

ZARAHEMLA RECORD

Issue 66
March/April 1993



New Findings from Scrolls

Scholars Gathered to Share Research

by Angela M. Crowell

Angela Crowell attended an international Dead Sea Scroll Conference in New York City, December 14-17, 1992. It was sponsored by the New York Academy of Sciences and the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. She also attended meetings at the Society of Biblical Literature and the National Association of Professors of Hebrew in San Francisco, November 14-21, where scroll research was presented. We have prepared the following interview to share Angela's findings with our readers.

First of all, what are the Dead Sea Scrolls?

In 1947, a Bedouin boy threw a stone into a cave and was surprised to hear the sound of clay pots shattering. In those clay pots were ancient scrolls. He had made the first of the history-making discoveries of what are now known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, ancient Jewish writings and Biblical manuscripts. In a period from 1947 to 1956, scrolls were found in a total of eleven caves in the Judean Desert located on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea near the ruins of an ancient settlement called Khirbet Qumran (i.e., ruins of Qumran).

Scholars have divided the scrolls into four categories: Biblical, sectarian, Jewish writings and non-literary works. More than 190 scrolls in the Biblical category have been discov-

ered. The only complete Biblical book found is the text of Isaiah (66 chapters). Besides the complete book of Isaiah, between 20 and 24 partial copies of Isaiah have also been found. The remaining scrolls are partial books from every book of the Bible except Esther. Commentaries on Biblical books were also found.

A second category is the non-Biblical or sectarian books. Most of these have been published. Some important fragments are being prepared for publication now.

A third category is Jewish writings from the Second Temple period (332 B.C. - A.D. 70). These were written outside of Qumran. Some books of this period were known earlier and are included in the Septuagint (LXX) which is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. These books are referred to as the Apocrypha. Other Jewish writings not included in the Septuagint or Apocrypha have been referred to as the Pseudepigrapha.

The fourth, smaller category is made up of fragments of 30 non-literary works which consist of lists and contracts.

What languages are the Scrolls written in?

The majority of the scrolls are written in Hebrew. Other scrolls are written in Aramaic and a few in Greek and Nabatean.

The Hebrew scrolls are written in

two different Hebrew scripts. One script, known as the "square" script or Assyrian script, adopted while the Jews were in Babylon during their exile, is the one in use today. The other script, an earlier one known as the paleo-Hebrew script, was used prior to the Babylonian Exile (before 600 B.C.).

Also, the language of the two previously unknown scripts appears to be Hebrew. One has been deciphered but not yet published.

What recent developments should we be aware of?

Much controversy has arisen in the last few years because a large group of manuscripts, almost 600 from Caves 4 and 11, have not been published. Control of these manuscripts lies with a small official editorial team who have declined to publish them. Other prominent scholars have not had access to these particular manuscripts since their discovery. Hershak Shanks, editor of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, and others have publicized this fact and have sought to gain release of these manuscripts so that all scholars could have access to them.

Worldwide interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls escalated in 1991 with the publication of a reconstructed text from unpublished, non-Biblical scrolls from Cave 4. Ben-Zion Wacholder, professor of Talmudic studies at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and his research associ-

ate, Martin Abegg, reconstructed their texts from the unpublished scrolls with the aid of a computer and a concordance which was compiled in the late 1950s but remained unpublished until 1988. The fact that the concordance existed proves that transcriptions of the texts could have been made available thirty years earlier. The television program NOVA featured the story of the text reconstruction in "Secrets of the Dead Sea Scrolls" which aired in October 1991.

Following Wacholder and Abegg's publication, the Huntington Library in San Marino, California released their photographs of the unpublished Dead Sea Scrolls to all scholars.

The Biblical Archaeology Society published a two-volume work, *A Facsimile Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, which contains 1,787 photographs of unpublished Dead Sea Scroll fragments. Now all scholars can have access to photographs of the unpublished scrolls, 40 years after their discovery.

For additional books, magazines and videos on the Dead Sea Scrolls, see "Reader Resources" at the end of the article.

What newly published texts should we be aware of?

Michael Wise, assistant professor of Aramaic at the University of Chicago, has published a translation of fragment 4Q521 (Wise & Tabor 1992:62). This text contains striking parallels to both Matthew 11:4-5 and Luke 7:22-23. Wise's translation reads:

The heavens and the earth will obey His Messiah . . .
He will heal the sick, resurrect the dead and to the poor
announce glad tidings . . .

Both Matthew and Luke record that while in prison John the Baptist heard about the works of Christ and sent two disciples to ask Jesus if he was the Messiah. Jesus responded:

Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Matthew 11:4-5 KJV

The Dead Sea Scroll fragment (4Q521) and the Matthew and Luke texts use identical language in describing the work of the Messiah. Both Michael Wise and James Tabor claim that this Dead Sea Scroll text "contains one of the closest, most direct linguistic parallels to a New Testament text that has ever been discovered in the scrolls" (Wise and Tabor 1992:65). It also presents "the first evidence outside the New Testament" (Wise and Tabor 1992:65) that the Messiah is the one who will raise the dead. This newly released text shows that the writers of the scrolls and early Christians shared a similar messianic understanding.

A second significant text Michael Wise translated is related to the book of Daniel and is called the "Son of God" text (4Q256). It reads:

He shall be called the son of God; they will call him son of the Most High. . . . His kingdom will be an Eternal Kingdom and he will be Righteous in all his Ways. . . . He [will judge] the earth in Righteousness . . . and every nation will bow down to him. . . . His rule will be an Eternal rule . . .
Eisenman and Wise 1992:70-71

This is very similar to the first chapter of Luke where the angel Gabriel speaks to Mary about a son she will bear and name Jesus.

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.
Luke 1:32-33 NIV

Here again the same terminology is used in Luke and in the Dead Sea Scroll fragment.

Another remarkable fragment is the "New Jerusalem" text. Michael Wise related in a television interview that it speaks of an angel who leads a seer (someone like Ezekiel) "around the city of Jerusalem that exists in the heavens that's going to someday be on the earth" (Levitt 1992).

This text has been found on scrolls from five different caves. It is similar to Ezekiel's vision of the measuring of a new temple found in Ezekiel 40-48 and the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21-22. Someone "is led around the city that will stand on the site of Zion" (Eisenman and Wise 1992:39). A companion measured different structures with a cane seven cubits long (c. 10.5 feet). The walled city he measured was a rectangle 13x18 miles that had twelve gates for the twelve tribes of Israel. It contained almost 1,500 towers, each over 100 feet high. Besides giving a reference to Babylon, the Dead Sea Scroll text contains a greater number of measurements and other items of information than are given in the Bible.

Since its release on November 8, 1991, the "Pierced Messiah" text (4Q285) has received the most publicity from the media. Scholarly debate on its translation continues on the pages of *Biblical Archaeology Review*. Michael Wise translated fragment 7 to read (quoting from Isaiah 11:1):

- (2) A staff shall rise from the root of Jesse, [and a Planting from his roots will bear fruit] . . .
- (3) the Branch of David. They will enter into Judgement with . . .
- (4) and they will put to death the Leader of the Community, the Bran[ch of David] (this might also be read, depending on the context, 'and the Leader of the Community the Bran[ch of David'], will put him to death) . . .

- (5) and with woundings, and the (high) priest will command . . .
- (6) [the sl]ai[n of the Kitt[im] . . . Eisenman and Wise 1992:29

Wise feels “this text is bringing together quotations from various portions of the book of Isaiah, applying them to a [messianic] figure” (Levitt, transcript of video tape four, pp. 16-17).

This preliminary translation is the first mention of a Qumran belief in a slain messiah. The debate is over the translation in line 4 above. Is the messianic figure put to death or does he put “him” to death? According to Eisenman and Wise, the “piercings” or woundings in line 5 might allude to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53:5: “But he was wounded for our transgressions . . . and with his stripes we are healed.”

While James O. Tabor, associate professor of Christian origins and ancient Judaism at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, agrees with Wise, Geza Vermes, professor emeritus of Jewish Studies at Oxford University and director of the Forum for Qumran Research, does not.

Why are the Dead Sea Scrolls important to us?

The Biblical manuscripts which were found are the oldest Old Testament texts we have today. They date back as early as 200 B.C., which is 1,000 years earlier than the oldest texts previously available. These scrolls are of great importance in the study of the Bible.

How are the Dead Sea Scrolls increasing our understanding of the New Testament?

There are many examples of how the scrolls are increasing our understanding of the New Testament, but two recent illustrations are cited here.

A recently published fragment (4Q525) contains beatitudes similar in structure to the ones found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-12 and Luke 6:20-23). Benedict Viviano, professor of New Testament at the École Biblique in Jerusalem, points out that the last beatitude in each case in Luke, Matthew and the Dead Sea Scroll fragment is much longer than those preceding it (Viviano 1992:66).

Luke contains three short beatitudes and ends with a fourth longer one. Matthew contains eight short beatitudes and ends with a ninth longer one. While we are not sure how many original beatitudes the Dead Sea Scroll fragment contains, it ends with four short beatitudes and a fifth longer one.

James Charlesworth, a world-renowned scholar and professor of New Testament Language and Literature at Princeton Theological Seminary, provides another example of how the Dead Sea Scrolls are increasing our understanding of the New Testament. He claims “the Dead Sea Scrolls have revolutionized our understanding of the Gospel of John” (Charlesworth 1993:19). Because of the scrolls, the book of John is now considered a first-

century composition. Before the Dead Sea Scroll discovery some scholars thought that due to the imagery of dualism found in the Gospel of John, but not in other Jewish works, the book must be a second-century work influenced by Greek thought. However, this same imagery of dualism has been found in many of the scrolls. Because of this discovery, some scholars now conclude that John may contain some of the oldest sections of the Gospels and that it may be the most Jewish of the Gospels.

How do the Scrolls relate to the Book of Mormon?

First Nephi 3:190-197 [13:38-41] describes a possible connection to the Dead Sea Scrolls. Nephi saw in vision that the Bible will be given to the remnant of Nephi’s brothers’ descendants. After the Bible is given to them, “other books” will go to these descendants to verify to them, to the Gentiles and to the scattered Jews that the Bible is true. It’s quite apparent that the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as the Book of Mormon, are some of these “other books.”

According to Nephi’s vision the “other books” will establish the truth of the prophets (Old Testament) and twelve apostles of the Lamb (New Testament) and will reveal the plain and precious things that have been removed. Also the “other books” will reveal to all people that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world and that all mankind must come to him for salvation.

If this interpretation is correct we can be very excited about what has been and is about to be revealed through the scrolls. These “other books” are to establish the truthfulness of the New Testament and all scripture that reveals Jesus as the Son of God.

Scholars have already brought forth many parallels tying the scrolls and the New Testament together. We have much to look forward to as more research is done on these newly published 580 Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts from Cave 4. ZRF

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READER RESOURCES

Books

The Dead Sea Scrolls in English by Geza Vermes \$10
A collection of non-Biblical Qumran scrolls; Penguin
Books paperback

The Dead Sea Scriptures by Theodor Gaster \$12
Doubleday paperback

The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered by Robert Eisenman and Michael Wise, hardback. \$24.95
Hebrew and Aramaic texts and English translation of documents from Cave 4. Translations by Wise; commentary by Eisenman. Reviewed in *Biblical Archaeology Review* January/February 1993.

Videos

"Secrets of the Scrolls" by Zola Levitt \$72
A set of seven videos produced in 1991-1992. Available from Zola Levitt Ministries, Box 12268, Dallas, TX 75225. Script of fourth video available for \$9.

"The Enigma of the Dead Sea Scrolls" \$32.85
A 60-minute video which deals with the history of the scrolls. Available from Biblical Productions U.S.A., PO Box 1256, Longmont, CO 80502.

"Secrets of the Dead Sea Scrolls" \$156.45
NOVA television production, first aired in October, 1991. Available from Films for the Humanities, PO Box 2053, Princeton, NY 08543, item number 3000.

Magazines


Biblical Archaeology Review 6 issues for \$14.97
PO Box 7026, Red Oak, IA 51591-2026

The Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls

by Raymond C. Treat

We need to be aware of the potential of the Dead Sea Scrolls in relation to the Book of Mormon. All Book of Mormon believers should know by now that the Lord is moving rapidly to "grow" (2 Nephi 2:20 [3:12]) the Bible and the Book of Mormon together. The main way in which the Lord is doing this is by bringing forth much new information about the ancient Hebrew nature of the Book of Mormon and the Bible as well. This will show that both books have the same origin in the ancient Hebrew language and customs. We can expect that the Dead Sea Scrolls, especially now that they are available for all qualified scholars to study, will be part of this growing together.

Both the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Book of Mormon contain ancient Biblical manuscripts. For example, the Dead Sea Scroll known as the Isaiah Scroll is a complete copy of the Book of Isaiah and is the earliest manuscript of Isaiah known to non-Restoration scholars. The Book of Mormon contains about one-third of the Book of Isaiah. This portion of the Book of Mormon is in reality an Isaiah manuscript dating back to at least 600 B.C., which incidentally is at least 400 years earlier than the Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll. It is reasonable to expect that the closer we get to original sources, the closer the Bible and the Book of Mormon will grow together.

The Lord is definitely moving to validate the authenticity of the Book of Mormon in several ways. We believe that the current release of the scrolls is part of this move. 

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