

# Scrolls go public with sacred text from past

By Cathryn Donohoe  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

**M**ichael Grunberger, the head of Hebraic studies at the Library of Congress, brings his eyes and his finger down as close as he dares to the neat Hebrew lettering on a tattered brown page of the scroll of psalms.

It is more than 2,000 years old, this ragged bit of half-tanned animal skin, spread out now to a length of perhaps 30 inches, enveloped in protective plexiglass and polypropylene. It is one of the scrolls found in the 1940s and '50s in caves beside the Dead Sea.

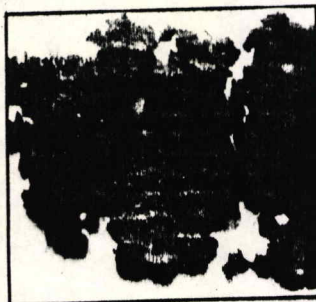
And perhaps because of its comparatively large size, it is the first display a visitor encounters on stepping into the Library of Congress' major exhibit, opening today, of 12 fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls — the most important manuscript discovery of the 20th century.

Mr. Grunberger reads. "This is Psalm 145 here, written in such a beautiful hand," he says, letting his voice betray elation — of the most scholarly sort, of course.

"Look at the Tetragrammaton, in paleo-Hebrew, so different in shape," he says.

And sure enough, there on the page in writing larger than the rest, looking indeed like a set of tiny tracks from some paleo-chicken (forgive us, O Lord), are the four He-

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A fragment from the MMT document at the Library of Congress

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# Life

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## SCROLL

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brew letters that make bold to suggest the unutterable name of God. They are written in English as YHWH, from which proceed Yahweh and the Christian Jehovah.

"The name was so holy it couldn't be pronounced. The word 'Lord' is only a substitute for it," Mr. Grunberger says, and one notices right away that he doesn't pronounce the name.

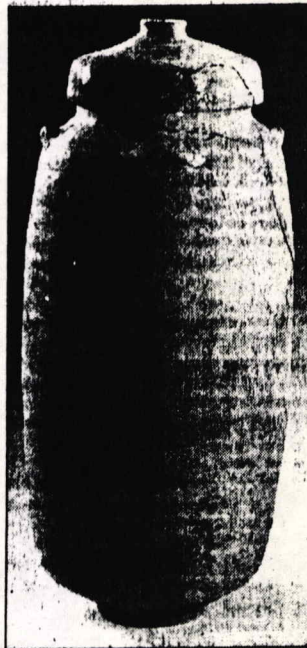
Never mind that in 1956, when Bedouin herdsmen found this scroll in the 11th and last cave to be discovered, it was shrouded in bat dung.

Never mind that what's here in this display case is not the entire psalm scroll, or that no one unfamiliar with Hebrew can read what it says.

What is important is that here at the library — in a gallery whose walls are sheathed in ocher rock-work made of fiberglass — are 12 flakes of history, dating from perhaps the third century B.C. to 70 A.D., that are thought to be older than any other surviving biblical manuscripts by almost a thousand years.

What's important is that accompanying them are 88 objects — pottery bowls and inkwells, boxwood hair combs, leather thongs, coins, scraps of basketry — excavated at Qumran, the site by the Dead Sea shore whose inhabitants, many think, produced the scrolls.

What's most important, from the viewpoint of scholars and of those who savor controversy, is that these selections from the original scrolls are here open to public view for the first time in a generation. They've been held tightly at the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem since the 1950s by a handful of French, British and American experts who refused access to all but their close colleagues, thereby provoking one



One of the jars that held fragments of the scrolls, excavated at Qumran

of the great academic resentments of all time.

In fact the Israeli Antiquities Authority, which has had custody of the Rockefeller scrolls since the 1967 war, approached the Library of Congress (and the New York Public Library, where the exhibit will open in October) to request this showing — to defuse, according to Mr. Grunberger, the mounting furor over the scrolls' inaccessibility.

You won't learn that from Gen. Amir Drori, who took over as the authority's director in 1988 and is generally credited with throwing open the scrolls: He has expanded the circle of privileged scholars to 60 and speeded up their publication

**WHAT:** "Scrolls from the Dead Sea," a major exhibition of 12 fragmentary scrolls and 88 archaeological artifacts  
**WHERE:** Madison Gallery, first floor, The Madison Building of the Library of Congress, 101 Independence Avenue SE  
**WHEN:** Through Aug. 1; open 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday

■ They are thought to be older than any surviving biblical manuscripts.

timetable, and is now publishing a microfiche edition of the scrolls in the authority's custody.

No, Gen. Drori will say, simply that the scrolls are here because the Library of Congress is "a very respectable place" to show them.

Yet the collection here, most pointedly, includes the highly controversial MMT document (for the Hebrew words meaning "Some Torah Precepts"). This 121-line text, an outline of the precepts that governed the life of the Qumran settlement, went unpublished for almost 40 years until, in the mid-1980s, frustrated scholars got hold of a copy and circulated it widely.

Here, too, is the "War Rule," a scrap that has generated debate because of its content — which, depending on whether one translates its reference to a messiah as either "pierced" or "piercing," could prefigure either a sacrificial Christ or a war hero.

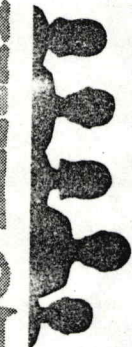
In the end, of course, what probably matters most to exhibit visitors is the fact that these ancient documents are not likely to come this way again sooh. That's reason enough for them to be seen.

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PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

# WESTERN RECORDER

## Value of Dead Sea Scrolls becoming clearer

By Laurie Lattimore  
*Missouri Word & Way*

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)—A two-hour Hollywood blockbuster—with fictional archaeologist Indiana Jones braving snakes, tarantulas and bad guys to explore the Dead Sea Scrolls legacy—wouldn't do justice to the significance of the centuries-old Jewish writings, the oldest known version of the Old Testament.

To the academic world, their 1947 discovery just 10 miles east of Jerusalem in the Qumran caves has proved to be a gold mine. But many

Christian laypeople have little comprehension of the scrolls' significance.

Unlike the grocery store tabloids proclaim, the scrolls say nothing of Elvis' return. Mainstream scholars also discount fringe theories that Jesus Christ is mentioned in the scrolls—particularly a translation from Australian Barbara Thering which says Jesus did not die on the cross but was drugged and later revived by the disciples so he could marry Mary Magdalene.

What the scrolls reveal directly is that the Old Testament used today is extremely close to the Hebrew and

Aramaic texts of the Dead Sea manuscripts—judged to have been written between 200 B.C. and 50 A.D. The sheer consistency of the Old Testament offers Christians validity and confirmation, scholars contend.

"It's nothing shy of miraculous," said Larry McKinney, professor of archaeology and biblical backgrounds at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. McKinney's master's thesis dealt with a Habakkuk scroll, too narrow the time period in which it was written.

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## Experts say Dead Sea Scrolls affirm Bible's accuracy

*Continued from page 1*

The first of the hidden scrolls was found in the Judean desert by Bedouin shepherds, unleashing the archaeological discovery of the century. Scrolls were uncovered between 1947 and 1956 in 11 rocky Qumran caves. Located about 10 miles outside of Jerusalem, the caves are adjacent to the ruins of a settlement of the ascetic Jewish sect known as the Essenes—believed to be the authors of the scrolls.

About 800 partial and complete texts make up the Dead Sea Scrolls—the first native documents to come out of the Holy Land from the centuries before Christ. About 127 of the documents are biblical texts—representing the entire Old Testament. Fragments have been found from every book except Esther, the only book of the modern Bible that does not mention God. Cave 4, excavated in 1952, represented the largest single trove of biblical texts—thousands of fragments from most of the Hebrew Bible. Many of the fragments from Cave 4 were among the scrolls kept secret by appointed scholars until 1991.

The Jordan government initially took control of all but the first few scrolls, which were translated and published by independent Israeli scholars and displayed at the Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem starting in 1965.

Roland De Vaux was assigned by Jordan authorities to assemble an international team of seven scholars to publish the rest of the scrolls. Scrolls were published regularly for nearly a decade, but the process slowed as scholars became overwhelmed with the amount of material to work through.

After the Six-Day War in 1967, when Israel claimed territory from Jordan, Syria and the United Arab Republic, the scrolls came under the Israeli Antiquities Authority, and disclosure was broadened. The team of scholars chosen to translate and publish the scrolls was expanded to about 40.

In 1989, photocopies of the scrolls in Jordan and Israel were placed in American libraries as safehouses because of war in the Middle East. They went to Huntington Library in San

Marino, Calif., and Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. Two years later, the Huntington Library decided to open the vaults and make the complete set available for scholarly review. Soon after, Israel loosened its restrictions on who may study the scrolls.

As access to the scrolls has broadened, so have the interpretations, which range from the absurd to the debatable.

But the bottom line, according to theologians interviewed for this article, is that the modern Bible is remarkably consistent with the Qumran scrolls.

Today's Old Testament is based on 10th century A.D. texts copied by the Masoretes, a group of Jewish scribes known for meticulous accuracy. In the 66 chapters of Isaiah, only 13 minor variations have been found between the scrolls and the Masoretic text.

Edward Cook, research scholar at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, has been translating some of the scroll fragments since 1991. Cook said the fact the Bible is so strikingly accurate is the major news of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovery.

"When the oldest manuscripts of the Old Testament come from 1000 A.D.—a long time after the prophets had lived—there is fear and suspicion that (the texts) might have been changed," Cook said. "The Dead Sea Scrolls show that it hasn't changed, confirming that the Old Testament was not corrupted."

In a few cases, recent translations of the Bible have included newly discovered texts from the Qumran scrolls. The 1990 New Revised Standard Version adds an entire paragraph in 1 Samuel that is in the scrolls but not in the Masoretic text: Chapter 11 tells of King Saul leading his people against the Ammonites. The Qumran text describes the oppression of the Israelites by the Ammonite king Nabash.

McKinney noted one instance in which the scrolls omit a text found in the modern Bible. There is no third chapter in Habakkuk, which is a prayer by the prophet in today's trans-

lations. McKinney said scholars question whether scribes added the prayer later.

The scrolls—both biblical texts and other documents—give insight into early Judaism and the beginnings of the Christian church after Jesus' crucifixion. Some of the documents are considered "apocrypha," coming from the inter-testamental period in which the Essenes wrote their views of a war at the end of time and of the coming of a Messiah. Jesus' name is not written, but the Essenes anticipated their messiah would be a prophet like Moses, a king like David and a priest like Aaron.

Fred Young, retired Old Testament professor at Central Baptist Seminary in Kansas City, Kan., said he concurs with many scholars who believe the Essenes were influential to the writers of the Gospels.

For example, a passage from a scroll in Cave 4 apparently refers to the Messiah's coming by saying he will "heal the wounded, resurrect the dead (and) preach glad tidings to the poor."

This closely resembles Luke 7:20-23, in which Jesus instructs the followers of John the Baptist to tell of the healings they witnessed.

Another fragment from the Qumran scrolls published in the Biblical Archaeology Review reads, "... and by his name shall he be hailed as the Son of God, and they shall call him Son of the Most High." This Aramaic passage is almost identical to the first chapter of Luke, when the angel Gabriel announces to Mary the birth of Jesus.

Hulitt Gloer, professor of New Testament at Midwestern Seminary, said the scrolls "give us a backdrop to the early church and the development of Christianity."

The Essene tradition is considered to be the tradition of Jesus, he explained.

"Understanding Judaism in the first century gives us more of the background from which Jesus came and taught, and insights into how the people thought about God and the kingdom of God."

## Today's world largely unchristian

North Americans and Christians do not constitute a majority in the world population today, according to the World Development Forum.

The organization reports that if a global village were formed representing the demographics of the world population, it would include 564 Asians, 210 Europeans, 86 Africans, 80 South Americans and 60 North Americans. From another view, this global village would include 300 Christians (of which only 84 would be Protestants), 175 Muslims, 128 Hindus, 55 Buddhists, 47 Animists, 210 without any religious affiliation and 85 from miscellaneous religious groups.

Also, within this group, 60 people would control half the total income, 500 would be hungry, 600 would live in shantytowns and 700 would be illiterate.

Such diversity also reflects a growing trend in the United States. Some studies estimate that by 2010 this nation will become "post-majority"—no cultural group will be able to achieve majority status. And the largest "ethnic minority" will be Hispanics, who will have eclipsed African-Americans.



# The message of the Dead Sea scrolls

By J. Bradley Keena

This weekend marks the 50th anniversary of the announcement of the discovery of perhaps the most important Biblical archaeological find of the century, the Dead Sea Scrolls. The discovery of these ancient manuscripts in Palestine put factual marrow into the historical event that Christians have for years commemorated on Easter.

By 1948, the Biblical account of the death and resurrection of Christ had suffered years of intense scientific and theological attack. Christian scholars could, of course, point to sound New Testament accounts of the Passion of Jesus. But what about the books of the Old Testament, said to have foretold Christ's death and resurrection? The problem, according to Biblical scholar Sir Frederick Kenyon, writing in 1947, is that "we can only arrive at an idea of it by a study of the earliest translations made from it" — namely, copies of the Old Testament produced in the ninth century after Christ.

For example, since the time of Christ, the book of Isaiah has been

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crucial to the historicity of the events surrounding His death and resurrection. Isaiah 53, purportedly written hundreds of years before Jesus' birth, forecasts:

*He was pierced through for our transgressions,*

*He was crushed for our iniquities;*

*The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,*

*And by His stripes we are healed.*

True to the Isaiah prophecy, the New Testament records that a soldier pierced the side of Christ with a spear after Jesus had been beaten, mocked and whipped to such a degree that stripes of blood covered his back. The Gospels also record that, although innocent, Jesus was crucified along with two thieves; that a wealthy man, Joseph of Arimathea, arranged a noble burial for Jesus on the day we commemorate on Good Friday. Isaiah records this too:

*His grave was assigned with wicked men,*

*Yet he was with a rich man in His death,*

*Because He had done no violence,*

*Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.*

Unfortunately, before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, even our best copies of Isaiah dated hundreds of years after Christ, leaving

Christians the object of scientific ridicule for their faith. The discovery of the Scrolls forever changed that. For centuries, the Rabbis entrusted with the care of copies of the Holy Scripture had treated these works with an almost superstitious veneration. When copies of Holy Scripture became too old and worn to be of any further use for ordinary purposes, the rabbis of old would reverently inter the

scrolls of the law and the prophets. How providential that such was also the case with the collection of ancient manuscripts discovered in caves of the Qumran region, northwest of the Dead Sea. Described by sober scholars with adjectives like "phenomenal" and "sensational," the discovery produced a complete parchment scroll of the book of Isaiah in Hebrew. Scholars have assigned it to the second century before Christ. A comparison with later copies of Isaiah, dated more than a millennium later, produced insignificant variance.



It seems God has a sense of humor. Overnight, all who doubted Isaiah's remarkable prophecies themselves became a laughing stock. Also found in Isaiah is the very reason for the Easter celebration, Christ's atoning sacrifice, the formula for eternal life:

*He poured out Himself to death,*

*And was numbered with the transgressors;*

*Yet He Himself bore the sin of many.*

*And interceded for the transgressors.*



# A guy called Jesus of Nazareth



**Richard Grenier**

If anyone has any doubts that we live in a secular age, he need only catch a replay of the grand four hour documentary that the Public Broadcasting System has just presented on "From Jesus to Christ." The identity of Jesus as Our Savior, despite the title, is rather shadowy in this account and during the four long hours, the Resurrection is mentioned only incidentally in one brief sentence. All the words s a n c t i f i e d through the centuries such as, "And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord," have been cut as

apparently insignificant.

But even being ignored is favored treatment compared to the brushing off PBS the Third Day He rose again from the dead" — which in PBS's version just doesn't seem to have even happened. In fact, in PBS's story of the secular Jesus (rarely called "Christ," Greek for "Messiah"), nothing otherworldly seems to happens at all.

There is no forgiveness of sins, no promise of eternal life—and this for audiences in America, an overwhelmingly Christian country, and a country all set for Easter, whose specific liturgical goal is to celebrate Christ's ascent into Heaven. After four sometimes tedious hours watching the varied and conflicting accounts of the life of PBS's secular Jesus, one might well wonder how it

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was that this tiny Jewish Christian sect — with no divine claims — swallowed all in its path, including the Roman Empire, which must have required a big swallow.

"The Quest for the Historical Jesus," an early 20th century work by Albert Schweitzer, was one of a handful of works by clerical scholars that, in the modern age — often with utmost piety — have tried to find out more about Jesus and the early Church than we're told in the New Testament. Universities were soon quite awash in scholarly studies of Jesus's life and Crucifixion, some studies focussing on one gospel or other source, some on others.

At about Jesus's time, the great Roman historian Josephus, writing in Hebrew, Aramaic and above all Greek, describes a number of Jewish Messianic claimants — all reputedly endowed with magical powers and promising Jews deliverance from their Roman masters. One way or another the Romans found a way of doing away with all such Jewish Messianic movements as seditions.

Except for one. Many scholars believe that the difference in appeal between Christian belief and the assorted pagan beliefs that prevailed throughout the Roman Empire lay in the deep Christian conviction (1) that their Messiah had been raised from the dead; (2) that he would shortly return with supernatural power; and (3) that he would then destroy the evil contemporary world in order to re-create the kingdom of God. This

original form of Christianity — at the time still a Jewish sect — was a powerful Messianic movement.

But these Messianic movements were virtually wiped out when in A.D. 70 the Romans destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem. That Christianity did not follow the other Messianic faiths of the day into oblivion was due, as far as we can tell, to the transforming genius of Paul, who resurrected Christianity, not as a Jewish sect, but as a religion of salvation for all mankind.

The Jesus PBS gives us, not surprisingly, is the one popular in late 20th century academic culture. We do not, in the modern age, know much about this Messiah, except for the varying ways his followers told His story. "Miracle workers are a dime a dozen in the ancient world," writes Michael White of the Uni-

versity of Texas, so we must be wary. But much as PBS tells us about miracle workers of the ancient world, all Front Line's narrator tells us about the Resurrection of Jesus is: "the death and Resurrection of Jesus lie at the very heart of Paul's preaching." After this, none of Paul's preaching about Jesus is heard. Nothing. The Resurrection is almost never heard from again.

For those unfamiliar with modern biblical scholarship, the third section of the PBS documentary may be the most puzzling. We are first given a modest little course on the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Then, at the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., we're told that Christians huddled together, confronting themselves by telling each other "stories" — not historical accounts but shared memories which altogether did not make out a "unified coherent religious movement."

This doesn't sound much like the Christianity which — with the conversion of the Emperor Constantine not much over 200 years later — was to conquer the entire Roman Empire and become the official church of Rome. Nor does PBS even make mention of credal formulas such as "The Apostle's Creed," which established Christianity's basic belief system for well over a thousand years.

But Front Line's libertarian thinkers, in search of the "true" Christianity, confess that somewhere along the line something must have gone wrong. Before the creeds and dogmas, they think before the fixed canons of books, before the priests and bishops, there was a truer, freer, more diverse, more tolerant, more authentic, religious spirit of Christianity — not to be identified with the historic Church. Among these "moder-ernists" there is great reluctance to admit that institutionalized and credal Christianity has now prevailed for countless centuries, and that Jesus of Nazareth, to say the least, has certainly outlived his rivals.

