

The Qumran Community

Like the scrolls themselves, the nature of the Qumran settlement has aroused much debate and differing opinions. Located on a barren terrace between the limestone cliffs of the Judean desert and the maritime bed along the Dead Sea, the Qumran site was excavated by Pere Roland de Vaux, a French Dominican, as part of his effort to find the habitation of those who deposited the scrolls in the nearby caves. The excavations uncovered a complex of structures, 262 by 328 feet which de Vaux suggested were communal in nature. In de Vaux's view the site was the wilderness retreat of the Essenes, a separatist Jewish sect of the Second Temple Period, a portion of whom had formed an ascetic monastic community. According to de Vaux, the sectarians inhabited neighboring locations, most likely caves, tents, and solid structures, but depended on the center for communal facilities such as stores of food and water.

Following de Vaux's interpretation and citing ancient historians as well as the nature of some scroll texts for substantiation, many scholars believe the Essene community wrote, copied, or collected the scrolls at Qumran and deposited them in the caves of the adjacent hills. Others dispute this interpretation, claiming either that the scroll sect was Sadducean in nature; that the site was no monastery but rather a Roman fortress or a winter villa; that the Qumran site has little if anything to do with the scrolls; or that the evidence available does not support a single definitive answer.

Whatever the nature of the habitation, archaeological and historical evidence indicates that the excavated settlement was founded in the second half of the second century B.C.E., during the time of the Maccabees, a priestly Jewish family which ruled Judea in the second and first centuries B.C.E. A hiatus in the occupation of the site is linked to evidence of a huge earthquake. Qumran was abandoned about the time of the Roman incursion of 68 C.E., two years before the collapse of Jewish self-government in Judea and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E.

For more information about the people who lived in Judea during this time, see [The Late Second Temple Period \(200 B.C.E. - 70 C.E.\)](#).

You can explore various artifacts excavated from the Qumran Site

- [Textiles](#)
- [Phylactery Cases](#)
- [Wooden Artifacts](#)
- [Pottery](#)
- [Vases, Jugs, Cooking Pots, and Bowls](#)
- [Basketry and Cordage](#)
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Library of Congress Materials Relating to the Qumran Community

These items were on display in the exhibit at the Library of Congress, May - August 1993. Images of these objects are not included in the online version of the exhibit, but these exhibit captions are included to provide some additional background on the scholarly work surrounding the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Qumran Community, and its Library.

Modern Phylactery Cases

Though larger, these phylacteries are modern versions of the Qumran phylacteries. Traditionally worn on the forehead and the left arm during weekday prayers, the head phylactery displayed here has been opened to show the compartments for the slips inscribed with biblical verses.

Phylacteries *Tefillin* . Early twentieth century. Hebraic section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress.

Phylactery Text

In this monograph on the phylacteries, noted archaeologist Yigael Yadin provided a detailed description of the methods used to fold the slips so that they could be inserted into their tiny compartments.

Yigael Yadin **Tefillin from Qumran** (Jerusalem, 1969) Printed book. Hebraic Section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress.

Solomon's Temple

Surrounded by explanatory text, the engraving at the center depicts the First Temple. The High Priest at the altar and the Ark of the Covenant are illustrated at the foot of the engraving.

This frontispiece from an edition of the works of Flavius Josephus was in the collection of Thomas Jefferson, acquired by the Library of Congress in 1815.

Flavius Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* Frontispiece from **The Genuine Works ...** (London, 1737) Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress

Views of Jerusalem

At the opening of Book One of "The Jewish War" of this first American edition of Flavius Josephus is an engraving of Jerusalem during the Second Temple. The Temple is located at the center of the lower half of the illustration and the Roman legions are shown encamped outside the walls.

Flavius Josephus *Jerusalem* **The Works of Flavius Josephus** (New York, 1792) Printed book, engraving. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress

The Dead Sea Looking Towards Moab

In 1838-1839, Scottish artist David Roberts (1796-1864) traveled through the Near East, bringing home 300 sketches of monuments and landscapes that he encountered on his journey. His drawings were reproduced in six volumes between 1842-1849.

Shown here is his rendering of "The Dead Sea Looking Towards Moab." In the foreground--carved into the rocky cliff--is the monastery of St. Saba.

David Roberts "The Dead Sea Looking Towards Moab" **The Holy Land** (London, 1842-1849) Lithograph with hand-coloring. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Views of Jerusalem

This map is the lower of two plates depicting Jerusalem. The Temple of Solomon, located at the top of the map, includes illustrations of the High Priest at the altar. The Ark of the Covenant is located in the Holy of Holies (the innermost chamber of the Temple), with God's spirit, the "Shekhinah," emanating from the ark and represented by the Tetragrammaton, the four-letter divine name.

Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg "Jerusalem" **Civitates Orbis Terrarum** (Cologne, 1612). Printed book, hand-colored etching. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

Views of the Holy Land

This hand-colored map of the Holy Land (Terra Sancta) features an enlarged depiction of the Dead Sea. On the lower left of the map is a rendering of the story of Jonah and the whale.

Abraham Ortelius "Terra Sanctia" **Theatrum Orbis Terrarum** (London, 1606) Printed book. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

Views of the Holy Land

Claudius Ptolemy (90-168 C.E.) was the preeminent geographer of the ancient world. Shown here is a hand-colored map of the Holy Land from a 1482 Ptolemaic atlas. The territories of the twelve tribes of Israel are clearly marked throughout.

Claudius Ptolemaeus **Cosmographia** (Ulm, 1486) Printed book, hand-colored woodcut. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

Bird's-Eye View of the Holy Land

This aerial perspective of the Holy Land reflects a nineteenth-century trend in American mapmaking which featured "bird's-eye" views prepared for towns and cities across the nation. Published in New York, the rendering of the Holy Land indicates the intense American interest in this part of the world.

A.J. Marks **Bird's Eye View of the Holy Land** (New York, 1879). Chromolithograph, sectional map in 6 parts. Geography and Maps Division, Library of Congress.

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Psalms Scroll

J. A. Sanders published his findings on the Psalms Scroll first in 1965, as the fourth volume of "Discoveries in the Judaean Desert," the official publication series. This is a later version published in the United States.

J.A. Sanders **The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll** (Itacha, 1967). Printed book. General Collections, Library of Congress.

The First Hebrew Printed Book of the Bible: The Psalms

Hand-written books of the Bible were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. This Psalter is the first book of the Bible printed in Hebrew. This edition of the Psalms includes the commentary of David Kimhi and was printed in 1477, probably in Bologna. The commentary on the Psalms was heavily censored by Church authorities. The owner of the book, however, inserted by hand each word that had been expunged.

Psalms (Bologna, 1477) Printed book. Hebraic Section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress.

The Aleppo Codex

Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, the Aleppo Codex, which dates to the tenth century C.E., was the oldest known Bible codex. This facsimile was published in 1976.

Aleppo Codex (Jerusalem, 1976) Printed book. Hebraic Section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress.

The Complutensian

This is the earliest of the great polyglot editions of the Bible and includes texts in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin. Produced under the patronage of Cardinal Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros (1436-1517), it was believed to have cost 50,000 gold ducats. Psalm 145 is a hymn arranged according to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. It is interesting to note that today's biblical text does not include a verse for the letter "nun," the fourteenth letter of the alphabet. The fragment of the Psalm Scroll displayed here does include a missing verse for this letter.

Psalms [Complutensian] (1514-1517) Printed polyglot Bible. Rare and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress.

The Community Rule

A complete version of the Community Rule was uncovered in Cave 1. It was photographed by J. Trever, an archaeologist at the American Schools of Oriental Research in Jerusalem. This manuscript is one of three that were exhibited at the Library of Congress in 1949. The fragment of the Community Rule on display here is from Cave 4.

John Trever **Scrolls from Qumran Cave I** (Jerusalem, 1972) Printed book. Hebraic Section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress

Torah Scroll

This eighteenth-century Torah scroll was written in North Africa. It is rolled to Leviticus, 23:22-29, which corresponds to the Leviticus Scroll from Cave 4 displayed here (object no. 4). Note the "wandering peh" (a Hebrew letter) which occurs frequently in the displayed column.

Torah Scroll (North Africa, c. 18th century) Parchment. Hebraic Section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress.

Leviticus Scroll

The large paleo-Hebrew fragment of Leviticus on display here was published in 1985 by D.N. Freedman and K.A. Mathews. The authors transliterated the paleo-Hebrew script into modern Hebrew characters.

D.N. Freedman and K.A. Mathews **The Paleo-Hebrew Leviticus Scroll** (11 Qpaleo Lev) (Winnona Lake, Indiana, 1985) Printed book. General Collections, Library of Congress

First Maccabees

Displayed here is the opening page of the First Book of Maccabees from the Walton Polyglot Bible. First Maccabees describes the rule of the early Hasmonean princes who freed Judea from the yoke of the Syrian rulers in 168 B.C.E. It is included in the Roman Catholic scriptural canon, but was removed from the Protestant canon after the Reformation and relegated to the Apocrypha.

First Maccabees [Walton's Polyglot] (London, 1655-1657) Printed book. Hebraic Section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress

Samaritan Bible

The modern descendant of the paleo-Hebrew script of the Leviticus Scroll (object no. 4) is the Samaritan script. This biblical manuscript, written in the Samaritan script, is opened to Leviticus 23:22-29. Note the similarity between the paleo-Hebrew script of the Leviticus Scroll written in the late second century B.C.E. and this Samaritan manuscript from the late nineteenth century.

Leviticus [Samaritan Pentateuch] (1880) Manuscript book. Hebraic Section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress

Dead Sea Scrolls from the Third Century C.E.

In his ecclesiastical history, Eusebius relates the story of Origen, who consulted scrolls found in caves near Jericho for his "Hexapla," a comprehensive redaction of the Hebrew Scriptures completed in the first half of the third century C.E.

In the . . . edition of the Psalms . . . [Origen reported] again how he found one of [the translations] at Jericho in a tunnel in the time of Antoninus the son of Severus.

Eusebius **Auncient ecclesiasticall histories ...** (London, 1585) Printed book. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress

The First "Dead Sea Scroll": The Damascus Document

Scholar and educator Solomon Schechter's discovery in 1896 of a sectarian document--which turned out to be a medieval version of the Damascus Document--among the Cairo Genizah trove was first published in 1910 as "Fragments of a Zadokite Work." Displayed here is a reprint of this first Dead Sea Scroll publication, published 37 years before the discovery.

Solomon Schechter **Documents of Jewish Sectaries** (New York, 1970) Printed book. General Collections, Library of Congress.

Ecclesiasticus: The Wisdom of Ben Sirah

Included among the Apocrypha, Ecclesiasticus extols wisdom and ethical conduct. A Hebrew version of the book, which was known only in Greek after the tenth century, was discovered by Solomon Schechter in the Cairo Genizah in the late nineteenth century. Fragments of the original Hebrew version were discovered in Cave 2.

Displayed here are Greek (from the Septuagint), and Latin versions of Ecclesiasticus from the second of the great polyglot Bibles, the "Antwerp" or "Plantin" Polyglot.

Ecclesiasticus [Plantin's Polyglot] (Antwerp, 1569-1572) Printed book, volume 3. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress.

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Library of Congress Materials Relating the Dead Sea Scrolls to Today

The Publication Controversy

In December 1991, a two-volume edition of scroll photographs was published. This facsimile edition was issued by the Biblical Archaeology Society, an American group headed by Hershel Shanks. It is opened here to a transcription and reconstruction of Some Torah Precepts. The publication of this reconstruction and transcription is currently the subject of lawsuit in Israel and the United States between the reconstructor of the text, Dr. Qimron and the publisher, Hershel Shanks. In March 1993, an Israeli court found in favor of Mr. Qimron.

Robert Eisenman and James Robinson, eds. **A Facsimile Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls 1 (Washington, 1991)** Printed book. Hebraic Section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress

The Publication Controversy

Reacting to the official team's slow pace of scholarly publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls, two Hebrew Union College scholars developed a computer program that reconstructed Cave 4 texts from a decades-old concordance. Soon thereafter, the Huntington Library announced in the fall of 1991 that it would make available to scholars photographic copies of the scrolls that had been deposited in its vaults. Displayed here is the first part of the reconstruction.

Ben Zion Wacholder and Martin Abegg. **A Preliminary Edition of the Unpublished Dead Sea Scrolls** (Washington, 1991) Printed book. Hebraic Section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress.

The Shapira Affair

In 1883, M.H. Shapira, a Jerusalem antiquities dealer, offered to sell fragments of an ancient manuscript of the biblical book of Deuteronomy. On examination by leading scholars of the day, the manuscripts were found to be forgeries. Disgraced and humiliated, Shapira committed suicide in 1884.

In view of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, some contemporary scholars have suggested that the Shapira fragments bear at least a surface resemblance to the Qumran manuscripts and have advocated re-examining their authenticity. Unfortunately, the Shapira fragments were sold at auction in 1885 and have since disappeared.

M.H. Shapira's daughter Myriam penned a thinly veiled fictionalized account of the scandal from the point of view of a devoted daughter. Serialized in France under the title of "La petite fille de Jerusalem," it was then translated into English as "The Little Daughter of Jerusalem" and published in New York and London.

In "The Shapira Affair," John Allegro, a leading scholar of the Dead Sea Scrolls and a member of the original scroll team, examined reproductions of the Shapira fragments in light of their resemblance to the Qumran documents.

John Marco Allegro **The Shapira Affair** (Garden City, New York 1965) Printed book. General Collections, Library of Congress.

Myriam Harry *La petite fille de Jerusalem La Petite Illustration* ([Paris] 1914) Unbound serial. General Collections, Library of Congress.

Myriam Harry **The Little Daughter of Jerusalem** (New York, 1919) Printed book. General Collections, Library of Congress.

The Dead Sea Scrolls: "A Hoax"

In the early 1950s, Professor Solomon Zeitlin of Dropsie University in Philadelphia argued strenuously--on philological grounds--that the antiquity of the Dead Sea Scrolls should be rejected. Subsequent carbon-14 tests on their linen wrappers firmly dated the finds to the late Second Temple Period and laid to rest arguments concerning the antiquity of the scrolls.

Solomon Zeitlin **The Dead Sea Scrolls and Modern Scholarship** (Philadelphia, 1956) Printed book. Hebraic Section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress.

The Library of Congress and the Dead Sea Scrolls

The Dead Sea Scrolls were first displayed in the United States at the Library of Congress in October 1949. The scrolls belonged to Mar Athanasius Yeshua Samuel, the head of the Syrian Jacobite Monastery of St. Mark in Jerusalem. In 1954, he placed an advertisement in "The Wall Street Journal" offering "The Four Dead Sea Scrolls" for sale. Purchased for the State of Israel by archaeologist Yigael Yadin, these scrolls are housed today in The Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem.

LC and the Dead Sea Scrolls Newsreel 16mm print. Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress.
Mar Athanasius Yeshua Samuel's account of his purchase of the scrolls is related in his "Treasure of Qumran." The volume is opened to a photograph of the Library of Congress exhibition in October 1949, showing Mar Samuel with then Librarian of Congress Luther Evans.

Athanasius Yeshua Samuel **Treasure of Qumran** (London 1968) Printed book. General Collections, Library of Congress.

Alvin Kremer, Keeper of the Collection at the Library of Congress, prepared the two memoranda shown here which document the arrival and departure of the scrolls in 1949, and describe the precautions taken to safeguard the artifacts.

Alvin W. Kremer to John G. L. Andreassen *Report on travel to obtain the Hebrew Scrolls* (October 24, 1949) Memorandum. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

Alvin W. Kremer to John G. L. Andreassen *Travel to deliver the Hebrew Scrolls to the Walters Gallery* (November 7, 1949) Memorandum. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

The Dead Sea Scrolls in Translation

The Dead Sea Scrolls have been translated into scores of languages. Displayed here are books that include scroll translations in Yiddish, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Arabic, Japanese, and Indonesian.

S. Glassman **Megiles fun Yam ha-Maylekh** (New York, 1965) Printed book. Hebraic Section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress.

Iosif Davidovich Amusin **Rukopisi Mertvoga Morya** (Moscow, 1960) Printed book. General Collections, Library of Congress.

Eugen Verber **Kumranski Rukopisi** (Beograd, 1982) Printed book. General Collections, Library of Congress.

M. al-Abidi **Makhtutat al-Bahr al Mayyit** (Amman, 1967) Printed book. Near East Section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress.

Shikai bunsho (Tokyo, 1963) Printed book. Japanese Section, Asian Division, Library of Congress.

Saleh A. Nahdi **Nafiri maut dari lembah Qamran** (Djakarta, 1964) Printed book. Southern Asian Section, Asian Division, Library of Congress.

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The Qumran Library

The scrolls and scroll fragments recovered in the Qumran environs represent a voluminous body of Jewish documents, a veritable "library", dating from the third century B.C.E. to 68 C.E. Unquestionably, the "library," which is the greatest manuscript find of the twentieth century, demonstrates the rich literary activity of Second Temple Period Jewry and sheds insight into centuries pivotal to both Judaism and Christianity. The library contains some books or works in a large number of copies, yet others are represented only fragmentarily by mere scraps of parchment. There are tens of thousands

of scroll fragments. The number of different compositions represented is almost one thousand, and they are written in three different languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

There is less agreement on the specifics of what the Qumran library contains. According to many scholars, the chief categories represented among the Dead Sea Scrolls are:

Biblical

Those works contained in the Hebrew Bible. All of the books of the Bible are represented in the Dead Sea Scroll collection except Esther.

Apocryphal or pseudepigraphical

Those works which are omitted from various canons of the Bible and included in others.

Sectarian

Those scrolls related to a pietistic commune and include ordinances, biblical commentaries, apocalyptic visions, and liturgical works.

While the group producing the sectarian scrolls is believed by many to be the Essenes, there are other scholars who state that there is too little evidence to support the view that one sect produced all of the sectarian material. Also, there are scholars who believe there is a fourth category of scroll materials which is neither biblical, apocryphal, nor "sectarian." In their view, such scrolls, which may include "Songs of the the Sabbath Sacrifice", should be designated simply as contemporary Jewish writing.

Scroll Fragments from the Qumran Library

- [Psalms](#) *Tehillim*
- [Phylactery](#) *Tefillin*
- [The Community Rule](#) *Serkeh ha-Yahad*
- [Calendrical Document](#) *Mishmarot*
- [Some Torah Precepts](#) *Miqsat Ma`ase ha-Torah*
- [Enoch](#) *Hanokh*
- [Hosea Commentary](#) *Pesher Hoshe`a*
- [Prayer for King Jonathan](#) *Tefillah li-Shlomo shel Yonatan ha-Melekh*
- [Leviticus](#) *Va-Yikrah*
- [Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice](#) *Shirot `Olat ha-Shabbat*
- [Damascus Document](#) *Brit Damesek*
- [The War Rule](#) *Serekh ha-Milhamah*

[Library of Congress materials relating to the Qumran Library](#)

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