Vaux, O.P., the archaeologist of Qumran and the first director of the publishing project; and Kando, the Arab antiquities dealer who set himself up as the go-between between Bedouin cave explorers and Western scholars.

Although the manuscripts from Qumran Cave 1 were published rapidly, it was clear that the many small fragments from Cave 4 and from the other caves required more extensive and complicated treatment. And so there was formed an international and interconfessional team of seven young scholars (Patrick W. Skehan, Frank M. Cross, John Strugnell, John Allegro, Josef Milik, Claus-Hunno Hunzinger, Jean Starcky) to work at editing the fragments. (Politics dictated that because the team was to work in Jordanian Jerusalem, there were, sad to say, no Jewish representatives.) The task of the team was to assemble, decipher, transcribe, and translate the texts, and to provide commentaries to be published in the official series issued by Oxford University Press under the title "Discoveries in the Judaean Desert" (known as DJD). The first task of sorting and assembling was like being faced with thousands of pieces from many different jigsaw puzzles all mixed together, and being asked to reconstruct the pictures without knowing what they were. After preliminary joins were made, the team worked at deciphering and interpreting the texts. A concordance listing every word in context was made to assist the editing process.

The work of the team started well, and it seemed that the remaining Dead Sea scrolls would be published rapidly. Between 1955 and 1968 five volumes in the official DJD series were published, followed, however, by only two from 1968 to 1989. The political changes after the Six Day War in Jerusalem, the academic commitments and personal problems of members of the editorial team, and the magnitude and complexity of the task all contributed to the slowdown. Still by the late 1980s about 80 percent in quantity of the Dead Sea scrolls had been published in some form. But many of the fragmentary works, especially from Cave 4, had not appeared in a form accessible to other scholars and to the general public.

The patience of the academic community regarding the unpublished texts was wearing thin, and the relative quiet surrounding Dead Sea scrolls research was shattered in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Geza Vermes called the nonpublication of the Qumran texts "the academic scandal of the twentieth century." Hershel Shanks (editor of *Biblical Archaeology Review*) and others mounted a public media campaign to "release the scrolls"-a campaign that issued in articles in major news magazines, op-ed pieces, and even an editorial in the *New York Times*.

The campaign achieved one of its goals when the chief editor of the project, John Strugnell, was removed from his position after an interview in an Israeli newspaper in which he referred to Judaism as a "terrible religion." In fact, Strugnell had opened up the project to Israeli scholars and had set a timetable for the work to move forward. Because of his poor health and erratic behavior induced by

manic depression, he was replaced by Emanuel Tov, Eugene Ulrich, and Emile Puech, who expanded the team further and developed an even tighter publication schedule.

In the fall of 1991 other scholars sought to speed up publication even more. Ben Zion Wacholder and Martin Abegg, using the concordance prepared as a working document for the original team of editors, began to reconstruct the texts of Cave 4 documents with the help of computer programs.[6] Robert Eisenman procured and published a set of photographs of unpublished texts;[7] about the same time the Huntington Library in California made accessible its set of photographs to "all qualified scholars." In 1993 E. J. Brill, Inc., of Leiden, with the cooperation of the "official" team and the Israel Department of Antiquities, produced a microfiche edition of the full set of scrolls,[8] making them available to any library or individual scholar that could purchase the microfiche.

Having access to the pictures of the scrolls is only the first step, however; it is also necessary to transcribe and translate them, and to provide appropriate philological, historical, literary, and theological comments. Robert Eisenman and Michael Wise in 1992 infuriated many of their scholarly colleagues by providing introductions, transcriptions, and translations for fifty Cave 4 documents.[9] The problem was that they skimmed off the "cream" of the Cave 4 texts and did their work badly:[10] their transcriptions and translations are often inaccurate, and the introductions place the texts within a hypothesis that almost all scholars reject: that the Qumran scrolls came from the "messianic movement" in Palestine that included Palestinian or "Jamesian" Christianity.

The controversies about the publication of the Qumran scrolls reopened the debate about their relation to Christianity-modern and ancient. Carrying on a tradition represented by John Allegro (a member of the original editorial team), Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh charged in 1991 that since the Qumran scrolls contain material that is embarrassing and even fatal to the traditional claims of Christianity, the Vatican has carefully directed a plot to suppress their publication.[11] Despite the fact that these claims were patently absurd to those who know, their work became a publishing sensation not only in English-speaking lands but especially in Germany. About the same time, Barbara Thiering, an Australian scholar, used what she called the "peskier" method to assert that Jesus was part of the royal priestly line of the Qumran sect, was born out of wedlock, performed no miracles, did not die on the cross but was drugged and later revived in a burial cave, married twice and fathered three children![12] The "evidence" for these claims is set out in great detail, but in the last analysis the evidence is worthless and indeed nonexistent.

### **What's New?**

Though what is "news" and what is "new" are not always identical, they are not mutually exclusive either. By simply following reports about the Dead Sea scrolls in the popular media one can learn a great deal but still may miss what is truly important about them. When we step back from the events, personalities, conflicts, and scandals, and try to discern what is genuinely significant about the Dead Sea scrolls, what emerges are new ways of looking at the Hebrew Bible, the Jewish world of Jesus (also called Second Temple Judaism), and Jesus and Christian origins.

Hebrew Bible. Before the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls the oldest extant manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible were dated around 1000 C.E. The Dead Sea scrolls enable us to trace the history of the Hebrew text back a thousand more years, even to 200 B.C.E. in some cases.[13] The Qumran caves have yielded manuscripts of every book of the Hebrew Bible but Esther (whose absence may be accidental, or deliberate-since the Hebrew version of Esther does not mention God's name). Although the manuscripts

of Isaiah found in Cave 1 are very extensive and in relatively good condition, most of the biblical fragments came from Cave 4, and give us only small portions of text. The bulk of these biblical fragments can be dated to the first century B.C.E. or C.E. Most were written in the familiar Hebrew square script with vegetable or carbon ink on scrolls made out of leather. There are, however, examples of biblical manuscripts written in the paleo-Hebrew or ancient Canaanite script.

The biblical manuscripts from Qumran provide an eloquent witness to the variety of Hebrew textual traditions in Jesus' time. This textual diversity should not be exaggerated to the point of imagining radically different books of Genesis, Exodus, or whatever. But the Qumran manuscripts make clear that there was no uniform or official version of the Hebrew Scriptures such as the Masoretic Version came to be in Judaism; there is a significant amount of textual variation in the Qumran biblical scrolls. What once had been attributed to the free or poor translation techniques of those who produced the Greek Septuagint or other ancient versions in many cases turned out to be accurate renderings of different Hebrew originals.

While the Qumran discoveries provide the earliest evidence for the books that make up the canon of the Hebrew Bible as we know it, it is not clear if and how the people behind the scrolls distinguished between canonical and noncanonical books. The discoveries do show that the books of the Bible were read by these people and regarded as important, but there is no list of canonical books and no obvious external distinctions between biblical and nonbiblical books. There is simply no way of knowing whether the Qumran people had an idea of "canon" in the sense of a fixed list of books regarded as normative, or to what books they might have accorded or refused authoritative status.

Second Temple Judaism. Although we cannot know what the Qumran people regarded as canonical Scripture, we do know that their chief texts included the books of our Bible. This is proven not only from the multiple copies of biblical books but also from the different kinds of composition based on the Bible. These include imaginative expansions and paraphrases of biblical narratives (Genesis Apocryphon), "commentaries" showing how biblical prophecies were fulfilled in the life and history of the Qumran community (Pesharim), Aramaic translations and paraphrases of difficult Hebrew texts in the style of what later came to be known as targums (on Job and Leviticus), and biblical and other laws expressed directly by God as the speaker (Temple Scroll). Even in compositions that are not directly based on biblical books, the Hebrew language and style are thoroughly biblical. These people (and other Second Temple Jews) understood creativity as saying "new" things in "old" ways; that is, they used biblical words and phrases in new combinations to express what they regarded as new.

If the Qumran scrolls represent the library of a sect of Essenes (or Sadducees-see below, p. 473), then they tell us about a Jewish religious movement around Jesus' time. The usual theory is that in the face of invasion by the Roman armies around 70 C.E. the inhabitants of Qumran placed the contents of their library in the hills surrounding the main site for safekeeping as they fled. Allowing that it is dangerous to deduce the beliefs and practices of a group from the contents of its library, the Community Rule (or, Manual of Discipline) looks much like the handbook for the theology and practice of a Jewish "monastic" group. Among the first Cave 1 texts to be published and studied, the Community Rule was quickly assumed to be the rule by which the Qumran people lived. As other "rules" appeared, there were efforts to relate them to the Community Rule and thus to chart the history of the Qumran movement. It is not impossible, however, that these rules applied to different Jewish movements or that they were simply products of religious imagination ("map without territory"). Whatever their origin and use, the rules provide evidence for variety and diversity within Second Temple Judaism. The early document

known as 4QMMT details the legal and cultic issues on which "we" differ from those in control of the Jerusalem Temple.

Whereas before the discovery of the Qumran scrolls scholars divided Jews into Pharisees and Sadducees, now it is clear that there were many groups and movements in Second Temple Judaism: Pharisees, Sadducees (perhaps several kinds), Essenes, Samaritans, Zealots, Christians, and probably many more. These discoveries in turn inspired a restudy of the so-called Old Testament Pseudepigrapha[14] and a thoroughgoing reassessment of the sociological map of Second Temple Judaism. It is now clear that Judaism not only in the Diaspora but also in the land of Israel was open to Greek influences from the third century B.C.E. onward in the areas of language, economics, military strategy, politics, culture, and even religion.[15] Scraps of ancient Greek biblical texts were found at Qumran, and a first-century C.E. scroll of the Twelve Minor Prophets in Greek was discovered at nearby Nahal Hever. Even Jews as isolated as the Qumran people and their neighbors near the Dead Sea were affected to some extent by Hellenism.

Christian Origins. The major reason why the Dead Sea scrolls have been "news" for almost fifty years is that they have repeatedly been connected with Jesus and the early Christians. In the effort to get at the "real" story the combination of Jesus and the Dead Sea scrolls has been irresistible. But attempts to demonstrate a direct relation between them turn out to be based on flimsy evidence and cannot be taken as in any way proved. Moreover, the claim that Qumran Cave 7 contained fragments of the Greek New Testament is very dubious.[16] Rather, the Qumran movement and early Christianity are best seen as independent and parallel groups within Judaism in the first century. The real significance of the Dead Sea scrolls for Christian origins is that they fill out and enrich our understanding of the Jewish world in which Jesus and the early Christians lived.

The closest parallels between the Dead Sea scrolls and the Christian Scriptures occur in theological language, eschatological consciousness, and community organization.[17] For both groups, the Hebrew Bible was the major source of theological words and concepts ("covenant," "thanksgiving/confession," etc.). For both groups theological creativity consisted in using old terms in new ways and new contexts. Both groups shared a lively interest in the present and future "fulfillment" of Scripture. The obvious difference is the centrality accorded to Jesus as the focus of early Christian theological language.

Both groups viewed themselves as living in the "last days." They saw the present as a struggle between light and darkness that would soon end with a definitive divine intervention. Both operated out of a schema of modified dualism—one that protected God's sovereignty in creation and at the end-time, while handing the present over to the Prince of Light and the Prince of Darkness. The most complete presentation of this dualism appears in columns 3 and 4 of the Community Rule: "From the God of knowledge comes all that is and shall be.... He has created man to govern the world, and has appointed for him two spirits in which to walk until the time of His visitation: the spirits of truth and falsehood." A similar schema underlies the theologies of Paul and John, Jesus' teachings about God's kingdom in the Synoptic Gospels, and the visions of John the Seer in Revelation. Again, the obvious difference is that the Christian Scriptures place more stress on the present or realized dimensions of God's reign through the decisive event of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Despite (or perhaps because of) their convictions about the imminent intervention of God and the coming of God's kingdom, both groups placed great emphasis on community structures. The group envisioned in the Community Rule had a leader or teacher (*maskil*) and an "overseer" (*mebagger*) an inner circle or executive committee of twelve men (standing for the twelve tribes of Israel) and three

others (representing the three priestly clans descended from Aaron), and the body of the community called "the many." There are intriguing parallels here to the place of the Twelve Apostles in earliest Christianity, the development of the office of "overseer" or "bishop" (episkopos in Greek), and the references to the whole Christian community in Acts as "the many" (plethos). The obvious difference is the urban and open character of the early Christian community.

There are other fascinating but in the last analysis less convincing parallels: the Qumran practice of community of goods and the sharing practiced by the Jerusalem Christians according to Acts; the ritual washings practiced by the Qumran people and the baptisms of John the Baptist and Jesus' followers; the community meals anticipating the eschatological banquet at Qumran and the Lord's Supper/Eucharist among early Christians; the solar calendar used at Qumran and the chronological discrepancies in the Gospel passion narratives. In each case there are impressive surface communalities but also profound differences, illustrating the basic contention that these were independent and parallel movements within Second Temple Judaism. It is not impossible that John the Baptist once belonged to something like the Qumran movement and that members of such movements became Christians. But early Christian claims about Jesus set Christianity apart from the Qumran and other Jewish movements.

### **Present and Future "News"**

If the "news" deals with events, personalities, and conflicts, then the Dead Sea scrolls have been a rich source of "news" for almost fifty years. If the "new" refers to significant changes in our understanding, then the Dead Sea scrolls have given us "new" ways of looking at the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Judaism, and Jesus and the early Christians. What is happening now, and what can we expect in the future?[18]

The most obvious and important "new" is the flood of competent studies of unpublished and published Qumran texts that are appearing in scholarly journals, collections of papers given at conferences, and volumes honoring distinguished scholars. These studies, produced by young scholars trained in large part by members of the original Qumran publication team (especially John Strugnell and Frank Cross), will feed into the "official" DJD series that should be completed by the year 2000.

The revival of interest in the Dead Sea scrolls has brought with it a reopening of the debates about the nature of the Qumran site and the people who lived there, raising questions about the "monastery" interpretation, mainly because the analogy was too easy and does not explain all the evidence. Some regard Qumran as a meeting place or "retreat center" for a Jewish religious movement. Others want to revive the theory that it was a military camp or training center. Still others deny any real connection between the main buildings at the site and the scrolls, on the assumption that the scrolls were transferred to Qumran from Jerusalem in the face of the imminent attack by the Romans in 70 C.E. The archaeologists now charged with publishing the final excavation report suggest that the main building complex is best understood as a Roman villa (which, of course, does not exclude later uses as a monastery, retreat center, or military camp).

There is also criticism of the identification of the Qumran people as Essenes. In the text known as 4QMMT and other legal texts there are agreements with the positions attributed in later Jewish sources to the Sadducees over against the Pharisees. Were the people behind the scrolls Sadducees rather than Essenes? Were the Essenes an offshoot of the Sadducees? Did the term "Sadducee" in the second century B.C.E. mean what it did in the first century C.E. and in the Christian Scriptures?

What these debates about the site and its people will conclude is hard to predict. I suspect, however, that the theory of Qumran as an Essene "monastery" still has much to be said for it. And what the debates about the relation of the Qumran scrolls to early Christianity will conclude is also hard to predict. I suspect, however, that most scholars will continue to look upon the Qumran and Christian movements as independent manifestations of the diversity within Second Temple Judaism. Thus far the Dead Sea scrolls have been full of surprises. Who know what will be "news" and "new" about them in the years to come?

### Notes

[1] Paul Vallely, "The Media, the Church, and the Truth," *Priests & People* 8 (1994) 175-80.

[2] See Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (3rd ea.; Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1987); and Florentino Garcia Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (Leiden-New York: Brill, 1994).

[3] Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective* (London: Collins, 1977).

[4] For a chronicle, see Vermes, "The Present State of Dead Sea Scrolls Research," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 45 (1994):101-10.

[5] *Israel and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1978).

[6] *A Preliminary Edition of the Unpublished Dead Sea Scrolls: The Hebrew and Aramaic Texts from Cave Four* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1991- ).

[7] *A Facsimile Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Prepared with an Introduction and Index* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1991).

[8] *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Microfiche: A Comprehensive Facsimile Edition of the Texts from the Judean Desert* (Leiden: Brill, 1993).

[9] *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered: The First Complete Translation and Interpretation of 50 Key Documents Withheld for Over 35 Years* (Shaftesbury, U.K.: Element, 1992).

[10] Daniel J. Harrington and John Strugnell, "Qumran Cave 4 Texts: A New Publication," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112 (1993): 491-99; and Garcia Martinez, "Notes al margen de The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered," *Revue de Qumran* 16 (1993): 123-50.

[11] *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception* (New York: Summit, 1991). For a refutation, see Otto Betz and Rainer Riesner, *Jesus, Qumran and the Vatican* (New York: Crossroad, 1994).

[12] *Jesus & the Riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Unlocking the Secrets of His Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992).

[13] Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

[14] James H. Charlesworth, ea., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983, 1985).

[15] Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism. Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974); and Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World. Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[16] For a defense of this identification see Jose O'Callaghan, *Los papiros griegos de la cueva 7 de Qumran* (Madrid: Editorial Catolica, 1974). For a revival see Carsten P. Thiede, *The Earliest Gospel Manuscript? The Qumran Papyrus 7Q5 and its Significance for New Testament Studies* (Exeter, U.K.: Paternoster, 1992).

[17] James H. Charlesworth, ea., *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Doubleday, 1993). For earlier collections, see Krister Stendahl, ea., *The Scrolls and the New Testament*

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