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THE DEAD SEA
SCROLLS
AT **70**

What have we learned?

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It's been decades since the scrolls were discovered in a cave in 1947.



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Scholars Celebrate!

It's the 70th anniversary of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovery

By LAWRENCE SCHIFFMAN

The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered between 1947 and 1956. After an initial flurry of excitement, the scrolls went into a period of quiet with-

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drawal. When I entered the field in the 1960s, only a few of the scrolls had been published. Those were the ones that were preserved in the Israel Museum that, in 1965, built a home for them known as the Shrine of the Book. A small number of the many texts discovered in the early 1950s while the West Bank was under Jordanian administration had also subsequently appeared. I was fascinated by the study of the scrolls, a then little-known and under-appreciated group of documents.

Since then, everything has changed. The full corpus of materials found at Qumran has been released. Anyone can consult the full set of volumes, with English translations, or get digital images online of all the scrolls. If you want to see them in person without traveling to Israel, look out for an exhibit coming soon to your neighborhood. The enormous number of

How did all these changes take place? What impact did they leave on the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls today?

In 1967, as a result of the Six Day War, Israel gained control of the area of the Judean Desert where Qumran and other archeological sites were located, and of the Palestine Archaeological Museum (now the Rockefeller Museum) in East Jerusalem where the still unpublished scroll fragments were housed. Nevertheless, the Israel Antiquities Authority (then the Department of Antiquities) left the Jordanian-appointed, all-gentile international team in place and did not interfere in their work, believing their claims that work was going on constantly and that the large number of remaining texts would soon be published.



The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered between 1947 and 1956 in the Judean Desert, continue to be the subject of intense scholarly research, analysis and debate.

drawals, and refused outside scholars any view of the sequestered texts, although by the early 1980s interna-

mental pressure had convinced them to include a few Israeli scholars.

The sudden release of texts hidden for over four decades by a secretive group of archaeologists had a profound effect on the study of the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Judaism, and early Christianity.

Between 1960 and 1990, a few members of the team still worked in the Palestine Archaeological

national pressure had convinced them to include a few Israeli scholars.

In 1984, the Israel Exploration

conference, myself included, at learning that a text of such great importance had been held back from the scholarly and general public for so many years. It became obvious that there was much exceedingly important material in the cache of scrolls that was off limits to most of us who were researching them.

After a Dead Sea Scrolls conference that I had the privilege to organize at New York University in 1985, Hershel Shanks initiated a campaign in the *Biblical Archaeological Review* and beyond for the release of photographic copies of the scrolls for scholarly examination and research. Shanks relentlessly editorialized about the need for total access to the scrolls and the widening of the editorial team.

Meanwhile, as a consequence of the reluctance of the international team to provide any access, others took the matter into their own hands. Ben Zion Wacholder and Martin Abegg realized that the texts could be reconstructed from a concordance that had been prepared by the team and circulated only internally for their own research purposes and to a limited number of scholars and institutions. The concordance listed each word in the context of its preceding and follow-

ing words. Using a computer, Wacholder and Abegg reconstructed non-biblical texts that they could not see and published their results in several fascicles published by the Biblical Archaeology Society (1991-95).

Robert Eisenman obtained photographs of the scrolls and released them in a facsimile edition, again published by the BAS, with an introduction by Hershel Shanks. Not long after, the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, where a microfilm copy had been deposited for safekeeping, decided to open its copy to the world. Then the Nova television series produced a documentary aired on October 15, 1991, about the scrolls and the situation of the hidden materials.

Coinciding with all this pressure, Strugnell gave an offensive, anti-Semitic interview to *Ha'aretz* on November 9, 1990. Amid persistent calls for something to be done, the Israel Antiquities Authority finally decided to remove him, replacing him with Emanuel Tov of the Hebrew University. Tov's first task was to widen the team to over 60 international and interconfessional scholars and to reorganize the publication process. Now, due to Tov's leadership and the work of the team, of which I am proud to have been a member, the complete edition and translation of the scrolls is available in print and in digital form. This sudden release of texts hidden for over four decades had a profound effect on scholarship in the study of the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity.

The entire series of events that led to the "liberation" of the scrolls certainly contributed to the reawak-



Much forensic work has been done on the scrolls over the decades. The question now is not who wrote them, but what they tell us about the internal ferment that took place in the Jewish community in the second and first centuries BCE.

visitors to these exhibits throughout the world and the tremendous public interest testify to the way in which the Dead Sea Scrolls have become part of our public culture.

Museum (PAM) in East Jerusalem, headed by John Strugnell of Harvard. They worked very slowly on the scrolls, saved many for dissertation topics for their own stu-

Society held a biblical archaeology conference in Jerusalem, during which the preliminary text of the *Miqsat Ma'ase ha-Torah* (MMT), a then still hidden foundational docu-

ening of interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls among the wider public throughout the Western world. Indeed, the tremendous public interest that was ignited has supported a series of exhibitions, documentaries and conferences that has been of genuine advantage to the field. The study of the Dead Sea Scrolls has matured into a full academic field, with major publications in the form of monographs, collected volumes and periodicals. A wide-ranging popular literature pertaining to the scrolls has also come into being.

Two separate tracks were followed in opening up the scrolls and restoring the field to normalcy. We might term these the "liberation" approach and the "editorial" approach. The liberation approach, led by the BAR editor Hershel Shanks, sought to bring about the release of photographs and rough editions of texts, assuming that breaking the monopoly of the earlier editorial team would reorient the field and make it possible for our collective understanding of the Dead Sea Scrolls and their historical significance to properly develop. The editorial approach, pursued for the most part by important Dead Sea Scrolls scholars not involved in the original editorial team, sought to reorganize the publication process

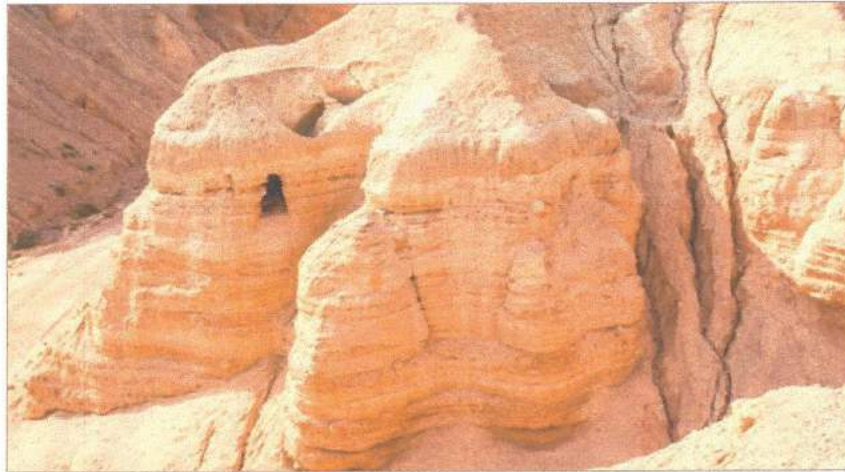
which had been unpublished at that time. The tremendous expansion of research in the scrolls field built solidly on pre-1991 scrolls research.

importance of recognizing that their system of Jewish law is that of the Sadducees and their historical origins lie in a group of pious Sadducees who protested the

So what have we learned now that we have the entire corpus that we could not have known when we worked with the few scrolls that had been published before 1990? In

and tefillin, indicating the continuity of Jewish traditional understandings of Scripture. Perhaps most important of all, we come to understand the plurality and variety of interpretations of the Bible and the manner in which they would shape the later development of religious traditions.

Many new details have emerged about the phenomenon of sectarianism in the Jewish community of the Land of Israel in late Second Temple times. Eventually, after the destruction of the Temple, a consensus developed around rabbinic Judaism that became the basis for the subsequent history of Judaism. Through the scrolls corpus, one can trace so many details of agreement and disagreement between groups, clear examples of common Judaism and inter-group tension, that there is simply no comparison between what we know now and what was known before the scrolls were made available to us.



Aerial view of the Qumran caves.

In the past 60 years, scholars have come to a consensus on many issues in Dead Sea Scrolls research, although some issues are, as is natural in any field, still subject to disagreement. Such is the case with the identification of the authors of the sectarian scrolls who, according to virtually all scholars, gathered the

Maccabean takeover of the Temple with the establishment of the Hasmonean dynasty circa 152 BCE. As can be expected, despite the most informed speculation, some issues will never be resolved because there is just not enough evidence on the tiny scraps of parchment that once were full scrolls to answer all our questions.

For those of us who labor in the field of scrolls research, the most exciting part of all this is the unbelievable scholarly progress that we have seen. Contrary to what so many people seem to incorrectly expect, scrolls research is not about looking for bombshells among the fragments. In reality, it is a painstaking activity, beginning with the proper evaluation and publication of manuscripts, proceeding to studying the literary history of texts, including their relationship to earlier texts of the Hebrew Bible, contemporary manuscripts from Qumran, other Second Temple compositions, and their later reflection in Judaism in rabbinic literature and in Christianity in the New Testament.

Only after this work can the scrolls scholar begin to unravel the history of ideas represented in the collection to which he or she is so devoted. This is why I think we are all so proud of the enormous number of recently published books that go way beyond the publication and translation of the scrolls. I often get the feeling that the public thinks that publication is all that is needed. However, what is most important is the careful literary and historical analysis of the texts that have been entrusted to us.

the field of Hebrew biblical texts, we have come to understand much better the process of evolution of the authoritative Masoretic Hebrew text and its relation to the textual traditions that existed in Second Temple times. The lines between text and exegesis were nowhere near as clear as we would have thought beforehand. Furthermore, at least in the case of the Dead Sea Scrolls community, differing biblical text types or textual families could coexist and serve the needs of the community. We have learned an enormous amount about the scribal practices, modes of transmission, and assertion of authority that

Indeed, the notion of common Judaism has become increasingly significant, and can be seen by studying Dead Sea Scrolls' Shabbat codes and other legal tractates that often have numerous parallels to those found in the later rabbinic corpus. Even while this allows us to observe continuities in Jewish practice, such as in the mikvaot (ritual baths) found at the sectarian site at Qumran, we must not forget that disagreements about Jewish law were the main factor that separated Jewish groups and movements in Second Temple times.

Yes, many theological differences existed. However, these were manifested most clearly in the differing

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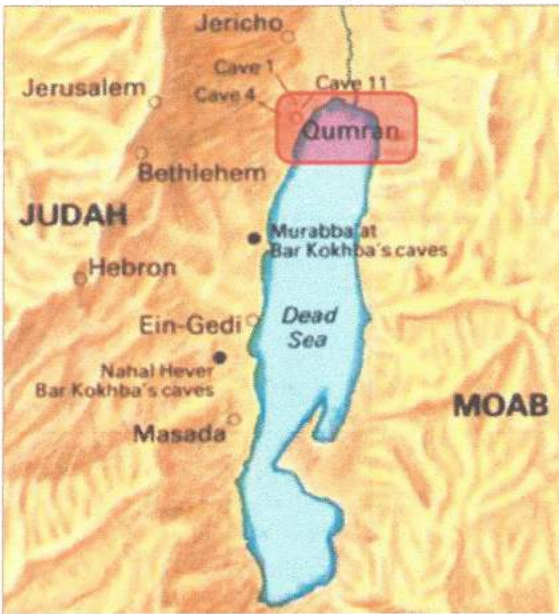
allowed the biblical text to be passed on from antiquity into the Middle Ages.

We have come to understand the varying modes of biblical interpretation that would later influence the authoritative texts of Judaism and Christianity. In the Scrolls we find Jewish legal midrash, some of it as complicated as what we find in later rabbinic literature. We also find modes of interpretation, like the genre of rewritten Bible, that point toward the aggadic midrash of the rabbis. Peshet, contemporizing biblical interpretation, points toward the fulfillment passages of the Gospels. Biblical texts were being used for the production of mezuzot

opinions about Jewish practice and ritual. One cannot overstate the impact of the scrolls on our understanding of the history of Halacha, Jewish law, an area that I have specialized in. With the help of the scrolls we have been able to reconstruct the Sadducee/Zadokite system of Jewish law that competed in Second Temple times with the pharisaic-rabbinic system that is the basis for later Judaism.

The focus of research has shifted so that the important question is not "Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls?" This issue is far less important than what the scrolls tell us about the inner ferment and debate that took place in

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Map showing location of the caves in which the scrolls were found, including Qumran (highlighted), where the largest and most important cache was discovered.

so as to produce academically significant editions, critical notes, translations and commentaries on the texts.

When the contents of these texts were released, genuine excitement reinvigorated the field as scholars learned to make use of the entire corpus of scrolls, the majority of

wider library that besides their particular sectarian texts also included biblical texts and a large number of post-biblical, Second Temple texts that must have been read widely by Jews in the Land of Israel.

The majority view regarding the identity of the sect is that they are Essenes. I have argued for the

The Changing Middle East

New leadership in Saudi Arabia may improve relations in the region

By ODED ERAN

For decades, Israel argued that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict wasn't the root of the Middle East's problems and that the instability in the region was affected

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by religious and tribal conflicts, autocratic and theocratic regimes or atrocious poverty and water scarcity.

As a former Foreign Ministry official, I can testify that no one listened to us or understood. Six years of an "Arab winter," millions of refugees, ruined cities and one-third of the Arab League states looking completely different from the way they did a decade ago, made it clear to those who had claimed that solv-

which includes normalization gestures from Arab states towards Israel. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and U.S. special envoy Jason Greenblatt's visits to Riyadh strengthen the expectation for Saudi gestures. If such gestures are offered, they will be part of a debate arising in Israel over the content of the initiative and the value of said gestures.

Saudi Arabia is undergoing a quick process of change. Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman may become the youngest Arab king, and at the age of 32 he is already leaving his mark on the kingdom. Since 2015, he has been the engine for deep changes in the country's security, foreign, social and economic policy. Since he began his involvement, Saudi Arabia has been

where the nuclear effort, former US President Barack Obama's weakness and helplessness, and Mohammad bin Salman's meteoric rise. Both Israel and Saudi Arabia watched the American administration's willingness to strike a deal with Iran, which fails to put a complete lid on its nuclear option, with a lot of concern. Both Israel and Saudi Arabia are learning President Donald Trump, unlike his past version presidential hopeful Donald Trump, won't walk away from the agreement with Iran unless it is blatantly violated.

Even if they aren't voicing it clearly, Israel and Saudi Arabia are also concerned about Washington's tendency to continue the gradual process of retreating from the Middle East. The lack of success in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, the declining dependence — which was never critical — on regional oil sources, and the very small chance for diplomatic achievements as a result of U.S. initiatives are discouraging American investments in the region.

Israel and Saudi Arabia are concerned about dormant American involvement in Syria compared to Russia and Iran's active presence. Furthermore, they suspect that Iran is developing a land corridor beyond the Mediterranean Sea, with the help of its allies — mostly Shiites — who control part of



Resigning Lebanese Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri with Saudi King Salman. Lebanon is an integral part of the Iranian plan.

this axis.

Lebanon is an integral part of the Iranian plan, and Hezbollah is an essential tool in its implementation. Lebanese Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri's resignations should be interpreted against this background. Preventing the creation of an Iranian corridor is a heavy strategic mission, which will be hard to accomplish without American involvement. That can explain the slight warmup in Saudi Arabia's relations with Russia and the stronger Russian-Israeli dialogue on the Syrian issue.

The Iranian danger alone likely won't be enough to openly bring

Saudi Arabia and Israel closer together. Mohammad bin Salman is working on fortifying his inheritance, and it's unlikely that he wants to expose himself to Arab criticism, especially Iranian, over his "betrayal of the Palestinian people." A positive Israeli response to the American initiative, once it is formed, might convince him to take the risk.

Dr. Oded Eran, a senior research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), served as head of Israel's negotiations team with the Palestinians in 1999-2000.

...the Trump administration is expected to launch a new initiative (possibly the same old thing under a different cloak), which includes normalization gestures from Arab states

ing the conflict with the Palestinians would cure the region's diseases that Israel isn't the problem.

In the coming weeks, the Trump administration is expected to launch a new initiative (possibly the same old thing under a different cloak),

standing firmly and openly against Iran, its nuclear program and its subversive activity in the region, especially in Yemen, Riyadh's backyard, where Iran is helping the Houthi rebels.

Iran's subversion isn't new. The innovations in the past few years

joining the cadre of Dead Sea Scrolls scholars or why I will fly across the world to lecture about the Dead Sea Scrolls and how thrilled I am to walk through a Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit and to see people learning about our common past. Now you can understand why so many courses in the Dead Sea Scrolls are

Scrolls has done in placing them front and center in the cultural heritage of Western civilization.

We have arrived at a point when we truly have a right to celebrate 70 years of the Dead Sea Scrolls. On November 16-17, New York University held a conference on "The Dead Sea Scrolls at 70!" cele-

One cannot overstate the impact of the scrolls on our understanding of the history of Halacha, Jewish law. ... We can now reconstruct the legal systems that competed for primacy in Second Temple Times.

being taught to undergraduate and graduate students in our country and throughout the world. Now you can understand what the full publication of the Dead Sea

brating the 70 years of research since the discovery of the scrolls. (They will do so again, in Jerusalem, from April 29 to May 3, 2018.) For a day and a half, schol-

ars, students, and the general public heard presentations that both provided a sense of the state of research and presented new findings. Nobody in attendance could miss the vitality of the scrolls research and its continued support for understanding the history of Judaism and the background of Christianity. The conference was keyed by NYU Professor Alex Jassen who spoke about imagined violence in the Dead Sea secretarians' view of the end of days. I had the opportunity to proceed him with some remarks on the amazing achievements of the field since the full release of the scrolls in 1991. My remarks concentrated on the accomplishments that took place after the 60th anniversary, which we also celebrated at NYU and in Jerusalem.

At the same time, the scrolls continue to spark considerable public interest. Witness the decision of Chabad's exemplary Jewish

Learning Institute to begin a course in 400 locations on "Great Debates in Jewish History" with a unit on the Dead Sea Scrolls. The 20,000-plus who are registered for this adult education course give an indication that it is not just academics who remain fascinated by the scrolls and their lessons.

As we look forward to the next 70 years of Dead Sea Scrolls research we should hope to see discussion of the scrolls become an integral part of the way we understand the history of Judaism and the background of Christianity. If the past 70 years are any indication, we should see the fulfillment of that hope.

Dr. Lawrence Schiffman is the Judge Abraham Lieberman Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies and Director of the Global Network for Advanced Research at New York University.

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the Jewish community in the second and first centuries BCE and the early first century CE. After all, the apocalyptic messianism that we see in the scrolls would propel the Jewish community toward two revolts against Rome, both of which had at least some messianic overtones. Further, the expectation of a soon-to-come redeemer and numerous other motifs found in Dead Sea Scrolls' apocalyptic tradition have left their mark on the rise of Christianity and its eventual separation from the Jewish community.

Allow me to brag: now you know why Dead Sea Scrolls scholars are so proud of the field we have created and of the students we have trained. Now you can understand why I will fly across the country to participate in a dissertation defense of a new scholar