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### The Dead Sea Scrolls: Retrospective and Prospective

Sidnie White Crawford

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*, [scrawford1@unl.edu](mailto:scrawford1@unl.edu)

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The Peshar (Commentary) Habakkuk. This is one of the original four scrolls brought to the American School in Jerusalem in 1948.

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# THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

## RETROSPECTIVE AND PROSPECTIVE

Sidnie White Crawford



John C. Trever photographing the Manual of Discipline manuscript at ASOR.

The Dead Sea Scrolls—in the popular imagination, the very name conjures up scandal, intrigue and mystery. Tales of illicit excavations, clandestine purchases, and midnight trips to Beirut, all with the sound of gunfire crackling in the background, abound in the lore of the Scrolls and the scholars associated with them. While visions of Roland de Vaux as a French Indiana Jones may be the product of an overheated imagination, the actual story of the discovery of the Scrolls is nevertheless an exciting one in the annals of archaeology.

### A Backward Glance

Let us begin then in February of 1948, when a representative of Mar Athanasius Samuel, the Metropolitan of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, arrived at the Albright Institute (then the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem) asking for an expert opinion in the matter of four old parchment scrolls the Metropolitan had recently purchased from an antiquities dealer in Bethlehem. The director that year, Millar Burrows of Yale University, was out of

the country at the time, but John C. Trever, who, along with William H. Brownlee, was a fellow at the School, first saw the four scrolls in his bedroom at the Albright Institute. The four manuscripts were 1QIsaiaha (which Trever was able to identify as Isaiah), the Commentary (Peshar) on Habakkuk, the Rule of the Community, and the Genesis Apocryphon (first called the "Lamech Scroll"), which was in an advanced state of decay. In Trever's own words,

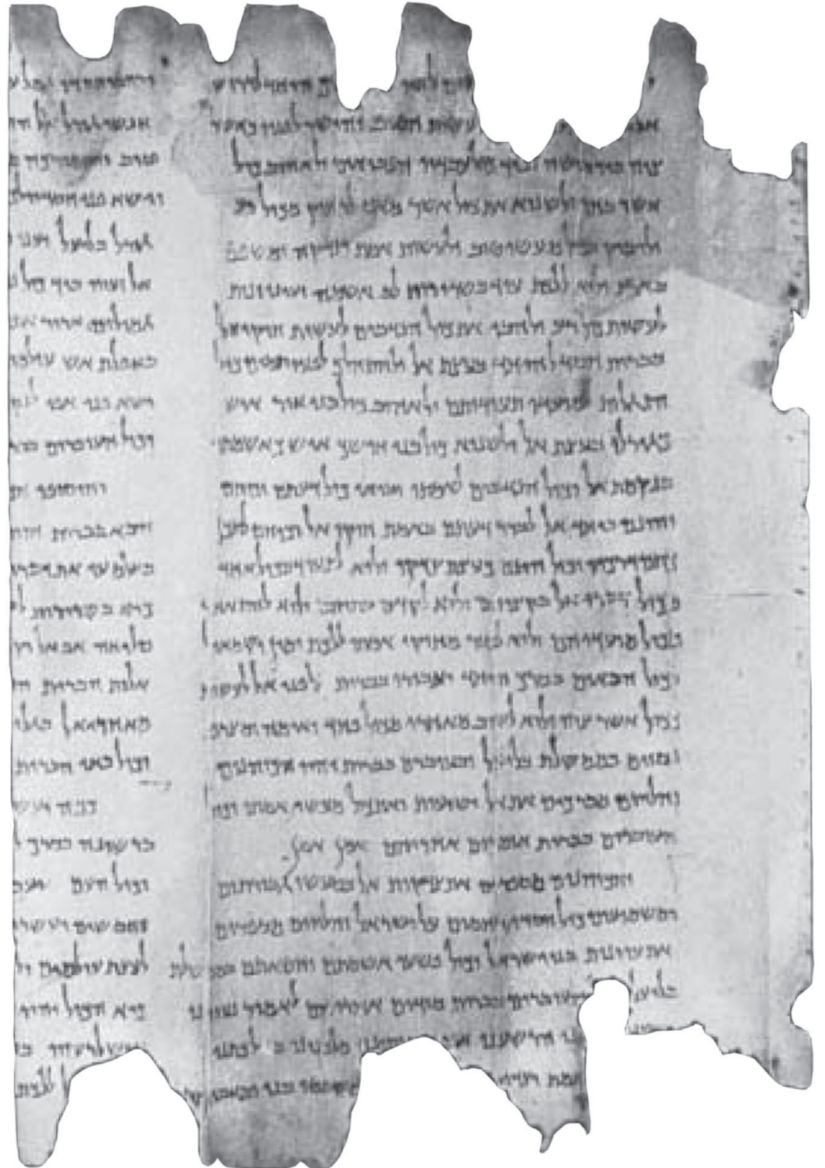
Sleep was almost impossible that night. Numerous questions flooded my mind. How long was the large scroll? How much of Isaiah was there? Could it be authentic? ... Out of sheer exhaustion I fell asleep, still arguing with myself! (Trever 1948: 50)

Trever, who fortuitously was a talented amateur photographer, received permission from the Metropolitan to photograph the scrolls, which he did in the basement of the School in what can only be described as primitive conditions. He and Brownlee were by now convinced that the scrolls were as old as the Nash Papyrus, and they hastened to send copies of the photographs to their teacher, W. F. Albright, then at The Johns Hopkins University. His reply, on March 15, 1948, was enthusiastic:

My heartiest congratulations on the greatest manuscript discovery of modern times! There is no doubt in my mind that the script is more archaic than that of the Nash Papyrus ... I should prefer a date around 100 B.C. ... What an absolutely incredible find! And there can happily not be the slightest doubt in the world about the genuineness of the manuscript. (Trever 1948: 55)

In April 1948 Burrows released a statement to the press announcing the discovery, and in 1950–51 ASOR published three of the four Syrian scrolls as *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery*, edited by Burrows, Trever, and Brownlee, with Trever's excellent photographs (Burrows et al. 1950–51).

This did not end the American School's involvement in the saga of the Dead Sea Scrolls, however. The Jerusalem School participated in the original excavations conducted at Khirbet Qumran led by Father Roland de Vaux of the École Biblique et Archéologique Française from March 10–29, 1952, and a group from ASOR explored some 225 caves in the sandstone cliffs above Qumran. They discovered Cave 3, a find that included the Copper Scroll. Cave 3 was one of the few caves actually discovered by archaeologists, not by the Ta'amireh Bedouin! When Roland de



The Community Rule (detail). This is one of the original four scrolls brought to the American School in Jerusalem in 1948.

Vaux organized the international team of scholars to publish the Cave 4 material being collected by the Palestine Archaeological Museum, he approached the American School to request the inclusion of American scholars. Acting under the advice of W. F. Albright, the American School appointed Frank Moore Cross (later of Harvard University) and Patrick W. Skehan (of The Catholic University of America). Finally, after the Cave 11 discoveries in 1956, ASOR purchased, through the generosity of the Elizabeth Hays Bechtel Fund, the 11QPsalm scroll and an Ezekiel scroll. Frank Moore Cross invited James Sanders, Director of the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center in Claremont, CA, to publish the Psalms Scroll. In the present era, the Albright Institute has been able to provide fellowships, through the generosity of the Dorot Foundation, the National Endow-



P. Benoit and Roland de Vaux of the Ecole Biblique in Qumran Cave I on a visit in the 1970s. *Photo courtesy of Joe D. Seger.*

ment for the Humanities and other foundations, for junior and senior scholars engaged in Scrolls research, including the present writer.

While the manuscripts discovered in the eleven caves in the vicinity of Khirbet Qumran are the recipients of much scholarly attention, it should not be forgotten that other caches of important manuscripts are included under the rubric "Dead Sea Scrolls." One of these, the Wadî ed-Daliyeh papyri, was discovered and purchased under the auspices of the American School. The Dahliyah papyri were discovered by the Bedouin in a remote cave in the central hill country about halfway between Samaria and Jericho, in 1962. The papyri came to the attention of F. M. Cross, who obtained funds from the Elizabeth Hay Bechtel Fund to purchase the papyri on behalf of ASOR. Cross describes his first sight of the papyri:

My attention, however, was riveted first on one of the bullae. It alone appeared to be inscribed. ... I read: "...-iah, son of (San)ballat, governor of Samaria." ... The sight of the seal very nearly dissolved all my poise for the bargaining procedures. (Cross 1963: 111)

In 1963 and 1964 the American School, led by then Director Paul W. Lapp, excavated the caves in which the papyri

were discovered. The Wadî ed-Daliyeh papyri have been critical for illuminating the history of the late Persian period in Judea and Samaria, while the excavations conducted by Lapp reveal the tragic end of the Samaritan aristocracy at the hands of the troops of Alexander the Great (Cross 1963: 119).

### The Current State of Affairs

To say that the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has revolutionized the study of the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism is to repeat what has become a well-worn cliché. But clichés, though trite, are often true, and, in fact, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls *has* revolutionized the study of the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism.

### Archaeology and Scrolls Research

In the wake of the discovery of the manuscript caves in the vicinity of Khirbet Qumran, the site was excavated in 1951 (by G. Lankester Harding and Roland de Vaux) and 1953–56 (by de Vaux alone).<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, de Vaux never published a final report on the results of his investigations, but his conclusions were well known from a number of preliminary reports, and, especially, by the synthetic overview he gave in the Schweich Lectures (de Vaux 1973). His conclusions may be sum-

marized thus: Qumran was a Jewish sectarian settlement, inhabited only by males, which was founded sometime during the reign of John Hyrcanus (135–104 BCE). The foundation period, Period 1a, was short-lived and the site small. This was followed immediately by Period 1b, when the settlement was greatly expanded. It was during Period 1b that the site took on its familiar shape, with a two-story tower at the entrance, a complex water system, dining facilities, and rooms and installations designed for communal use. The absence of private dwellings is noticeable. De Vaux hypothesized that the inhabitants lived in the caves, or in huts or tents around the site. Period 1b ended with an earthquake and a fire in 31 BCE, after which the site was uninhabited for a number of years.

Period II began, according to de Vaux, between 4–1 BCE, in the reign of Herod Archelaus. The same sectarian community returned and reused most of the structures. It is in Period II that de Vaux labeled one of the rooms a “scriptorium,” theorizing that the manuscripts found in the caves were copied there. The identification was made based on the remains of several plastered benches and tables, a platform with two cup-shaped depressions, and two inkwells. Period II ended in a violent destruction (at which time the scrolls were hidden in the nearby caves), which de Vaux attributed to the Roman legion operating in the Jericho area in 68 CE. After the destruction, the site was briefly used as a small Roman army camp.

De Vaux’s reconstruction remained mostly unchallenged during the first forty years of Scrolls research. I have remarked elsewhere that while the complaint has been made that the existence of the texts from the eleven caves adjacent to Qumran affected de Vaux’s archaeological interpretation of the site, it can equally be argued that de Vaux’s archaeological reconstruction affected the interpretation of the texts (Crawford 1998: 39–40)! In the past ten years, several challenges have been mounted against de Vaux’s interpretation. The site of Qumran has been variously interpreted as a *villa rustica* (Donceel-Voûte 1994; Humbert 1994), a Herodian fortress (Golb 1995), or a caravansary (Crown and Cansdale 1994). None of these hypotheses has withstood challenge. More importantly, de Vaux’s photographs from the excavations have been published, along with a synthesis of his field notes (Humbert and Chambon 1994). The resulting scholarly scrutiny has proved de Vaux’s main chronology and his conclusions regarding the nature of the settlement to be sound, although certain details have been challenged. For example, objections have been raised against the suggested time of the foundation of the settlement, the proposed thirty-year gap in occupation between Period 1b and Period 2, the hypothetical complete absence of women from the settlement, and the nature of the settlement in Period 1a (see Magness 1998: 57–58, 64–65). Answers to these and other questions await the complete publication of the archaeological evidence.

### *Textual Criticism and Scrolls Research*

Textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible has made extraordinary advances in the wake of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Textual critics were presented with a wealth of new material, giving us Hebrew manuscripts of biblical books from

as early as 200 BCE (4QExod-Levf, 4QSamb). Two main areas of research have arisen concerning the Bible in the late Second Temple period: the question of canon and the question of text. As is well known, all of the books of the Hebrew Bible with the exception of Esther and Nehemiah were discovered among the Qumran scrolls, which included about two hundred biblical manuscripts (the other find sites yielded only nineteen). Thus, at first it was thought that the canon of Jewish Scripture was more or less fixed in the late Second Temple period. However closer scrutiny made it clear that the word “canon” was in fact an anachronism in this period; that the Jewish canon as we know it did not come into existence until the second century CE, with some books, such as Esther, still inspiring debate as to its status as late as the fourth century CE! In light of this, the term “canon” was displaced in favor of “authoritative books.”

“The impact of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls on the question of the text of the Hebrew Bible has been not merely provocative but explosive.”

Further, it became clear that the list of authoritative books might vary among different communities of Yahwists. For example, all Yahwists in the Second Temple period accepted the Torah, the Five Books of Moses, as having scriptural authority. But the Samaritans accepted only the Torah, and no other books. Meanwhile, the community at Qumran appears to have accepted the Torah, the Prophets, and most of what we term the Writings, with the probable exception of Esther and possibly others. In addition, the Qumran community accepted other books, particularly Jubilees and 1 Enoch, as authoritative, even though they were not included in the later Jewish canon. Even some New Testament writers viewed 1 Enoch as authoritative (cf. the Epistle of Jude). Thus, the discoveries at Qumran have forced us to revisit the question of canon and the canonical process with provocative results.

The impact of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls on the question of the text of the Hebrew Bible has been not merely provocative but explosive. Before 1947, there existed three main witnesses to the text of the Hebrew Bible: the Masoretic Text, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Septuagint. The Samaritan Pentateuch was often dismissed as sectarian, while debate about the value of the Septuagint for text critical purposes was intense. The discovery in the caves at Qumran of a variety of Hebrew text types, some close to the Masoretic text,

some to a pre-sectarian form of the Samaritan Pentateuch, and some conforming to a supposed Hebrew forerunner of the Greek Septuagint, while yet others were “non-aligned,” did two things: it confirmed the three witnesses known prior to 1947 as of equal value for text criticism, and it complicated the picture of the history of the transmission of the text of the Hebrew Bible (it will be remembered that the textual scenario is different for each separate book of the Hebrew Bible). Further, the biblical manuscripts found outside of Qumran (Wadi Murabba’at, Nahal Hever and Masada) indicated that the text of the Hebrew Bible had stabilized by the end of the first century CE, with the proto-Masoretic group becoming dominant in the Jewish community and other witnesses disappearing (to be preserved only in the Samaritan and Christian communities). A reevaluation of the field of textual criticism was precipitated by Albright himself in a programmatic 1955 article “New Light on Early Recensions of the Hebrew Bible” (Albright 1955). In it Albright first laid out an argument for three textual families, one Palestinian, one Babylonian and one Egyptian, that could account for the differences among the various witnesses. This view was championed by F. M. Cross in his theory of “local texts,” textual families that developed in relative isolation from one another in the main centers of Jewish life in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. This theory implies the existence of a Hebrew prototype or archetype from which all three textual families developed. The Albright–Cross theory did not meet with universal approval. S. Talmon, for example, saw in the Qumran caves a “conflux of text-traditions which had developed over a considerable span of time in different areas of Palestine, and also outside Palestine, as in Babylonia, and in different social circles” (Talmon 1975: 325–26). Thus, rather than seek one source text, which broke up into three distinct families, Talmon suggests that the Hebrew Bible began as “primal traditions” with a limited amount of variation, which slowly solidified into the three *Gruppentexte* preserved by the faith communities of the Jews, the Samaritans, and the Christians.<sup>2</sup> Both of these positions have been critiqued and refined in what we may term the “second generation” of Qumran biblical scholarship, especially in the work of E. Ulrich and E. Tov, the main editors of the biblical manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Ulrich differentiates between orthographic variants, which are essentially incidental, individual textual variants, which may enable the critic to locate a manuscript within a particular text family, and variant literary recensions, which exist for certain books as a whole (e.g., Jeremiah), or distinct literary passages (e.g., the Song of Hannah; 1999: 86–95). Tov classifies biblical manuscripts into five groups (which may overlap): Texts written in what he terms the “Qumran practice,” Proto-Masoretic texts, pre-Samaritan texts, texts close to the presumed Hebrew source of the LXX, and non-aligned texts (1998: 294–98). The two scholars have drawn elements from both Cross and Talmon to attempt to create a new synthesis. Undoubtedly, now that the biblical texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls are almost fully published, new insights will be gained and refinements proposed.

Of perhaps greater importance for the wider field of bibli-

cal studies is the result the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has had on the production of new critical texts of the Hebrew Bible. In this endeavor, textual critics form two divergent camps. The first camp, of which the United Bible Society’s Hebrew Old Testament Text Project and its off-shoot, *BHQ*, is an example, makes a distinction between the history of the literary formation of the text and the subsequent history of its transmission. This school of thought rejects conjecture as a valid text-critical choice. Rather, in the words of James Sanders, “the aim of text criticism is to establish the date in the earliest history of the transmission of the text when inner literary developments are basically complete and when ancient Jewish believing communities accepted those texts as functionally canonical” (Sanders 1998: 13). This date would appear to be the first century CE. The Hebrew University Bible Project (HUBP) also adheres to this basic philosophy. As a result, both projects are creating a diplomatic edition of the Hebrew Bible text, using the Masoretic Text as the base text. *BHQ* will use the *Codex Leningradensis*, while HUBP uses the Aleppo Codex. Both editions will present variants, including those from Dead Sea Scrolls manuscripts, in a series of apparatuses. HUBP in particular will include for the first time variants gleaned from the Rabbinic corpus. The judgments of the editors’ text-critical analysis will be presented separately, in HUBP in a fifth apparatus and in separate, freestanding volumes (*Critique textuelle De l’Ancien Testament*) for *BHQ*. Thus both projects avoid what they term “exegesis” (that is, deciding between variants based on subjective judgment about a particular passage) in textual criticism.

The other camp believes it is desirable, if not always possible in practice, to arrive at, through the judicious use of text critical judgments, a fully critical, eclectic text of the Hebrew Bible. In the words of Ron Hendel, “the fundamental hypothesis of the textual critic is that by collating and analyzing the extant textual data a better or earlier or more original reading can at times be determined” (1998: 5). Thus, textual critics in this group do not begin with a default text, but attempt to determine a fully critical, eclectic text. The result will be more subjective, but this charge of subjectivity can be overcome if the text-critical evidence is fully presented, for the reader then to accept or reject. A new project, the Oxford Hebrew Bible project, is undertaking this task. Whichever camp one finds oneself in, the result of all three of these projects will be to analyze, collate and present in easily accessible scholarly editions all the new data made available by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

## To the Future

What, then, of the future? “I am not a prophet, or a prophet’s daughter,” and “much study is a weariness of the flesh.” However, this assignment calls on me to make some statements about the future of the field. The obvious *desideratum* for the short term is the final publication of the archaeological data, and the completion of the publication of the manuscripts, down to the most tattered scrap. Once that short-term goal is achieved, much work remains to be done. The main thrust of research, I

believe, will involve the synthesis of the new Dead Sea Scrolls data into our previous knowledge. The first generation of scholars, and to some extent the second generation as well, perforce had to process and come to terms with the new data on its own (in fact, the argument has been made that there was too precipitous a movement toward synthesis). However, the next major projects will be synthetic. That this is already happening in the field of textual criticism should be clear from my remarks above. It is also happening in archaeology, as well as in the history of the Second Temple period. The study of texts from the Second Temple period will be greatly changed. I predict that the next generation will no longer only produce separate handbooks for the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Pseudepigrapha, etc., but instead develop collections based on literary genres, such as apocalyptic or wisdom literature, or historical periods (e.g., the Persian period). The hard and fast distinction between “biblical” and “nonbiblical” will disappear (although of course the distinction will continue to be important in faith communities); already work on the category of “Rewritten Bible” has blurred the lines of “scripture” in the Second Temple period. The understanding of the origins of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism, sensationalism aside, is and will continue to undergo profound changes. In other words, there is no area in our field of study that will go unchanged by the discoveries that began in 1947. My final prediction is this: that the Albright Institute, which was there from the very beginning, will continue, through the scholars it nurtures, to be a major voice in the field.

## Notes

1. For my remarks on the archaeology of Qumran, I am greatly indebted to the work of Jodi Magness, currently a trustee of the Albright Institute (Magness 1998).
2. This paper is too brief to comment on the important work done by such scholars as D. Barthélemy, J. Sanders, and P. W. Skehan.

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**Sidnie White Crawford** (Ph.D. Harvard University) is currently President of the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research as well as Professor of Hebrew Bible and Chair of the Classics and Religious Studies Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She is a member of the international committee for the publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls.



Sidnie White Crawford