

Faith Digest: Oldest known Torah scroll discovered

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Oldest known Torah scroll discovered in Italy. An Italian university professor found what is believed to be world's oldest complete Torah scroll. Mauro Perani, professor of Hebrew at the [University of Bologna](#), said the scroll originally was believed to be no more than about 400 years old. New studies and carbon dating tests suggest it was written around 850 years ago. The scroll had been stored for centuries in the university's archives but had been mislabeled in 1889 as dating from the 17th century. When Perani re-examined the scroll, he realized it used a script of the oriental Babylonian tradition, hinting it must be extremely old. The professor then had the scroll carbon-dated by laboratories at Italy's University of Salento and the University of Illinois. Both tests confirmed the scroll dated from the second half of the 12th century to the first quarter of the 13th century.



Lutheran group elects gay bishop.

R. Guy ErwinThe [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#) elected its first openly gay bishop, R. Guy Erwin, to oversee churches in Southern California, four years after the church allowed openly gay men and lesbians to serve as clergy. The ELCA's five-county Southwest California Synod elected Erwin to a six-year term. Erwin, who holds a doctorate, bachelor's and two master's degrees from Yale University, has spent several years teaching university and

seminary classes. He currently serves as a pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in Canoga Park, Calif., and a professor of Lutheran confessional theology at California Lutheran University. Part Osage Indian, Erwin also is the first Native American bishop in the ELCA. The ELCA is the largest Lutheran denomination in the United States, with more than 4 million members in 9,638 congregations. Observers note the election is likely to further strain relations between the ELCA and the nation's second-largest Lutheran body, the more theologically conservative Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The two bodies work together on disaster relief, refugees and immigration but hold different positions on social issues.

Missouri governor vetoes anti-Shariah law. Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon has vetoed a bill that would have made his state the seventh in the nation to prohibit judges from considering Shariah—Islamic law—and other “foreign laws” in their decisions, saying the legislation would make it harder for families in his state to adopt children from overseas. If state judges would not be able to consider foreign decrees that are sometimes required to finalize adoptions, adoptive families and children would be left stranded, Nixon asserted. State Sen. Brian Nieves, who introduced the bill in February, called the governor's reasoning for his veto “gibberish” and labeled as “absurd” his assertion the bill interferes with foreign adoptions. Nieves could try to override the veto; a veto override requires a two-thirds majority in both chambers, and the bill had the support of 24 of 34 senators and 109 of 167 state representatives when it passed earlier this year.