

Welcome to

# SCROLLS FROM THE DEAD SEA

## The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Scholarship



**an Exhibit at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC**

The exhibition **Scrolls From the Dead Sea: The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Scholarship** brings before the American people a selection from the scrolls which have been the subject of intense public interest. Over the years questions have been raised about the scrolls' authenticity, about the people who hid them away, about the period in which they lived, about the secrets the scrolls reveal, and about the intentions of the scrolls' custodians in restricting access. The Library's exhibition describes the historical context of the scrolls and the Qumran community from whence they may have originated; it also relates the story of their discovery 2,000 years later. In addition, the exhibition encourages a better understanding of the challenges and complexities connected with scroll research.

The exhibition is divided into five sections:

- [Introduction -- The World of the Scrolls](#)
- [The Qumran Library](#)
- [The Qumran Community](#)
- [Today -- 2,000 Years Later](#)
- [Conclusion](#)

The original exhibition included nearly 100 objects: scroll fragments, artifacts from the Qumran site, and books and illustrations from the Library of Congress' collections. The online exhibit includes images of 12 scroll fragments and 29 other objects loaned by the Israel Antiquities Authority for this exhibition.

You may view the exhibit by selecting any of the above sections or you may choose to browse the entire exhibit by selecting

- [Outline of Objects and Topics in Scrolls from the Dead Sea](#)

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[Project Judaica Foundation](#), the international sponsor of the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibition, has brought the exhibit to the Library of Congress, New York, San Francisco, The Vatican and Jerusalem. Project Judaica is continuing its efforts to make the Scrolls and other Judaica available to the public through the Internet.

The Project Judaica website also provides [more information on the background of the Scrolls exhibit](#), including information on ordering an interactive CD-ROM of the exhibit.

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More information about the Dead Sea Scrolls can be found in

- [LC Collections Enrich Dead Sea Scroll Exhibit](#), an article by Michael W. Grunberger
- [Selected Readings](#)
- [Resource Materials for Teachers](#)
- [Glossary](#)

There is a free *EXPO* [Shuttle Bus](#) waiting outside. It is very comfortable and can quickly take you to other exciting *EXPO* exhibits. It also makes a routine stop at the *EXPO* [Ticket Office](#).

Next to the entrance door, there is the *EXPO* [Bulletin Board](#), with all kinds of notes from various visitors. Among other things, it contains up to date information from the *EXPO* organization.

At the *EXPO* [Book Store](#) you can pick up information about how to order the exhibit's catalog.

*The text and images in the Online Exhibit SCROLLS FROM THE DEAD SEA: THE ANCIENT LIBRARY OF QUMRAN AND MODERN SCHOLARSHIP are for the personal use of students, scholars, and the public. Any commercial use or publication of them is strictly prohibited .*

**Note:** This hypertext exhibit contains inlined images in GIF format. The tiny pictures you see in the text are links to full size GIF equivalents (each of which is 100 to 400 KB). Just click on the tiny ones to see the big ones.

This hypermedia interface to **SCROLLS FROM THE DEAD SEA: The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Scholarship** was done by Jeff Barry, [barry@scholar.lib.utk.edu](mailto:barry@scholar.lib.utk.edu). The materials in this exhibit have been reorganized by Jeff

Barry to better suit a hypermedia format; therefore, this hypermedia exhibit may provide a different interpretation of the Scrolls than that provided by the original Library of Congress exhibit.

The original data was copied by ftp from ftp.loc.gov. Questions or comments about the online exhibit should be sent to the Library of Congress World Wide Web Team (lcweb@loc.gov).

## **The World of the Scrolls**

In 1947, young Bedouin shepherds, searching for a stray goat in the Judean Desert, entered a long-untouched cave and found jars filled with ancient scrolls. That initial discovery by the Bedouins yielded seven scrolls and began a search that lasted nearly a decade and eventually produced thousands of scroll fragments from eleven caves. During those same years, archaeologists searching for a habitation close to the caves that might help identify the people who deposited the scrolls, excavated the Qumran ruin, a complex of structures located on a barren terrace between the cliffs where the caves are found and the Dead Sea. Within a fairly short time after their discovery, historical, paleographic, and linguistic evidence, as well as carbon-14 dating, established that the scrolls and the Qumran ruin dated from the third century B.C.E. to 68 C.E. They were indeed ancient! Coming from the late Second Temple Period, a time when Jesus of Nazareth lived, they are older than any other surviving biblical manuscripts by almost one thousand years.

Since their discovery nearly half a century ago, the scrolls and the identity of the nearby settlement have been the object of great scholarly and public interest, as well as heated debate and controversy. Why were the scrolls hidden in the caves? Who placed them there? Who lived in Qumran? Were its inhabitants responsible for the scrolls and their presence in the caves? Of what significance are the scrolls to Judaism and Christianity?

This exhibition presents twelve Dead Sea Scroll fragments and archaeological artifacts courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority as well as supplementary materials from the Library of Congress. It is designed to retell the story of the scrolls' discovery; explore their archaeological and historical context; introduce the scrolls themselves; explore the various theories concerning the nature of the Qumran community; and examine some of the challenges facing modern researchers as they struggle to reconstruct the scrolls from the tens of thousands of fragments that remain.

## **The Dead Sea**

The Dead Sea is located in Israel and Jordan, about 15 miles east of Jerusalem. (A [map of the Dead Sea Region](#) is available). It is extremely deep (averaging about 1,000 feet), salty (some parts containing the highest amount of salts possible), and the lowest body of water in the world. The Dead Sea is supplied by a number of smaller streams, springs, and the Jordan River.



Because of its low elevation and its position in a deep basin, the climate of the Dead Sea area is unusual. Its very high evaporation does produce a haze yet its atmospheric humidity is low. Adjacent areas to it are very arid and favorable for the preservation of materials like the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Bible's description, in Genesis 19, of a destructive earthquake near the Dead Sea area during the time of Abraham is borne out by archaeological and historic investigation. While no evidence remains of the five cities of the plain (Zeboim, Admah, Bela or Zoar, Sodom, and Gomorrah) their sites are believed to be beneath the waters at the southern end of the sea.

Archaeological sites near the Dead Sea include Masada, Ein Gedi, and Qumran (where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found).

### **[Library of Congress Materials Relating to the World of the Scrolls](#)**

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- Continue exploring the Dead Sea Scrolls with [The Qumran Library](#).
- [Outline](#)