The Dead Sea Scrolls:
The Texts and Their Significance for
Early Judaism and Early Christianity

Gary A. Rendsburg
Rutgers University

Colgate University – 18 February 2015
Qumran caves

Qumran caves

Location of Qumran in the Judean Desert

Qumran Cave One

Muhammad edh-Dhib and colleague
Kando

Eleazar L. Sukenik (1889-1953)

Second Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa)

War Scroll (1QM)
Hodayot Scroll (Thanksgiving Hymns) (1QH)

Mar Samuel
The Syrian Metropolitan

First Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa'

Community Rule (Manual of Discipline) (1QS)

Kando

Pesher Habakkuk (1QpHab)
Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen)

[midrashic text dealing with Noah and Abraham]

American Schools of Oriental Research (Jerusalem)

Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls?

Four Sects mentioned by Josephus (c. 80 C.E.)

- Sadducees
- Pharisees
- Essenes
- Zealots

Essenes:

- Communal life style
- Initiation rites
- Predetermination
- Some were celibate (see also Philo)
- Strict interpretation of Jewish law
Key Passages from the Community Rule (1QS)

3.15-16 All that is now and ever shall be originates with the God of knowledge. Before things come to be, He has ordered all their designs, so that when they do come to exist – at their appointed times as ordained by His glorious plan – they fulfill their destiny, a destiny impossible to change.

6.1-2 They shall eat together, they shall pray together, and they shall deliberate together.

6.13-23 [detailed description of initiation rites]

7.13 And whoever spits in the midst of the assembly of the congregation, he shall be punished thirty days.

Pliny the Elder (23-79 C.E.), *Natural History* (77 C.E.) mentions the Essenes living along the shore of the Dead Sea and then states: *infra hos Engada* 'below this is Ein Gedi'

“with no women among them, renouncing desire entirely, without money, with (only) palm trees for company”

Col. V (Purity)

13 None of the perverse men is to enter purifying waters used by the Men of Holiness and so contact their purity. Indeed, it is impossible to be purified

14 without first repenting of evil, inasmuch as impurity adheres to all who transgress His word.
 Pesher Habakkuk 7.17 – 8.3

‘But the righteous man by his faith will live’ (Hab 2:4)
This refers to all those who obey the Torah among the Jews whom God will rescue from the house of judgment, because of their suffering and their faith in the Teacher of Righteousness.

- This verse is cited and used the same way 3x in the New Testament: Romans 1:17, Hebrews 10:38, Galatians 3:11

 Pesher Method in the New Testament
Matthew 1

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

 Ben Ezra Synagogue – Cairo Geniza discovery (1890s)

Damascus Document – key passages

4.20 – 5.1 They are caught in two: fornication, by taking two wives in their lifetimes although the principle of creation is ‘male and female He created them’ (Gen 1:27).

12.1-2 A man may not lie with a woman in the city of the Temple, defiling the city of the Temple by their impurity.

12.8-10 No one may sell a permitted animal or bird to the Gentiles, lest they sacrifice them; neither from his threshing-floor nor from his winepress shall he sell to them.

12.13-14 and the fish, they may not be eaten unless they are split open while alive and their blood poured out.

 Damascus Document – Sabbath law
(most of cols. 10-11)

10:21 – 11:2

- One may not travel outside his city more than a thousand cubits.
- A man may not eat anything on the Sabbath day except food already prepared.
- One may not send a Gentile to do his business on the Sabbath day.
Josephus, *Jewish War*

8.9 Moreover, they [sc. the Essenes] are stricter than any other of the Jews in resting on their labors on the seventh day. For they not only get their food ready the day before, that they may not be obliged to kindle a fire on that day, but they will not remove any vessel out of its place. . . .

Mar Samuel
The Syrian Metropolitan

Yigael Yadin (1917-1984)

1QIsa – Great Isaiah Scroll
1QS – Community Rule

Pesher Habakkuk (1QpHab)
Genesis Apocryphon
Shrine of the Book – היכל הספר
Israel Museum – מוזיאון ישראל
Opened 1965

Qumran caves

Qumran caves

Père Roland de Vaux, O.P.
(1903-1971)

École biblique et archéologique française

Khirbet Qumran
The Dining Hall

The Pantry – more than 1000 ceramic vessels found here

Writing Tables displayed at the Rockefeller Museum

Mikveh (ritual bath)
Miqveh
(ritual bath)

Large Cistern

Water Channel

The Caves of Qumran
Entrance to Qumran Cave 4

Qumran Cave 4

581 texts from Qumran Cave 4 alone

4Q364
4Q365
Reworked Pentateuch

4Q303 – 4Q307
Miscellaneous Texts

Palestine Archaeological Museum
– Rockefeller Museum
Every biblical book (except Esther) is represented
Best attested ones are:

- Psalms – 39
- Deuteronomy – 31
- Isaiah – 22
- Genesis – 18
- Exodus – 18
- Leviticus – 17

- Numbers – 12
- The Twelve – 10
- Daniel – 8
- Ezekiel – 7
- Jeremiah – 6

Yigael Yadin
Roland de Vaux
Geza Vermes (1924-2013)
Temple Scroll

47.7-13 All skins of permitted animals that will be slaughtered within their cities, they shall not bring into it; but in their cities they may do with them their work for all their needs; but into the city of my temple they shall not bring (them). . . . And you shall not defile the city in which I settle my name and my temple; but in the skins (of the animals) that they will slaughter in the temple, in them they shall bring their wine and their oil and all their foodstuffs to my temple city.

46.13-16 And you shall make for them a place (for) the ‘hand’, outside the city, to which they shall go out, to the northwest of the city – roofed houses, with pits within them, into which the excrement may descend, so that it will not be visible at any distance from the city, three thousand cubits.

Josephus, *Jewish War*

8.9 Moreover, they [sc. the Essenes] are stricter than any other of the Jews in resting on their labors on the seventh day. . . . nor do they defecate thereon.