

## Wolfson College and a Jubilee of Dead Sea Scrolls Research: 1966–2016

I offer my congratulations to the president and members of this glorious Wolfson College in your jubilee year. This college has achieved much in its half century of existence. I, myself, was a member of your common room in 1974–1975, and therefore share in your pride of the college. I even was a member of your punt club, but I don't remember much about it. I probably was not a very active member.

For us, as scholars of the Dead Sea Scrolls, it is very gratifying that Wolfson College has decided to mark the celebration by devoting attention to scholarship in our area. The college has been home to activity surrounding the scrolls and, equally important, was home to Geza Vermes, a prolific Dead Sea Scrolls scholar, and that alone is reason enough to talk about Geza's many contributions to the scrolls. We will also turn to Oxford's double claim to fame in the publication of the scrolls, and then, of course, we turn to the scrolls themselves.

### 2. Geza Vermes

Many of the activities at Oxford related to the scrolls were centered round Geza Vermes (1924–2013), of blessed memory, who is survived by his dear wife Margaret and son Ian. Geza was one of the founding members of this college, in which he took great pride. He will be remembered for his books depicting the Jewish background of Jesus, his reworking (together with Sir Fergus Millar and Martin Goodman) of Schürer, his seminal work on the "rewritten Bible," and his many activities related to the Dead Sea Scrolls.

If you haven't read Geza's autobiography named *Providential Accidents*, I suggest that you become acquainted with this beautiful piece of literature, and while reading you will see him smiling and hear his contagious laughter. You will also hear his attempt to sound more British than the British. For Geza, Oxford was "The Wonderland" (pp. 155–170); he arrived at Iffley College in 1965, which later became known by its current name of Wolfson College.

In 1974, as a young post-doc at Oxford, I met Geza, who never was "Professor Vermes," and I immediately fell under his spell and years of warm friendship followed. I took some of his courses, participated in his seminar, and learned from his wide experience.

In the area of the scrolls, Vermes has become a household name beyond academic circles due to the wide distribution of his Penguin edition of the translation of the Scrolls, which in seven editions has sold more than a million copies. Samples of these editions, his *Introduction* to the scrolls, and his other books, which have been translated into many languages, found a place of honor in his living room.

Geza was unhappy about the lack of progress in the publication of the scrolls. When he did not succeed in speeding up that process,<sup>1</sup> he made his famous statement in 1977 that “the greatest and most valuable of all Hebrew and Aramaic manuscript discoveries is likely to become the academic scandal *par excellence* of the twentieth century.” That doomsday prophecy did not materialize, but the very statement was often quoted and must have contributed towards a general feeling of urgency. I will spare you the details, but Geza definitely was a major spokesman or even general in the army of those who fought for the freeing of access to the scrolls, which was also a personal issue for him as he himself had been denied that access.

Geza was extremely active in the area of the scrolls; yet he was unhappy that he was not included in the original team of scroll editors. I am glad that I was able to correct this situation myself in 1990 when, as the newly appointed editor-in-chief, I asked him to prepare his own volume, *DJD XXVI (Serekh Ha-Yahad, 1998)*, together with his former student Philip Alexander.

Geza was instrumental in the building of frameworks at Oxford that advanced the study of the scrolls. In 1991, he devised and subsequently directed, later together with Martin Goodman, the Qumran Forum for Qumran Research. The purpose of that forum was to conduct “fortnightly seminars devoted to a pioneering enquiry into unpublished texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls.” These meetings were attended by scholars from British and overseas universities, as well as by all Oxford specialists in Qumran research” (annual report of the OCHJS 1991, p. 18). These meetings continued routinely until 2010–2011 with an occasional highlight such as the jubilee conference in May 1997 in celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the scrolls. At that conference, Geza Vermes gave a lecture entitled “The Greatest Hebrew Manuscript Discovery after Fifty Years.”

A second framework that Geza pioneered at Wolfson, together with Sebastian Brock, also of Wolfson, was the so-called Oxford Forum for the Study of Judaism and

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<sup>1</sup> See the chapter “The Battle over the Scrolls: A Personal Account” in *Providential Accidents*, 188–209.

Christianity. The activities of this forum were closely connected with those of the Qumran forum. Sebastian is a major scholar in these areas and he and Geza were close colleagues. He personally has had a great impact on the study of Judaism and the Bible at Oxford from the angle of the ancient Syriac exegesis of the Bible.

Since Geza also was the editor of the *Journal of Jewish Studies*, *JJS*, understandably and quite laudably that journal was a pioneer in devoting much attention to the scrolls. The journal published several of the proceedings of the Oxford Forum<sup>2</sup> and a list of the unpublished Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Oxford and the Publication of the Scrolls

Quite separate from these activities, in the same city of Oxford, there was also much commotion in the so-called Oxford Qumran Project that was created and administered by the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies (OCHJS) at Yarnton Manor. That project was initiated during the final years of the tenure of my predecessor, John Strugnell, around 1988 and continued until the end of the publication of *DJD*. Upon my appointment as editor-in-chief in 1990, I gladly became part of this operation. An anonymous benefactor donated a generous amount each year that was earmarked for the publication of the scrolls and also for related activities at the centre. One of the fringe benefits of this arrangement was that, for years, the only place that housed good photographs of the scrolls other than Jerusalem (and two other places in the USA that were then unknown) was the so-called Qumran room in the Oxford Centre in Yarnton Manor.<sup>4</sup> This arrangement worked well for some fifteen years. I came annually or biannually to Oxford, and reported on the publication efforts to the centre and to the anonymous donor. Until a year ago, I still received emails from this anonymous donor.

This is one of Oxford's claims to fame with regard to the publication; the other one is that all the volumes were published by Oxford University Press. We prepared camera-ready printouts of all the pages of the *DJD* editions in Jerusalem and in Notre Dame, USA, and the publisher, Oxford University Press, reproduced our manuscripts

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<sup>2</sup> See the annual report of the OCHJS 1991, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> This was indeed a very good service that Geza rendered to the publication efforts. The list was compiled by myself and commissioned by Geza: E. Tov, "The Unpublished Qumran Texts from Caves 4 and 11," *JJS* 43 (1992): 101–36. This list was later republished in a revised form: "The Unpublished Qumran Texts from Caves 4 and 11," *BA* 55 (1992): 94–104.

<sup>4</sup> See the annual report of the OCHJS 1992-1994, pp. 35-37 referring to the "Oxford Qumran Project."

photo-mechanically. At times, OUP caught some of our mistakes at the last moment, such as discrepancies between the table of contents and the actual pages, and at times *they* introduced new ones by printing different details on the book jacket than those appearing on the title page, or by imprinting the wrong details on the spine of the book. In this way, we managed a good equilibrium.<sup>5</sup>

The publication enterprise had a beginning and an end. The first volume was published in 1955 and a total of eight already existed when I was appointed in 1990. We published another thirty-two until 2012, as well as three concordance volumes, together with a *Microfiche Edition* and an inventory volume. The series thus turned out to be only slightly more extensive than what was planned initially. Folder 1118 of the Palestine Archaeological Museum contains a letter by G. Lankester Harding, who in the early 1950s, when looking for a press, was thinking in terms of “altogether, perhaps, five volumes.” My work involved the re-organization of the team, the preparation of an inventory, the reassigning of fragments, the standardization of the publication conventions, and of course the major job, the actual overseeing of the preparation of the text editions and of the volumes themselves.

The editions in some volumes were minimalistic, while others may have been maximalistic. Professor Edward Ullendorff of Oxford definitely thought that we were too maximalistic. In a 1996 review of vol. XIII, he said: “But would it not have been enough just to publish photographs (like those on Plates IX or XVII and XXI) and thus eschew the enormous expenditure of toil and precious time by distinguished scholars and, incidentally, also of finance for producing such elaborate monuments? These reflections do not, of course, apply to the bulk of the material but mainly to the fingernail-sized scraps referred to.” (*JJS* 47 [1996] 333). Of course, that was not our view.

#### 4. The Dead Sea Scrolls

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<sup>5</sup> On the whole, OUP contributed much to our enterprise by way of the high quality of their products, but this cooperation also involved much investment on my part in maintaining good communication with the various departments at OUP. Had I not done this, the production would have been delayed. The production was not uneventful. One time, the delivery of the proofs was delayed by a week because there was snow in or around Oxford, and the truck needed to be repaired. On another occasion, the camera-ready manuscripts of two complete volumes were lost at OUP’s printers. There were mishaps in the production of two sets of plates caused by the printer using too much ink, resulting in several overly dark plates. But these were isolated instances.

After all this talk about the Dead Sea Scrolls, there is no further need of an introduction. Nevertheless, permit me to say a few words in this regard. Between the years 1947 and 1956, literally thousands of scroll fragments of all sizes were found in eleven caves in cliffs surrounding Wadi Qumran, south of Jericho, on the shore of the Dead Sea. These fragments were found predominantly in the so-called caves 1, 4, and 11 and they date from the period between 250 BCE and 70 CE. Some of these fragments are sizable, and in rare cases very large, even constituting complete scrolls, while most are medium-sized to minute. These fragments belonged to what were once some 930 complete documents in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek written in several scripts: the square and paleo-Hebrew (“old Hebrew”) scripts for Hebrew and Aramaic documents, the Greek script, and three different “Cryptic” (“esoteric”) scripts, used for sectarian writings in Hebrew. More texts were found at other sites in the Judean Desert south of Qumran.

By way of these scrolls, we now have a clear picture of the Jewish literature of this period, as the caves contained several hundreds of literary works. The group of compositions found at Qumran probably reflects the literary taste of the Qumran community but, as this is not certain, the maximum we can say is that the members of the community possessed these writings. These scrolls include compositions in diverse genres such as Wisdom literature, psalms, biblical interpretation, apocalyptic compositions, calendrical documents, prayers, rewritten biblical books, eschatological writings, and magical documents, some composed by the Qumran community, and some penned elsewhere. In addition to these, some 220 biblical texts were also found. Many texts have been found in multiple copies, enabling an examination of the relationship between these copies. The texts that are the most typical of the Qumran sectarian literature are the *pesharim* (contemporizing biblical commentaries), the Thanksgiving Hymns (*Hodayot*), the Community Rule, and the War Scroll.

Ever since the discovery of the scrolls, they have been known as the “Dead Sea Scrolls” or “Scrolls from the Judean Desert.” However, are these scrolls indeed restricted to the Dead Sea area? Although this term does not necessarily imply that these scrolls were copied at the sites where they were found, they have often been described in this way. This certainly applies to the romanticized descriptions of the so-called Qumran “monks” who sat at long tables and copied their scrolls. However, it has become increasingly clear that only a certain percentage of the scrolls were copied at the sites in which they were found. For Qumran, probably only one-third of

the scrolls were copied on site, while the remainder were taken there by Qumran community members from other places in Israel. This view is based on content considerations and on a theory about a school of Qumran scribes that copied a large number of scrolls that share certain scribal characteristics as opposed to other scrolls taken to Qumran.

As a result, the name “Dead Sea Scrolls” is probably misleading, as it implies a limited milieu for the scrolls. However, in actuality, the Qumran scrolls represent a broad spectrum of writings created and copied in all of ancient Israel, and they should therefore be considered “the scrolls of ancient Israel as a whole.”

## 5. Research related to the Dead Sea Scrolls

Today we celebrate fifty years of Wolfson College along with fifty years of Dead Sea Scrolls research. The latter number is of course inaccurate as, in fact, we are looking back at the seventy-year knowledge of these scrolls. We will review several topics even though it is not easy to select from the plethora of topics relating to the scrolls those in which significant progress has been made. After all, much progress has been made in all areas: the dating of the scrolls, technical investigations of the scrolls, the nature of the Qumran community, the nature of the Qumran corpus, the presence of women at Qumran, the nature of the texts written in the encrypted script, the calendar of the Qumran community, Messianic expectations in the scrolls, the development of the Hebrew and Aramaic languages, the Qumran scrolls and Christianity, possible differences between the contents of the different caves, the beginning of institutionalized prayer, and many additional areas. To these, one has to add all the genres of the Qumran literature in each of which much new ground has been broken, such as the study of the *pesharim* and other types of sectarian literature, liturgical texts, calendrical documents, legal texts, the new category of parabiblical literature, hymnic literature, and finally the biblical texts. I will speak at some length about the biblical texts, but first I will review a few other topics.

### A. Modern techniques used in the study of the scrolls

Over the past five decades, the sciences have come to our aid in examining several material aspects of scroll fragments, their coverings, stitching material, etc. There are

many ways in which the sciences helped or *could* help us gain a better understanding of the scroll fragments and aid us in their reconstruction. The main areas are: (1) determining the date of the scrolls (based on the age of the leather and ink [?]); (2) determining whether fragments derive from the same sheet (Carbon-14, DNA research, the chemical composition of the leather and ink; follicle patterns in leather, and fibers in papyrus); (3) retrieving previously illegible letters with the aid of advanced photographic techniques; and (4) identifying fragments and determining the relation between fragments with the aid of computer-assisted research.

1. The first system used for dating scrolls was that of *paleography* (dating on the basis of the type of handwriting), and this is still our major source for dating. At the same time, at an early stage in the study of the scrolls, carbon-14 examinations<sup>6</sup> became instrumental in determining their dates, mutually corroborating paleographical dating.<sup>7</sup>

For example, with the aid of the carbon-14 test, 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has been dated between 202 and 107 BCE, while the paleographical date is 125–100 BCE and 11QTemple<sup>a</sup> (“the Temple Scroll”) between 97 BCE and 1 CE (paleographical date: late first century BCE to early first century CE). However, there are also a few texts for which the paleographical and carbon-14 dates are remote from each other. But they are exceptional. Further, the accuracy of the carbon-14 examinations has been questioned by Greg Doudna who claimed that the castor oil applied to the leather in the 1950s in order to improve the clarity of the written text interfered with the precision of these examinations. Doudna’s own view is that all the scrolls date from the period before 40 BCE.<sup>8</sup>

Most Qumran documents fall within the presumed time frame of the period of settlement of the sect at Qumran between 150 or 120 BCE and 70 CE, but some documents predate the period of the settlement. These early scrolls probably were taken to Qumran by the settlers.

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<sup>6</sup> The basis for carbon-14 analysis is that the animal hides contained carbon-14 atoms when the animal still lived, and the amount of these atoms decreased after their death at a measurable rate, when these atoms became carbon-12 atoms, all compared with the carbon-14 atoms in tree rings.

<sup>7</sup> The paleographical dates applied to the documents range from the fourth century BCE to the first century CE for the Jericho documents, from 250 BCE to 68 CE for the Qumran texts, from 150 BCE to 70 CE for the Masada texts, and from 75 BCE to 135 CE for the texts from Wadi Murabbaat, Nahal Hever, and Nahal Seelim.

<sup>8</sup> G. Doudna, “Dating the Scrolls on the Basis of Radiocarbon Analysis,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment* (ed. P. W. Flint and J. C. VanderKam; Leiden/Boston/Cologne: E. J. Brill, 1999) 430–65.

2. DNA research of ancient texts is still in its infancy and even if one succeeds in obtaining DNA from an ancient text the information provided is very limited. At most, one can determine whether two fragments derived from the same sheet of skin from a specific animal.

3. The study of the ink composition could give us some clues regarding the relationship between scroll fragments. However, this analysis also is still in its infancy.

4. A study conducted by Hahn et al. based on the contaminants present in the parchment and ink (elemental composition analysis) showed how two fragments could not have belonged to the same sheet. This analysis, also, has not yet been sufficiently developed.

5. On the other hand, the infrared color photographing of all the fragments with new techniques has been very beneficial, as is visible on the IAA website.

6. OCR research carried out in Europe and Tel Aviv that comes to the aid of identification and reconstruction and paleographical analysis has some success. Scholars claim that one day paleographical analysis could be machine based.

7. Tomography. One of the real marvels is that with a photographic tomography process a closed Leviticus scroll from En-Gedi that was damaged in a fire in the synagogue in the sixth century CE was recently examined. Through this process, the secrets of this scroll have been unlocked, despite the fact that the scroll would crumble if touched. Together with two scientists in the USA who carried out the tomography, Dr. Segal and I published this early scroll<sup>9</sup> that dates possibly from the first century CE.<sup>10</sup>

## B. The nature of the Qumran corpus

Since the early days of research, the Qumran corpus has been described as a library, a term used often in the scholarly literature since the influential study by F. M. Cross,

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<sup>9</sup> W.B. Seales, C.S. Parker, M. Segal, E. Tov, P. Shor & Y. Porath: "From Damage to Discovery via Virtual Unwrapping: Reading the Scroll from En-Gedi," *Science Advances*, September 2016; M. Segal, E. Tov, W.B. Seales, C.S. Parker, P. Shor, Y. Porath: "An Early Leviticus Scroll from En-Gedi: Preliminary Publication," *Text* 26 (2016).

<sup>10</sup> According to Carbon 14 dating, the scroll was copied in the second century CE (less likely) or between the 3rd and 4th century CE (firm assessment), not long after the biblical Dead Sea Scrolls. On the other hand, paleographical analysis of the scroll by Dr. Ada Yardeni suggests an earlier date, in the 2nd half of the first century CE, contemporaneous with the latest of the Qumran scrolls and several of the scrolls found in other sites in the Judean Desert.

*The Ancient Library of Qumran*, which has dominated scholarship since the first edition of that book in 1958.<sup>11</sup> Several studies have been written on the basis of the assumption that the Qumran collection as a whole, or that of cave 4, represents a library.<sup>12</sup> However, neither the contents of the Qumran corpus nor any external features of the caves or a community building can be adduced as supporting evidence for the assumption that the caves, or cave 4, housed a library. In my view, the Qumran caves were used as depositories for all the written material owned by the Qumran community. After all, the holdings of cave 4 included phylacteries and some personal notes, neither of which would have found a place in a library. These holdings also included an archive or two, such as the archive of Greek biblical texts in cave 7. It is likely that many of the scrolls from cave 4 indeed came from a central storage place for books within the community,<sup>13</sup> but the use of the term “library” evokes incorrect associations.

### C. The nature of the texts written in the cryptic script

Most texts found at Qumran were written in the square Hebrew and paleo-Hebrew (ancient Hebrew) scripts, in Greek (a limited number of texts only), and in a few variations of an encrypted (secret) script (also named esoteric and Hebrew Hieratic). In this script, each Hebrew letter is represented by a cryptic sign. After the code was broken in the 1960s by Jozef Milik, these cryptic texts were deciphered and all of them have now been published.<sup>14</sup> Although many aspects of these texts remain unknown, it is clear that several sectarian encrypted compositions conveyed a secret message to the members of the community to be hidden from outsiders. In one of these encrypted compositions (4Q298, named 4QWords of the Maskil to All Sons of Dawn), someone gives instructions concerning the virtues of the community, namely the seeking of justice, modesty, truth, humility, and the studying of the Law. Scholars usually believe that the spiritual leader of the community, the so-called *Maskil* (sage), wrote these instructions to the novices in the community.

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<sup>11</sup> Garden City, New York 1958. It is now consulted in its 3rd edition (Sheffield, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> K. G. Pedley, “The Library at Qumran,” *RevQ* 2 (1959): 21–41 went as far as contemplating whether or not there ever existed an inventory list of the ‘Qumran library’ such as that in several ancient libraries.

<sup>13</sup> For an account as to how these scrolls *may* have reached the caves, see Stegemann, *Die Essener*, 89–93.

<sup>14</sup> In *DJD* XX, XXVIII, XXXV, and XXXVI, mainly by S. J. Pfann.

Until the 2010s, the cryptic scripts were known only from the Qumran excavations, but an inscribed Second Temple stone cup,<sup>15</sup> probably containing an incantation, found at Mount Zion provides the first example of the cryptic script outside of Qumran,<sup>16</sup> possibly also authored by a member of the Essene community.

#### D. Presence of women at Qumran

The presence at Qumran of women is a hotly debated issue involving the interpretation of literary and archeological evidence. With regard to literary evidence, scholars have usually described the community as an all-male monastery on the basis of the descriptions of the Essenes by Josephus and Philo. Indeed, the great majority of the sectarian texts, such as 1QS (the *Community Rule* from cave 1), simply ignore women. The community texts 4QD (the *Damascus Document* from cave 4) and CD (the *Damascus Document* from the Cairo Genizah) include purity laws for women, as well as laws concerning marriage and divorce, but it is usually thought that these laws pertained to the Essene settlements throughout Palestine, not necessarily at Qumran. In recent research, however, some scholars such as Eileen Schuller<sup>17</sup> and Sidnie White Crawford<sup>18</sup> have stressed that nevertheless some women were probably members of the Qumran community. The latter scholar stresses that women were allowed to be present during the rituals of the community. She bases herself on 1QSa (the *Rule of the Congregation* from cave 1) 1 4-5, which states: “When they come they will assemble all who come including children and women, and they will recite all the statutes of the covenant.” However, this quotation is probably irrelevant as it refers to procedures to be followed in the world to come, and not to the life of the Qumran community.

The discussion about the presence of women at Qumran also involves archeological evidence that is interpreted in different ways. Sidnie White Crawford

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<sup>15</sup> Stephen J. Pfann, “The Mount Zion Inscribed Stone Cup: Preliminary Observations” in *New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and Its Region: Collected Papers*, ed. D. Amit et al., vol. 4 (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, Jerusalem Region, 2010), 32\*–41\*.

<sup>16</sup> See Pfann, *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> E. Schuller, “Women in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in Flint–VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, I.117–44.

<sup>18</sup> S. White Crawford, “Not According to Rule: Women, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Qumran,” *Emanuel, Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov* (ed. S. M. Paul, R. A. Kraft, L. H. Schiffman, and W. W. Fields, with the assistance of E. Ben-David; VTSup 94; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003), 127–50.

lists the artifacts that may point to the presence of women, four beads and mirrors, and a spindle whorl, but this evidence may not be convincing, as beads and mirrors also could have been used by men.

From the beginning of the research on Qumran, the relevance of six female skeletons amidst the overall preponderance of graves of males was brought to bear on this issue. What did these controversial women do at Qumran? However, the evidence regarding the female skeletons is contested, and it is now interpreted in different ways. Further, the number of skeletons has been reduced to two, with the others deemed as being those of either males or Bedouin women.<sup>19</sup>

#### E. Biblical texts

The Qumran biblical scrolls are so well known that the public often thinks that the Qumran discoveries are confined to the twenty-four canonical books of Hebrew Scripture. But this is not true; many non-biblical scrolls were found there as well. There is no doubt that the Qumran community made a special effort to collect these Scripture texts as well as other compositions they considered authoritative. The 230 biblical scrolls found at Qumran form a large number and they show that the Bible had a central status at Qumran. We also learn from the *Rule of the Community* that one-third of the night was spent studying Scripture in the Qumran community, and that wherever ten people were assembled, a person well versed in Scripture needed to be among them. It therefore does not surprise us that the Qumran community made an effort to take many copies of the Hebrew Bible to Qumran. As a result, all the canonical books of the Old Testament are represented at Qumran with the sole exception of the little book of Esther. The lack of Esther, no doubt, should be attributed to coincidence. In my view, the tiny book of Esther was probably preserved only in one or two copies, as were Chronicles and Proverbs. As such, it was an easy prey for the Qumran worms.

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<sup>19</sup> Joe Zias found in the tombs of some of the six women beads, which he took as sure signs pointing to Bedouin women, and not Essenes: "The Cemeteries of Qumran and Celibacy: Confusion Laid to Rest?," *DSD* 7 (2000) 220–53. Zias also noticed that the orientation of these graves was East–West, not SSW to NNE like the other ones. Further, according to him, in Second Temple period there were no beads or jewelry in graves. The whereabouts of the skeletons themselves, described in the original excavation reports by de Vaux, were unknown for some time, until they recently surfaced in research institutes in Paris and Germany.

The group of Qumran biblical scrolls probably reflects the literary taste of the Qumran community. This preference is reflected in the preponderance of Genesis (20–21 copies), Deuteronomy (28 copies), Isaiah (21 copies), and Psalms (36 copies) among the biblical writings. The Qumran community loved the stories of Genesis (note also the large number of rewritten Pentateuch copies); it was much influenced by the style of writing of Deuteronomy; they wrote many hymns themselves in the style of the biblical Psalms; and the prophecies of Isaiah greatly influenced their ideas and writings. We, therefore, understand why these four books are so well represented at Qumran. On the other hand, other books were attested only in one or two copies.

Scholars would like to know which books were accepted by this Essene community, in other words, which books were considered authoritative or canonical. Are there any criteria for such decisions? Should we examine how books were quoted, or should we simply see which books were found at Qumran? The latter procedure is usually employed. We know that a few of the so-called Apocrypha were found at Qumran (*Sirach*, *Tobit*, *Jubilees*, *Levi ar*, *TJud ar*, *TNaph*). *Jubilees* was found there in multiple copies and was probably accepted by the community, as we see from the way it was quoted. Possibly the *Temple Scroll* was also considered authoritative, as it was written on a beautiful scroll, 11QTemple-a, and in three additional copies. Scholars have not reached any consensus on matters of detail, but they usually agree that the number of books accepted as being authoritative by the Qumran community was larger than that included in the Masoretic Bible. In other words, regarding the last centuries before the common era, we know of the concept of the biblical canon that is reflected by the Masoretic Bible, we know the somewhat wider canon of the LXX, wrongly named Alexandrian, being another Jewish concept subsequently perpetuated in Christianity, and we now know that the Qumran community conceived of a larger number of books as authoritative, even though that community never formally defined the extent of its holdings. We know of the three different concepts of the shape of the Hebrew Bible in the last centuries before the Common Era, and within the contents of the Dead Sea Scrolls we also find different shapes of each of the biblical books.

Scholars compare the biblical Dead Sea Scrolls with other copies of the Bible. In many ways, these newly discovered manuscripts have revolutionized the study of the text of the Hebrew and Greek Bibles. The Qumran scrolls are also relevant on

occasion to our understanding of the final writing and editing stages of the biblical books.

In scholarly jargon, it may sound a little bombastic to speak of the scroll finds as “revolutionizing” the field, but this term is probably an appropriate description, especially for those found at Qumran.

The biblical Dead Sea Scrolls constitute a very ancient group of texts, written one, two, five or more centuries after the writing of the original compositions. They are ancient; yet, they do not derive from the time of the biblical authors themselves. Only the Daniel scrolls stand alone in being perhaps two generations removed from the time of the composition of the last chapters of that book. The other scrolls are far more distant descendants of the original copies. Thus, for example, we should not expect to find an answer to the vexing question regarding whether Isaiah ought to be separated into two compositions, usually named Isaiah (chapters 1–39) and Second or Deutero-Isaiah (40–66). Some scholars even distinguish a Trito-Isaiah (chapters 56–66). If these different compositions were indeed combined into one book, as most scholars believe, it happened many centuries before the writing of the earliest Qumran Scrolls.

When looking at the Qumran scrolls, it will probably always remain an open question regarding the determining of what constitutes a Scripture scroll and what does not constitute a Scripture scroll. In other words, which scroll carried authority? In my definition, authoritative scrolls are scrolls that one would study, from which one could quote, that one could read in religious gatherings or in one’s personal meditation, and that formed the basis for religious practice, especially *halakhah*. I distinguish between such authoritative Scripture scrolls and scrolls with scriptural content, that is, Scripture-like scrolls that were not as authoritative as Scripture, such as partial Scripture scrolls and liturgical scrolls. The latter pertain only to the Torah and Psalms. However, for many scholars, these liturgical and partial scrolls are also considered Scripture, and this view complicates the discussion. Is the beautiful Psalms scroll from cave 11 really a Psalms scroll as its modern name indicates, or is it a liturgical scroll, a prayer book, as I believe? In the case of the latter, its details remain significant for textual criticism but the inclusion of specific Psalms and their sequence are irrelevant to literary analysis. Among the Qumran scrolls, we also find partial Scripture scrolls, such as the minute scroll 4QDeut<sup>q</sup> that probably contained only the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32, and liturgical scrolls such as 4QDeut<sup>j,k1,n</sup> that

contained only segments that were found in *tefillin*. However, the discussion of what should be considered Scripture is much more complex, since at Qumran we found scrolls that differ from everything that was considered Scripture before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. One of the Joshua scrolls, 4QJoshua<sup>a</sup>, possibly presents a different sequence of the events in the book of Joshua. Two scrolls of Canticles, 4QCant<sup>a-b</sup>, present shorter versions of the book, either later abbreviations or more original versions of the book. In either case, these two scrolls definitely present Scripture. The most serious challenge are the texts that were named 4QReworked Pentateuch, denoting their non-scriptural status, which on further thought should probably be renamed as 4QPentateuch. These five scrolls contain many exegetical variants, more than any previously known text, but they are within the realm of the Scripture texts, just like the greatly deviating Greek translations of 1 Kings, Esther, and Daniel, all of which were clearly based on Hebrew or Aramaic *Vorlagen*. The Dead Sea Scrolls thus required us to change our view on what constitutes Scripture.

Turning now to details on textual analysis, and looking back at half a century of research, we see truly revolutionary developments in just about all aspects of this area. Let us review the various texts, not only the new ones that were found seventy years ago, but also the texts that have been known for a long time. Thus, the Masoretic text, LXX, and SP have been known for several centuries, but we understand them much better in the wake of the new discoveries.

**MT:** Basically the MT is our Bible, in Hebrew and, through translation, in English, and in all other languages. Around the turn of the era, this text form became the *only* accepted text of Scripture for Judaism. All the printed editions you hold in your hands, in whatever language, are more or less identical to MT. Together with all its details, the MT is 1,000 years old, but its consonantal form is actually 2,000 years old as that text form was found in the Judean Desert area in the form of the so-called proto-MT. This fact is of utmost significance not only for scholarship but also for religious communities, although organized Judaism and Christianity do not make use of these data. It remains a marvel, a man-made marvel, that there is hardly any difference between the text of codex L(eningrad) and the Judean Desert texts from all the sites except for Qumran. The few differences that do exist between L and these sources are of the same nature as those between L and the other medieval texts. In the case of the En-Gedi scroll, the identity is complete, 100%. The special lesson we learn from these texts is that the proto-MT text was revered by special groups, the followers

of Bar-Kochba who were influenced by Jerusalem rabbis and the Zealots of Masada, but not by the Essenes of Qumran, and that this text remained unchanged for 2,000 years.

**LXX:** The second lesson we learn about the new finds relates to the Greek translation, the LXX. Some fragments of that translation were found in the Judean Desert, signifying that this translation was in use in Palestine. Furthermore, the reliability of the LXX has now been enhanced by the Qumran texts. The LXX is one of the most important texts for biblical research, but since it is written in Greek, its Hebrew source has to be reconstructed. The reconstruction of many such details is now supported by the discovery of identical Hebrew readings in Qumran scrolls.

**SP:** We've also learned much about the so-called Samaritan Pentateuch, the Bible of the Samaritans through the ages. This slightly tendentious text goes back to early texts of 2,000 years ago, and quite amazingly we have now found several such texts among the Qumran scrolls. The Samaritan Pentateuch is known mainly from the medieval texts, but their precursors such as those found at Qumran were not sectarian, and the SP was based on one of these texts. From the point of view of their content, these pre-Samaritan texts represent copies that were easier to use. Difficult forms were simplified or removed, differences between texts were harmonized, and grammatical problems were smoothed away. In short, these were popular texts.

**Other groups** of popular texts made the spelling of the Hebrew words more easily understandable to the readers, particularly by adding a multitude of so-called *matres lectionis*. The large Isaiah scroll is an excellent example of this trend.

The coexistence of these different groups of texts within the Qumran community is remarkable. The fact that these divergent texts were found in the same caves reflects a textual diversity in the period between the third century BCE and the first century CE. Within that textual plurality, we note a large number of proto-Masoretic texts. However, in the Torah, the situation is probably different as we see at Qumran a larger number of texts that combine the readings of the LXX with the pre-Samaritan texts,<sup>20</sup> but that is a topic for more detailed textual analysis. No solid conclusions can be drawn about the approach of the Qumranites themselves towards the biblical text,

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<sup>20</sup> There are more texts of block II than of block I at Qumran: there are more straightforward texts of LXX-SP (6) than of MT (4), and a large number of texts that indirectly reflect the tradition of block II: 3 liturgical texts, 4QDeut<sup>i,k,l,n</sup>; 7 *tefillin* written in a conservative spelling pattern (4QPhyl C, D, E, F, R, S; 4QPhyl 4); and several rewritten Bible compositions: 11QT<sup>a</sup>, 4Q252, GenApocr, 4QTest. In addition, there are 20 fragmentary texts that could reflect either MT or SP; in the past I included them with MT, but I now realize that they cannot be included in any statistics.

but it is safe to say that they paid no attention to textual differences. It is hard to know whether in their solemn meetings they read from one type of text, while in the privacy of their own dwellings they consulted another one.

That these different groups of texts coexisted at Qumran, and in Palestine as a whole, shows that no text or textual family had been accepted as an authoritative source for the country as a whole. However, in one milieu, there was only one accepted text. I believe the Masoretic Text was the only one accepted text in Temple circles, and that it was also influential elsewhere. The purest form of this text was found at Masada and at the sites of the Bar Kochba fighters and was probably copied from the master scroll in the Temple. We now know it was also found in the En-Gedi scroll, dated to one of the first centuries of the Common Era. The Qumran group of texts display a less pure form of this proto-MT along with several additional text forms. Qumran thus attests to textual plurality that included a less pure form of MT that was further removed from the master copy in the Temple. The other sites, such as Masada, give witness only to MT. The differences between Qumran and the other sites are socio-religious and not chronological. It has often been said that the Judean Desert sites are later than Qumran and therefore attest to the predominance of MT. However, this cannot be true as the *terminus ad quem* for Masada is identical to that of Qumran. The groups of texts from Qumran and Masada both contain texts copied until 73 CE, but the nature of these texts was different as the two sites were inhabited by different types of societies.

Scholars characterize many Qumran scrolls in different ways, their details are explained differently, and there are various interpretations of the overall nature of the Qumran scrolls. However, most scholars agree that the scrolls are of great significance for scholarship:

1. Readings in the scrolls not previously known help us to better understand many details in the biblical text, which sometimes involve matters of substance.
2. The textual variety reflected in the Qumran texts provides a good overview of the condition of the biblical text during the Second Temple period.
3. The scrolls provide much background information on the technical aspects of the copying of biblical texts in the Second Temple period.

Let me add two details from my recent research, both from the Pentateuch/the Torah:

When trying to understand the textual status of the Torah in the Second Temple

period, we are faced with a veritable textual plurality that is probably reflected in some ten different textual branches, more than in the other Scripture books. Moving beyond earlier textual theories, I suggest that this plurality should be reduced to a pattern of two tradition blocks, MT and all the other texts. Among these other texts, the (probably Palestinian) block composed of the LXX, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the pre-Samaritan scrolls, together with their congeners, are the major component. The LXX and SP were based on a common textual tradition characterized by facilitating and harmonizing readings, especially pluses, among them several inappropriate ones. This assumption is supported by the binary division of the textual character of the *tefillin*, which belong to either the MT or LXX-SP group. It is further supported by the fact that the MT tradition is quoted only in the rabbinic literature, while the LXX-SP block served as the basis for the rewritten Bible compositions. This block was probably a Palestinian block of texts. Unlike this block, the MT block remained relatively clean of secondary readings. Among the biblical and non-biblical texts at Qumran, there is more evidence for block II than for block I. This description, which is based on a long series of detailed studies, pertains only to the Torah.

Returning to my beginning words, it is very gratifying that Wolfson College has decided to mark the celebration of its jubilee by devoting attention to scholarship in the area of the Dead Sea Scrolls. On this day, we reflect gratefully upon the long and fulfilling life of Geza Vermes, a senior scholar of this college, who did much to promote the study of the scrolls. And we reflect upon the many contributions the scrolls have made to so many disciplines.