

Dr. Jeffrey Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 23, Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Part 1

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This is Dr. Jeffrey Hudon in his teaching on biblical archeology. This is session 23, Archeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Part 1.

There's little doubt in the minds of most biblical scholars and archeologists, biblical scholars and archeologists that the discovery and recovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls comprise probably the greatest archaeological find related to the Bible in modern times.

Dead Sea Scrolls comprise nearly 1,000 fragments of nearly 1,000 manuscripts as well as several nearly complete manuscripts of the Bible, of commentaries and of sectarian literature dated in the centuries immediately before and shortly after the turn of the era. These are found over a number of years near the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea near a site called Khirbet Qumran. And we see a picture here of at least one of the caves, cave number four, and the actual ruins of Qumran is over in this area here.

This is the escarpment up into the Judean wilderness. Two pieces of the famous copper scroll were discovered upon their discovery. It is really the only complete scroll found by archeologists rather than the Bedouin. We'll unpack that shortly.

Just again, here are a few brief facts about the wilderness of Judea. That's the biblical Hamidbar, Midbar Yehuda. These are, again, some scenes of looking at the highway to Jerusalem and the landscape of the wilderness.

And then again, from Mount Scopus to the east with a view of the wilderness as well. Okay, the scrolls themselves were found in a series of at least 12 caves, probably many, many more. But there's a much earlier history to the site of Khirbet Qumran.

And we'll kind of try to unpack that and then move ahead with our description. Khirbet Qumran, as we mentioned in an earlier lecture, was probably one of the cities of the wilderness or desert district of the tribal allotment of Judah. Some people believe Sakaka, but there's other suggestions and theories as well.

This is again a top plan of the ruins of Qumran as they were originally excavated by the Dominicans at Ecole biblique. We've got again, water channels that brought water from dams along the escarpment to the site. This is again a picture of some of

the nearby excavations at En Gedi and also at a site that is the City of Salt, Ir ha Melek, right along the shore of the Dead Sea.

Again, both date back to the Old Testament and the Qumran itself. Excellent work for studying the history of the Dead Sea Scrolls is by Weston Fields, who recently passed away, and volume one is out.

Volume two hopefully will appear at some point. He describes a very detailed explanation of the history of the discovery of the scrolls and their early decipherment. It's rather surprising to many people that the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls again, which happened around 1947, is not the first-time manuscripts were found in the Judean wilderness near the Dead Sea origin.

The Christian leader, second-century and third-century Christian leaders reported the discovery of an ancient manuscript together with other Hebrew and Greek books in a jar near Jericho. Again, Jericho just shortly or just to the north of Khirbet Qumran. So, this, again, is a very early reference to manuscripts found in jars.

Secondly, Timothy, patriarch of Seleucia, also reports the following. He learned from a trustworthy Jew that some books were found some years ago in a rock-dwelling near Jericho. After a hunter followed his dog into a cave and found a chamber containing many books, Jews from Jerusalem investigated and found books of the Old Testament and others in Hebrew script.

And we have another one, another gentleman; I won't pronounce his name, Yacoub something, in 950, so about a century after Timotheus was a Karite scholar or historian, described the doctrines of the Jewish group called the cave people that he claimed were contained in books hidden in a cave. So, there are several instances of, again, books or scrolls found in caves or somewhere in the vicinity of Qumran before 1947, when the first group of the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. Finally, in the 1930s, the Dead Sea Potash Works on the northern shore of the Dead Sea, a Jewish settlement, local Bedouin, and this is from the Tamir tribe, sold antiquities, coins, and pottery to the workmen at the settlement and offered to take them to see caves that contain books from the time of your kings for a few piastres more.

I don't know if any of the workers took up that offer, but that, again, is a reference to possible scrolls nearby in this area. We also have the account of Moses Wilhelm Shapira, who was a Jerusalemite and an antiquities dealer in the Old City in the 19th century. He was quite well known for selling antiquities to tourists and to museums.

He claimed to have found manuscripts, leather manuscripts or strips, I should say, of these from the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. He claimed that these manuscripts contained an early version of Deuteronomy, and he dated them to 850 BC. He then

wanted to offer them to the British Museum for the princely sum of one million pounds sterling.

Scholars examined these leather strips in England and claimed that they were forgery, perhaps wide margins of truly old Torah scrolls that were cut off and then written with paleo letters. It's important to understand that the Mesha Stela was found ten years later than these strips, also from east of the Dead Sea in Moab. So, this was also from that area.

Shapira was distraught over this charge of forgery and committed suicide in a Rotterdam hotel in 1884. The leather strips themselves were documented into the 1890s, and then they disappeared. There has been much work on this lately.

Initially John Allegro wrote about Shapira's book called *The Shapira Affair*. But lately, this has been restudied his life, and some scholars believe there may have been authenticity with his claims for these scrolls. Unfortunately, the photographs of these scrolls did not turn out.

They were too dark. You couldn't see the writing. Here are some copies of these scrolls, what they look like, and, of course, Allegro's book.

Christian Corder wrote where Shapira's shop was located. He was again a convert to Christianity. He was Jewish, and his daughter wrote a book, *The Little Daughter of Jerusalem*, which was a novel but a thinly disguised account of her own life.

Names were changed, but you can clearly know who's who about the sadness surrounding this affair and her father's suicide. Shortly after this time, a Jewish scholar who was living in England and working at Cambridge University, Solomon Schechter, was made known of a Geniza at the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Cairo, old Cairo. Inside this Geniza were very ancient manuscripts.

So, Schechter went to the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Cairo. This has been recently restored, a picture of it here. This is the ladder up to the repository or Geniza, where they put old, worn-out scrolls.

He got just tattered scrolls and fragments of manuscripts, put them in crates, and sent them to England, where he spent many years working on them. Schechter focused his attention on two fragments of a work copied from a much more ancient source that contained the teaching of an extinct Jewish sect called the Sons of Zadok that existed around the first century BC and was led by a figure known as the Teacher of Righteousness. Another copy of this exact work was later found with the first group of the Dead Sea Scrolls, *Serekh haYahad*, or the Rule of the Community and the Damascus Document.

So, Schechter again really found what we would say the earliest Dead Sea Scroll only in Cairo rather than near the Dead Sea. So, how were the Dead Sea Scrolls found? You have to look at the political context of their discovery and understand what was going on in Palestine in 1946-1948. This was a time of upheaval and often open warfare between Jews and Arabs.

The British, which had a mandate over Palestine, were in charge and trying to keep order. It was very, very violent and very, very dangerous. Here's again a car burning outside of Damascus Gate.

You still have these, even today, memories of that time with these fortified kiosks for road checking traffic and checking papers of people going by. This is a Russian compound or an area close to Jaffa Road. You can see the protection the British had to erect, to protect the barriers and barbed wire to protect themselves.

So, it was a very dangerous time to be in the Holy Land. It was at that exact time that the famous story of two Bedouin boys looking for a lost sheep threw a rock into a cave, and instead of hearing the rock hit another rock, they heard the breaking of pottery. And so, they investigate and find several jars that have lids on them.

Here are pictures of two of them there. And so they go in thinking that they're going to find treasure. And they reach into the jar and instead of pulling out gold or silver or coins, they pull out a very green looking, moldy, long, rolled up scroll.

And so, they leave it and tell at the fire that night around the campfire, they tell what they have found and return, retrieve these scrolls, and at least take one or two to Bethlehem to have them appraised. Maybe they can sell them and make some money. Now the time between the retrieval of the scrolls from the cave until they took it to Bethlehem to have it looked at by an antiquities dealer could have been a lengthy period of time.

And you can just imagine a Dead Sea Scroll hung up on a peg outside of a tent during a Palestinian winter, again, waiting for somebody to go to Bethlehem to take that and get it appraised. We don't know how long that was, but it could have been months. The Arab who found Bedouin was Mohamed Ahmed El Hamid or Adib; the wolf was his nickname.

And he was, has been, attempts to track him down years later. And there are photos of different people that claim to be him. We're not sure if the actual, if it's the actual person or not.

By the way, that turned out to be cave number one. That's the interior of the cave today and the entrance to the cave outside. So, the initial discovery of the three

scrolls was by two or three Amir Bedouins, including Adib, in the winter of 1946, 1947, or possibly earlier due to seasonal grazing patterns of their flock.

So, they would have been down in that area during the cold part of the year, the winter, very early spring, and then move up to the highlands, move up to the hill country around Bethlehem later in the spring. The Bedouin brought the scrolls to Bethlehem, where they were shown to be shown to shopkeepers who dealt in antiquities. They were then recognized as Hebrew manuscripts.

George Isaiah, a shopkeeper, was convinced that the scrolls were genuine and referred the Bedouin to a man by the name of Khalil Iskander Shahin, who was known as Kondo. Kondo, in turn, took the scrolls, gave a five-pound advance, and brought them to Mar Athanasius, Yeshu Samuel of the Syrian Orthodox Church, and an amateur manuscript enthusiast at St. Mark's Church in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem. He purchased them on the spot for 24 pounds, a hundred dollars, and the deal was made in late summer 1947.

So, the first group of scrolls were found at that time more or less intact and sold for a hundred dollars. Samuel attempted to get expert opinions about his scrolls. No one took him seriously or the scrolls.

Samuel even traveled with the scrolls to Homs, Syria, where his ecclesiastical patriarch dismissed them as well. Now, we have to understand that in Jerusalem at this time, even though there was a lot of tension and sometimes open warfare and a lot of violence, you had a lot of scholars the various schools. You had Hebrew University scholars, you had the French school with biblical scholars, you had German scholars, and the American school.

And so, he was taking these around to some of these scholars and just dismissed them. There's no way these can be genuine scrolls. They simply wouldn't have survived.

So, Kondo dispatched Shia to find more scrolls, and with the Bedouin as guides, four more scrolls were retrieved from the cave. Three of these were sold to another dealer in Bethlehem for thirty dollars, and two of the jars they were found went for, again, the incredible sum of 75 cents apiece. Another shopkeeper in Bethlehem acted as the selling agent for these three scrolls and contacted Eliezer Sukenik of Hebrew University.

And again, Sukenik, remember, was the first Jewish Israeli archaeologist who was trained and one of the early pioneers of Israeli archaeology. Sukenik traveled on a bus to Bethlehem on the very day the UN voted for the partition of Palestine to look at these scrolls. Now, it's important to point out here that Sukenik's son, again, was

Yigal Yadin, who at this time was an Israeli general, or I should say a Jewish general in the Haganah, the pre-state army of the Jews in Palestine.

He was also an archaeologist. And he pleaded with his father, do not do this. It's too dangerous.

You're a Jewish man traveling to Bethlehem, an Arab town. If they recognize who you are, you could die. But Sukenik had some trusted Arab friends.

He dressed up in Arab garb and got to Bethlehem and back safely. While he was in Bethlehem, he was able to buy the three scrolls for Hebrew University, consisting of a poorly preserved scroll of Isaiah and two sectarian scrolls, the War of the Sons of Darkness against the Sons of Light and the Thanksgiving Scrolls. So, three of these scrolls got into Jewish hands almost immediately.

So, Metropolitan Samuel, the leader of St. Mark's Church, finally took the scrolls that were in his possession to the American School. The American School, which later became the Albright Institute, again, was mostly evacuated. The director was gone.

There were only really two students there, William Brownlee and John Trevor. They were recent PhD students. He showed the scrolls to them.

And they immediately got word to Professor William Albright at Johns Hopkins and somehow got some early photos of those to him. And Albright immediately responded and said, congratulations on the discovery of the greatest manuscript, the discovery of modern times, something to that effect. He loved superlatives and he certainly used those in that correspondence.

There are great pictures here of Trevor and two of the St. Mark's Armenian priests. This gentleman here, this is Athanasius Samuel, the Metropolitan. George Isaiah, I believe, is this person here.

He later died in the violence in Jerusalem shortly thereafter. What happened was that John Trevor happened to be an amateur photographer. And so he immediately wanted to take photos of all the scrolls.

And so, he scoured Jerusalem, again, dodging bullets as he went from shop to shop, trying to find the film. All the films that were available at that time were outdated. It was expired, and it wasn't correct, but he did the best he could and got the best film available.

Again, in a very makeshift photo lab, depicted here, he took pictures of every column of every scroll that he could open, of the scrolls that the Metropolitan Samuel had. Of course, he was assisted by William Brownlee, who was also there. So that photo

on the right really captures one of the greatest moments in modern biblical scholarship.

That is a 2000-year-old scroll on that table being photographed by Trevor. And there's John Trevor as an older man. Again, these photos were published by the American Schools of Oriental Research, both in black and white and color.

And they remain probably the best way to study those texts because since their discovery, they've deteriorated, gotten dark, and they're much harder to read. And the photographs right shortly after the discovery, made by John Trevor, really capture a text that is much better than you can actually see, even if you have the original text in front of you. This is Kondo, the shopkeeper in Bethlehem or cobbler that sold the scrolls and later on was the middleman between the Bedouin and the scholars as more and more scroll fragments were discovered.

Now, this scroll here actually looks like it's burned. It's in very poor shape. That's the Genesis Apocryphon that wasn't unrolled until much later by the Israelis and very poorly preserved, but published nevertheless.

So, there were seven initial scrolls: four were in the possession of the Metropolitan Samuel, and three were in the possession of the Israelis, or soon to be Israelis, as the State of Israel was proclaimed in 1948. And Eleazar Sukenik is here studying one of the scrolls that he purchased, as well as one of the jars, and his son Yigal Yadin, much later in life, reading another scroll called the Temple Scroll that he published himself. So the Metropolitan Samuel, the Armenian priest that had these four scrolls, then tried to sell the scrolls after the violence subsided and the State of Israel was formed and things settled back down a little bit in and around Jerusalem.

He tried various venues to sell these scrolls, but they were not successful. He finally brought them to the United States and actually placed them for sale in the Wall Street Journal. And here's the original ad: the four Dead Sea Scrolls, biblical manuscripts dating back to at least 2200 BC, are for sale. This would be an ideal gift for an educational or religious institution by an individual or group.

It's hard to believe, but actually that was actually the ad in the Wall Street Journal for the Dead Sea Scrolls. Well, this was spotted and recognized in Israel, and the Israeli government wanted to purchase these scrolls immediately. And so Yadin flew to New York, Yigal Yadin, Sukenik's son, and talked to this person here.

And this person was given the alias of Mr. Green, and he was going to be the expert to look at these scrolls and make sure they were genuine. His real name was Harry Orlinsky, a Jewish scholar, and he had a very good sense of humor. And his first words to Yadin were, was this going to be dangerous? Did you need me for a

dangerous military raid or maneuver? And Yadin said, no, we need you for something more important, and that's getting these scrolls.

So Orlinsky looked at the scrolls and recognized that they were genuine, and they were purchased and flown to Israel. And some of that is again recorded in Yadin's own book on the scrolls, *The Message of the Scrolls*. So, on the Israeli side, again, after the war, 1948 war, Israel controlled the southern part of the Judean wilderness.

Jordan controlled the northern Judean wilderness, including the area around Qumran. And for Israel, there were a lot of reports of Bedouins sneaking over the border from Jordan and, again, going through ancient caves in the Wadis, going up into the wilderness, up into the hill country, and perhaps looting and finding ancient objects, perhaps even scrolls. So, what Israelis did is they launched an expedition with archaeologists and systematically surveyed all of the Wadis or the canyons on their side of the border.

And so, if there was any material there, they would find it and save it from the Bedouin, where it would be made perhaps turn up for sale, but out of context, and they wouldn't get as much information from that, of course. And so an early survey of the Nahal Hever, one of these canyons going up into the hill country, showed Bedouin activity like cigarette butts and garbage that they left, even at the remotest, most difficult-to-access caves. Nevertheless, they missed materials, and early materials from the Chalcolithic and Roman periods were found.

The Judean wilderness I missed here was occupied during the Chalcolithic, Middle Bronze, and Iron Ages, as well as the Roman period, by refugees or brigands hiding from authorities. It was a place where people ran to get away from society, to hide out. And so there are remains from all of these periods in the Judean wilderness, not just from the early Roman period, when the Dead Sea Scrolls were deposited there.

A recent testimony from a member of this early team suggests that there was actually a skeleton of probably a priest or a Jewish religious sect member found in one of these caves. he testified to that, but nothing ever appeared in the original reports, so we don't know how true that is. So another expedition was founded later on, an even more thorough expedition that covered all of these canyons on the Israeli side of the border, and they were given again to a team of archaeologists, Yigal Yadin, Pesach Baradon, who we talked about earlier, who found all the Chalcolithic materials, Yohanan Aharoni, and Nachman Avigad. This was a logistical nightmare because of the remoteness of these sites, so the Israeli army helped with logistics, supplies, helicopters, and whatnot, and this was carried out for a couple of seasons.

Meanwhile, on the Jordanian side of the border, around Qumran, where the original scrolls were found, Captain Aish al-Zebin of the Jordanian Arab Legion led an

expedition with Bedouin help to find Qumran cave run where the original seven scrolls were found, and he had success and rediscovered that cave. Then the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, led by G. Lancaster Harding, organized an archaeological expedition to look for more caves and excavate the site of Khirbet Qumran, which again was close to these caves, thinking that there may be a link between the ruins and the caves. This was led by the Dominican father Roland Deveau of the École Biblique et Archéologique Française, or the French School of Bible and Archaeology in Jerusalem.

So, a very prestigious institution there was going to be excavating the site, and Harding was in charge of finding more caves and searching for more scrolls. So, we talked about the Israeli, what they were doing on their side of the border, and now the Jordanians, what they're doing on their side of the border. What were the Bedouin doing? They recognized that there's money in those caves and that those scrolls, so they scoured the whole area.

While the French were digging at Qumran and went home to have their baguette sandwiches for dinner, the Bedouin would come out, who were working at the dig during the day, came out at night to find more caves and excavate more scrolls and scroll fragments. So, it was a difficult time. The researchers, the Europeans, did as best as they could to save as much as they could, but the Bedouins were almost always there ahead of them.

And scrolls and scroll fragments continued to appear on the antiquities market at higher and higher prices but with no context. And when the Israelis and Europeans got to these caves, they would find them looted, and if there were any scrolls there, they would be gone. So, after Cave 1 was identified, excavations were carried out in that cave, revealing fragments from approximately 70 documents and two fragments from two of the seven original scrolls.

So, this is Lancaster Harding here, Joseph Millick in the middle, and then Roland Deveau. So, they had just a huge task to scour these caves and try to excavate them. And of course, all that required a lot of money.

The Jordanian Department of Antiquities simply didn't have the budget. Even the Kingdom of Jordan was short on money. And so, help was needed, international help from institutions and governments to help in these excavations and explorations.

And then, of course, soundings and excavations were carried out at Qumran, Khirbet Qumran itself, and to look for connections between the manuscripts and the site. And similar jars, scroll jars, were found. These excavations were carried out until 1956, and then the Israelis returned with excavations by the Israel Antiquities Authority in the 1990s and the 2000s.

So, a heavily excavated site. And this is a, we'll break down that in a minute here. This is a site of Qumran and some of the caves you can see in the immediate vicinity.

So, the physical and topographical setting of Qumran sat atop a terrace overlooking the Dead Sea, and then behind it was an escarpment going up to the Valley of Acre. And again, during the wet season or the rainy season, winter up in the hill country, water would run down those wadis and empty out into the Dead Sea. And so, the ancient occupants of Khirbet Qumran built dams and channels to divert that water during the rainy season into cisterns within the settlement.

And a lot of those have been partially restored. They were recognized and partially restored. So, even in dry months, Qumran had adequate water for drinking and bathing.

It seems to be when the early archaeologists went to this site that it was quite remote, but there was a road system in this area in antiquity. And so, it wasn't as remote in antiquity as previously thought. Khirbet Qumran was not discovered by these archaeologists.

It was known by a series of early explorers in the region that mentioned the ruins, but they simply weren't excavated at that early date. The excavations at Qumran basically clarified its history, and this is kind of a breakdown of that history. The site was probably established in the 9th or 8th century BC as a fortified border post and village, and again probably referenced in Joshua 15 and also in 2 Chronicles 26 during the 8th century reign of Uzziah.

This was probably one of his paramilitary agricultural settlements. Then, in approximately 125 BC, a Jewish religious sect or dissident group reoccupied these ruins, rebuilt them, and expanded them. So, the Qumran that they lived in was built upon the ruins of this earlier paramilitary outpost.

Members of the sect constructed halls, workshops, and meeting rooms, as well as an elaborate system of water channel cisterns and ritual baths. Again, the Hebrew term mikvot, and the population expanded significantly during the reign of Alexander Janius, one of the Hasmonean kings. This occupation was disrupted by a massive earthquake that hit the region in 31 BC, and the damage from that earthquake can still be seen today when you visit Qumran.

The cracks in one of the mikvehs is a telltale sign. Finally, from approximately 4 BC to AD 68, Qumran is reoccupied by the same sect, and in AD 68, a Roman army, the 10th Legion, approaches from the north, marching down the Jordan Valley. The site is abandoned at that time.

This is probably because the scrolls were hidden in the caves, and the fate of the occupants of the Jewish sect is unknown. They were probably killed or sent into slavery. So, we'll leave our narrative at that point and begin next time continuing our study of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

This is a beautiful aerial view of Khirbet Qumran, the original settlement. You can see some of the round cisterns over here, which date to the Old Testament period. This is the escarpment, and there was a water channel running water down from a dam, filling all the cisterns here and some of the caves here and in the immediate vicinity.

The Dead Sea is out here, and the modern highway along the western shore of the Dead Sea is visible as well. Thank you very much.

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