

## **A VISIT TO SOME DEAD SEA SCROLLS. November 2007**

**As remembered by Bill Huntley and Lillian Larsen**

**On this morning after the encounter with some of the Dead Sea Scrolls in San Diego's Museum of Natural History, I find myself inspired by the memorable encounter with the ancient writings and those who hid them for almost two thousand years in the caves near Qumran, the keen questions and insights of a hundred Redlands students, alums, and their friends,; and the organizing skills of Ms. Coco Haupt who brought us all together for a day of inquiry.**

**I must confess to some anxiety at the prospect of trying to answer questions from a hundred different perspectives when I was not sure which scrolls would be on display, my first move was to invite my new colleague in Religious Studies at the U. of R.; Dr, Lillian Larsen, who teaches Christian Scriptures as well as World Religions. She brings a background in Greek and Coptic languages to the Scrolls, more recent than my study 40 years ago in a class in which we were assigned small fragments of the Hodayot (Psalm Scroll).**

**Driving down for this opportunity, as I went over the hill South of Temecula and saw first hand the extent of the fires on both sides of the 15 Freeway, it framed what I might say today. What I saw on the 15 Freeway gave a sense of the destruction that happened just last week, [and 2000 years ago at] Qumran. Those who wrote the Scrolls met just such a fate, by the human agency of the Romans. But they knew what was coming and hid the Scrolls. I asked myself what is valuable that I own that might have been saved. I wondered to myself what I would consider valuable enough to save in a calamity like a fire or an invasion to hide in a cave for some future generation or millennium.**

**After meeting the hundred Redlands alums and current students, we entered the Museum for an introduction to the viewing of the scrolls which attempted to show the similarities of the landscape of modern Israel with San Diego County and then took us inside the community of Qumran in the era that that community shared with the origins of Christianity. We were given a chance to imagine life in such a harsh landscape with few resources. The Essenes (or "covenanters" as Frank Cross calls them), who hid the Scrolls, probably had a legitimate fear of the Roman legions, who indeed soon burned and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple built during the rule of Herod. As well**

**as a realistic fear of Romans they probably also held desire to withdraw from society and forge a strong community in the desert.**

**During lunch or at least during dessert, Lillian and I answered questions. The lead off question was:**

**Why did the scribes write the letters "YHWH" ?**

**B. (Bill) that is a great question and one I can answer. The scribes did not want readers later to mention the name of the Deity except in reverence, so when a reader would see those four letters, he would hesitate to say the[m] out loud. Sometimes those 4 letters written in a very old "font" as if in Old English for us, or in "Paleo-Hebrew," from before the Exile to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE, readers of the particular scroll would be careful not to speak the name; sometimes the scribes who wrote the scrolls we just saw put just 4 big dots where the name for the Divine one would have appeared in a text. In modern Jewish reading from the scriptures, Jews will say "Adonoi" (my lord) when they see those four letters.**

**Why did the scribes write in such small letters?**

**L. (Lillian Larsen) The materials that they were using were very valuable. In any ancient context, preparation of both parchment and papyrus was costly and time intensive. It may have been particularly difficult to get and prepare materials for writing in this relatively remote place.**

**B. We might also acknowledge that while the [fragments] we saw downstairs just now were in small "fonts" all the scrolls from Qumran were not that small. The Isaiah Scroll is not safely preserved in the "Shrine of the scroll" in the Jerusalem Museum, and it was not on display in San Diego. When unrolled it reaches around a room about half the size of this room (or about 40 x 40 feet). It was among the very first of the scrolls discovered at Qumran.**

**Q. What about the Scrolls would be of importance to modern Jews?**

**B. Again, this is an important question. Whether one is from an Orthodox, Conservative, Re-constructionist, or Reform branch of Judaism all would, I think, be happy to find that the Scroll from Deuteronomy (4Q41 as it was labeled, cf. Kohn, 18) contained the "Ten Commandments" (at least the Deut.5 version). The narrator on my headphone said that this fragment might be part of what was carried as a "prayer book" of the owner.**

**Q. How do the scrolls fit within the study of scripture generally? What do they tell us that is different from what we knew already?**

**L. The scrolls containing Biblical texts are very similar to the versions that were passed down through the centuries. These First Century BCE documents stand remarkably close to manuscripts dated a thousand years later.**

**B. Indeed, if I were a family of a scribe, (which with my handwriting, I am clearly not), then I would be proud to have been in a tradition that kept so close to the text, with so few errors.**

**L. It appears that the accuracy of the Hebrew scribes over the Centuries was more accurate than those who preserved and copied the Christian Texts, including those we know as the New Testament.**

**Q. What connections do the scrolls have with Christianity?**

**B. One of the fragments downstairs which we saw as the "Messianic Apocalypse" (4Q521, as Kohn, p. 57) has a strong connection to the story in the Gospel according to Matthew 11 with the parallel in Luke in the story of the disciples of John the Baptist, who was then in prison. They went to Jesus asking if he was the one "who was expected" as the Messiah; Jesus answered in almost exactly the same words as we find in the scroll "that the wounded are healed, the dead are raised, and the good news is being proclaimed to the poor." Many scholars think that Jesus may have gone to Qumran and heard this text recited. Indeed, one wrote that after his temptation, Jesus could clearly have had time to have gone there, and, indeed, the place Jesus could have been tempted was very close to Qumran. Other scholars do not think that Jesus had to have learned the "Messianic formulae" from the folks at Qumran.**

**L. There is much debate about how much of the speech attributed to Jesus was actually spoken by Jesus (cf. "Jesus Seminar" debates). However, at minimum, the shared language and imagery suggests that the author of Matthew's Gospel was familiar with the material contained in the Scrolls, and was conversant with the traditions from which the Dead Sea teachings derive.**

**Q. Can you actually read the Scrolls in Hebrew?**

**B. I did have a class in graduate school at Duke years ago, under John Strugnell, (Fields, p. 676) who had studied Hebrew at Oxford, just in time to be invited to Jerusalem to put the small pieces of the manuscripts together. He had us read selections from the Hodayot or the Psalms. I recently found my paper for him on "1QH xv" 12-25. My translation and comments on those 13 verses now seem a very amateur project and my translation was never published, nor should it have been (But I do still have it).**

**In San Diego today I found I could still read some of the scrolls on exhibit, in particular, the Papyrus Bar Kokhba 46, which was not found at Qumran at all but near Ein Gedi some miles to the South. It was a lease agreement dated in 134 CE in "Mishnaic Hebrew" which maybe a lawyer or judge here in the audience would like to read with me...at any rate the characters are very well written and in large enough font to read. Also the first few lines tell the date of the month and the year of Bar Kosiba (Kokhba) which had the numbers spelled out fully with the same spelling that my Hebrew class on campus learned this week. [Also the beautiful parchment document now owned by the Imperial Public Library of Russia but the name of the scribe we know as R. Asher who lived sometime in the 11th Century and pointed in the manner of the Masorites, with all the vowels added, unlike the Qumran scribes, who did not use vowel pointing, that is the vowels as "dots and dashes" which were added during the Medieval Period, 600 or 700 years after the Qumran scribes were dead.**

**To give a sense of the language and feeling of the scrolls, I would like to read from Vermes' translation in English. For example, The "War Scroll" reflects a very fearful time, when the folks at Qumran (who thought of themselves as "Sons of Light") would return from the desert. The King of the Kittim (perhaps Romans, perhaps the Greeks) would soon attack. The scribe wrote, "Battle formations would be marshaled, and the priests shall sound their trumpets...but do not fear. For your God goes with you to fight for you against your enemies that He may deliver you." (here the scribe seems to be quoting. Deut: 20:2-4 cf. Vermes, 118). I found this fragment to have a connection to the tone and expectation in the New Testament Book of Revelation. These folks at Qumran had a sense of being in a cosmic battle. They thought that they were living in the "end of time." Indeed they were; none of them survived.**

**As I walked among the scrolls in the Museum of Natural History, I looked around for someone to speak with the "voice" of the ancient folks in Qumran. Perhaps this is the effect of an exhibit during the week of Halloween, as I wish very much for the "voice" of a ghost. But I heard no such "voice" except from the Scrolls themselves.**

**Q. Because the scribes hid the scrolls, were there any clues as to how they might be found?**

**B. None that we know. The Scrolls were first discovered by a shepherd throwing rocks. He had no clues, and no Biblical scholars over the Centuries had found any clues. If clues had been known then the scrolls might have been found earlier, at perhaps a less lucky find than in the last century, when scholars knew how to date, and to protect them. But in any case, is it not a wonderful miracle, that they were found and in "our century"...as if for us? What will we make of them? How will we use this amazing discovery for the good of both religious traditions which should cherish them and for the good of human kind?**

**Q. What about this Enoch manuscript, I never heard of him until today?**

**L. Enoch is a well-known text that stands outside the canons of both Hebrew and Christian Scripture but seems to have been well known by both. The story attaches itself to the biblical figure of Enoch found in Genesis. Enoch is significant because he is said never to have died a normal death but was taken to be with G\_d. There are repeated allusions to Enoch in Christian Scripture, particularly in the book of Revelation.**

**Q. Who were the "Guardians"?**

**L. A portion of Enoch describes a group of semi-divines known as the Watchers. This again goes back to early in the book of Genesis where an account is given of heavenly male beings who are taken in by the charms of women on earth. The 'Watchers' are the offspring of these unions.**

**Q. What about Esther? I read that the book is the only one which was not found at Qumran. Why?**

**L. Esther is a relatively late addition to the canon of Hebrew Scripture. Its exclusion from the collection found at Qumran may be a function of its story-like qualities, which may have been understood as more entertaining than instructive.**

**Q. What has the discovery of the scrolls mean to Jews and Christians today?**

**L. The discovery underscores the deep connections between these two traditions. It emphatically reminds us that any attempts to read Christian Scripture outside the context of Second Temple Judaism are inherently problematic.**

**Q. I read that some of the texts of the Scrolls were being held back, because they might threaten or challenge the faithful.**

**B. In some cases the translations have been held back, but it was the slowness of the translators or the fact that specific scholars were given texts to work on, and took they their own good time, sometimes passing the rights of publication to their own children and not allowing others to look at them. Now, thanks to the Huntington Library in San Marino, all the photographs of the scrolls which photographers working for the Huntington Library made have been made available in the last decade to any scholar who wishes to use them. This has also sped up the translation [process].**

**{The comments above were made without the benefit of a tape recorder. They are to be taken as an aide to memory, from our memory of what was said. If we made any errors, we will be happy to correct this modest composition, as we share it with others who might not have been able to join in our trip. Now in December, some who went to see the Dead Sea Scrolls are still thinking about what we say, as for example in the comments of Ashley Thompson, a Johnston senior who has taken several Religious Studies courses wrote in her self-evaluation as follows:**

**“I am thrilled that I got to see the Dead Sea Scrolls and attend the American Academy of Religion conference all in one semester. The Dead Sea Scrolls made religion really come**

alive for me on a personal level. Seeing the actual writings made so many years ago, knowing that a real person created those beautiful brush strokes was awe inspiring. Before this trip, ancient religious texts and traditions never seemed very close to me, but having the pieces of parchment and papyrus right in front of me was truly a time transcending experience...the students did gain a sense of reality within these traditions and texts that hadn't been there before. After the trip, students began to think of events and circumstances surrounding the texts instead of getting stuck on the page. The San Diego trip influenced students to start thinking of the bigger picture that is Early Christian History. It was a brilliant move on Lillian's part to organize the trip, and it is an experience the students will never soon forget."}

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

### **A VISIT TO SOME DEAD SEA SCROLLS.**

**As remembered by Bill Huntley and Lillian Larsen**

**On this morning after the encounter with some of the Dead Sea Scrolls in San Diego's Museum of Natural History, I find myself inspired by the memorable encounter with the ancient writings and those who hid them for almost two thousand years in the caves near Qumran, the keen questions and insights of a hundred Redlands students, alums, and their friends,; and the organizing skills of Ms. Coco Haupt who brought us all together for a day of inquiry.**

**I must confess to some anxiety at the prospect of trying to answer questions from a hundred different perspectives when I was not sure which scrolls would be on display, my first move was to invite my new colleague in Religious Studies at the U. of R.; Dr. Lillian Larsen, who teaches Christian Scriptures as well as World Religions. She brings a background in Greek and Coptic languages to the Scrolls, more recent than my study 40 years ago in a class in which we were assigned small fragments of the *Hodayot* (Psalm Scroll).**

**Driving down for this opportunity, as I went over the hill South of Temecula and saw in person the extent of the fires on both sides of the 15 Freeway, it framed what I might say today. What I saw on the 15 Freeway gave a sense of the destruction that happened just last week, [and 2000 years ago at] Qumran. Those who wrote the Scrolls met just such a fate, by the human agency of the Romans. But they knew what was coming and hid the Scrolls. I asked myself what is valuable that I own that might have been saved. I wondered to myself what I would consider valuable enough to save in a calamity like a fire or an invasion to hide in a cave for some future generation or millennium.**

**After meeting the hundred Redlands alums and present students, we entered the Museum for an introduction to the viewing of the scrolls which attempted to show the similarities of the landscape of modern Israel with San Diego County and then took us inside the community of Qumran in the era that that community shared with the origins of Christianity. We were given a chance to imagine life in such a harsh landscape with few resources.**

**The Essenes (or “covenanters” as Frank Cross calls them), who hid the Scrolls, probably had a legitimate fear of the Roman legions, who indeed soon burned and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple built during the rule of**



**Herod. As well as a realistic fear of Romans they probably also held desire to withdraw from society and forge a strong community in the desert.**

**During lunch or at least during dessert, Lillian and I answered questions. The lead off question was:**

**Why did the scribes write the letters "YHWH" ?**

**B. (Bill) that is a great question and one I can answer. The scribes did not want readers later to mention the name of the Deity except in reverence, so when a reader would see those four letters, he would hesitate to say the[m] out loud. Sometimes those 4 letters written in a very old "font" as if in Old English for us, or in "Paleo-Hebrew," from before the Exile to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE, readers of the particular scroll would be careful not to speak the name; sometimes the scribes who wrote the scrolls we just saw put just 4 big dots where the name for the Divine one would have appeared in a text. In modern Jewish reading from the scriptures, Jews will say "Adonoi" (my lord) when they see those four letters.**

**Why did the scribes write in such small letters?**

**L. (Lillian Larsen) The materials that they were using were very valuable. In any ancient context, preparation of both parchment and papyrus was costly and time intensive. It may have been particularly difficult to get and prepare materials for writing in this relatively remote place.**

**B. We might also acknowledge that while the [fragments] we saw downstairs just now were in small "fonts" all the scrolls from Qumran were not that small. The Isaiah Scroll is not safely preserved in the "Shrine of the scroll" in the Jerusalem Museum, and it was not on display in San Diego. When unrolled it reaches around a room about half the size of this room (or about 40 x 40 feet). It was among the very first of the scrolls discovered at Qumran.**

**Q. What about the Scrolls would be of importance to modern Jews?**

**B. Again, this is an important question. Whether one is from an Orthodox, Conservative, Re-constructionist, or Reform branch of Judaism all would, I think, be happy to find that the Scroll from Deuteronomy (4Q41 as it was labeled, cf. Kohn, 18) contained the "Ten Commandments" (at least the Deut.5 version). The narrator on my headphone said that this fragment might be part of what was carried as a "prayer book" of the owner.**

**Q. How do the scrolls fit within the study of scripture generally?**

**What do they tell us that is different from what we knew already?**

**L. The scrolls containing Biblical texts are very similar to the versions that were passed down through the centuries. These First Century BCE documents stand remarkably close to manuscripts dated a thousand years later.**

**B. Indeed, if I were a family of a scribe, (which with my handwriting, I am clearly not), then I would be proud to have been in a tradition that kept so close to the text, with so few errors.**

**L. It appears that the accuracy of the Hebrew scribes over the Centuries was more accurate than those who preserved and copied the Christian Texts, including those we know as the New Testament.**

**Q. What connections do the scrolls have with Christianity?**

**B. One of the fragments downstairs which we saw as the "Messianic Apocalypse" (4Q521, as Kohn, p. 57) has a strong connection to the story in the Gospel according to Matthew 11 with the parallel in Luke in the story of the disciples of John the Baptist, who was then in prison. They went to Jesus asking if he was the one "who was expected" as the Messiah; Jesus answered in almost exactly the same words as we find in the scroll "that the wounded are healed, the dead are raised, and the good news is being proclaimed to the poor." Many scholars think that Jesus may have gone to Qumran and heard this text recited. Indeed, one wrote that after his temptation, Jesus could clearly have had time to have gone there, and, indeed, the place Jesus could have been tempted was very close to Qumran. Other scholars do not think that Jesus had to have learned the "Messianic formulae" from the folks at Qumran.**

**L. There is much debate about how much of the speech attributed to Jesus was actually spoken by Jesus (cf. "Jesus Seminar" debates). However, at minimum, the shared language and imagery suggests that the author of Matthew's Gospel was familiar with the material contained in the Scrolls,**

**and was conversant with the traditions from which the Dead Sea teachings derive.**

**Q. Can you actually read the Scrolls in Hebrew?**

**B. I did have a class in graduate school at Duke many**

**years ago, under John Strugnell, (Fields, p. 676) who had studied Hebrew at Oxford, just in time to be invited to Jerusalem to put the small pieces of the manuscripts together. He had us read selections from the Hodayot or the Psalms. I recently found my paper for him on "1QH xv" 12-25. My translation and comments on those 13 verses now seem a very amateur project and my translation was never published, nor should it have been (But I do still have it)**

**In San Diego I found I could still read some the scrolls on exhibit, in particular, the Papyrus Bar Kokhba 46, which was not found at Qumran at all but near Ein Gedi some miles to the South. It was a lease agreement dated in 134 CE in "Mishnaic Hebrew" which maybe a lawyer or judge here in the audience would like to read with me...at any rate the characters are very well written and in large enough font to read. Also the first few lines tell the date of the month and the year of Bar Kosiba (Kokhba) which had the numbers spelled out fully with the same spelling that my Hebrew class on campus learned this week. [Also the beautiful parchment document now owned by the Imperial Public Library of Russia but the name of the scribe we know as R. Asher who lived sometime in the 11th Century and pointed in the manner of the Masorites, with all the vowels added, unlike the Qumran scribes, who did not use vowel pointing, that is the vowels as "dots and dashes" which were added during the Medieval Period, 600 or 700 years after the Qumran scribes were dead.**

**To give a sense of the language and feeling of the scrolls, I would like to read from Vermes' translation in English. For example, The "War Scroll" reflects a very fearful time, when the folks at Qumran (who thought of themselves as**

**"Sons of Light") would return from the desert. The King of the Kittim (perhaps Romans, perhaps the Greeks) would soon attack. The scribe wrote, "Battle formations would be marshaled, and the priests shall sound their trumpets...but do not fear. For your God goes with you to fight for you against your enemies that He may deliver you." (here the scribe seems to be quoting. Deut: 20:2-4 cf. Vermes, 118). I found this fragment to have a connection to the tone and expectation in the New Testament Book of Revelation. These folks at Qumran had a sense of being in a cosmic battle. They thought that they were living in the "end of time." Indeed they were; none of them survived.**

**As I walked among the scrolls in the Museum of Natural History, I looked around for someone to speak with the "voice" of the ancient folks in Qumran. Perhaps this is the effect of an exhibit during the week of Halloween, as I wish very much for the "voice" of a ghost. But I heard no such "voice" except from the Scrolls themselves.**

**Q. Because the scribes hid the scrolls, were there any clues as to how they might be found?**

**B. None that we know. The Scrolls were first discovered by a**

**shepherd throwing rocks. He had no clues, and no Biblical scholars over the Centuries had found any clues. If clues had been known then the scrolls might have been found earlier, at perhaps a less lucky find than in the last century, when scholars knew how to date, and to protect them. But in any case, is it not a wonderful miracle, that they were found and in "our century"...as if for us? What will we make of them? How will we use this amazing discovery for the good of both religious traditions which should cherish them and for the good of human kind?**

**Q. What about this Enoch manuscript, I never heard of him until today?**

**L. Enoch is a well-known text that stands outside the canons of both Hebrew and Christian Scripture but seems to have been well known by both. The story attaches itself to the biblical figure of Enoch found in Genesis. Enoch is significant because he is said never to have died a normal death but was taken to be with G\_d. There are repeated allusions to Enoch in Christian Scripture, particularly in the book of Revelation.**

**Q. Who were the "Guardians"?**

**L. A portion of Enoch describes a group of semi-divines known as the Watchers. This again goes back to early in the book of Genesis where an account is given of heavenly male beings who are taken in by the charms of women on earth. The 'Watchers' are the offspring of these unions.**

**Q. What about Esther? I read that the book is the only one which was not found at Qumran. Why?**

**L. Esther is a relatively late addition to the canon of Hebrew Scripture. Its exclusion from the collection found at Qumran may be a function of its story-**

**like qualities, which may have been understood as more entertaining than instructive.**

**Q. What has the discovery of the scrolls mean to Jews and Christians today?**

**L. The discovery underscores the deep connections between these two traditions. It emphatically reminds us that any attempts to read Christian Scripture outside the context of Second Temple Judaism are inherently problematic.**

**Q. I read that some of the texts of the Scrolls were being held back, because they might threaten or challenge the faithful.**

**B. In some cases the translations have been held back, but it was the slowness of the translators or the fact that specific scholars were given texts to work on, and took them their own good time, sometimes passing the rights of publication to their own children and not allowing others to look at them. Now, thanks to the Huntington Library in San Marino, all the photographs of the scrolls which photographers working for the Huntington Library made have been made available in the last decade to any scholar who wishes to use them. This has also sped up the translation [process].**

**The comments above were made without the benefit of a tape recorder. They are to be taken as an aide to memory, from our memory of what was said. If we made any errors, we will be happy to correct this modest composition, as we share it with others who might not have been able to join in our trip. Now in December, some who went to see the Dead Sea Scrolls are still thinking about what we say, as for example in the comments of Ashley Thompson, a Johnston senior who has taken several Religious Studies courses wrote in her self-evaluation as follows:**

“I am thrilled that I got to see the Dead Sea Scrolls and attend the American Academy of Religion conference all in one semester. The Dead Sea Scrolls made religion really come alive for me on a personal level. Seeing the actual writings made so many years ago, knowing that a real person created those beautiful brush strokes was awe inspiring. Before this trip, ancient religious texts and traditions never seemed very close to me, but having the pieces of parchment and papyrus right in front of me was truly a time transcending experience...

the students did gain a sense of reality within these traditions and texts that hadn't been there before. After the trip, students began to think of events and circumstances surrounding the texts instead of getting stuck on the page. The San Diego trip influenced students to start thinking of the bigger picture that is Early Christian History. It was a brilliant move on Lillian's part to organize the trip, and it is an experience the students will never soon forget”.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

**Charlesworth, James, ed.(1992) Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls. New York: Doubleday. Charlesworth was a class mate of Bill's at Duke, who made a career from the study of literature like the Scrolls in the era between the Hebrew Scriptures endings and the Christian Scriptures beginnings. He is a scholar of the "second generation" of Qumran studies.**

**Cross, Frank (1961). The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies. (The Haskell Lectures 1956-7) Anchor Books: New York. This is the shortest and clearest statement which demonstrates the excitement of a scholar of the first generation of "handlers"**

**Fields, Weston W. (2006) The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Short History.Leiden: Brill. This small volume was on sale at the San Diego Exhibition.**



**Kohn, Risa Levitt (2007) Dead Sea Scrolls. San Diego State University Press. This is the catalog sold at the Museum of Natural History.**

**Rourke, Mary, “John Strugnell, 1930-2007 Obituary..Official on Dead Sea Scrolls project lost his position...” Los Angeles Times, p. B-8 (Dec 14, 2007)**

**Vanderkam, James and Peter Flint (2002). The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls. San Francisco: Harper Collins. This text addresses the significance of the Scrolls for understanding Second Temple Judaism and Christian Origins.**

**Vermes, Geza (1967). The Dead Sea Scrolls: translated with an introduction with commentaries. The Heritage Press: New York. Some of the translations seem to follow the King-James-Translation-English, but the format of this publication is attractive.**