

Southwestern Seminary offers look at Dead Sea Scroll fragments

July 20, 2012

FORT WORTH—[Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary](#) opened its exhibition of the Dead Sea Scrolls July 2 in the MacGorman Performing Arts Center on its Fort Worth campus. The exhibition will continue through Jan. 13.



Shalom Paul, professor emeritus of Bible at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, delivers a lecture at the exhibit.

A series of educational lectures dealing with either the scrolls or archaeology in general also is being held each Tuesday evening.

The first lecture, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Their Significance for Understanding the Bible, Early Judaism and the Birth of Christianity," was given by Shalom Paul, professor emeritus of Bible at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

He also is chairperson of the [Dead Sea Scrolls Foundation](#).

He has opened all the exhibitions of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the United States, he said. He noted the other exhibitions were all at museums, and this is the first time the scrolls have been shown at a seminary.

The exhibition includes 21 fragments of original scrolls bearing texts from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Psalms, Isaiah and Daniel. At least 12 of the fragments in the exhibit, including a rare large fragment from a Genesis scroll, never have been on public display.

A simulated Qumran dig site located behind the building where the exhibit is held allows visitors of all ages to experience the work of an archaeologist. Doctoral students teach visitors to take elevations, record measurements and tag artifacts.



Dead Sea Scroll exhibit at Southwestern Seminary provides a learning opportunity for visitors of all ages. (Photo by Matt Miller/Southwestern Seminary)

A shepherd boy whose goat wandered away discovered the scrolls in 1947, Paul said. The goat wandered into a cave and the boy tossed in a rock to scare it out. Instead of hearing the expected sound of stone striking stone, he heard pottery breaking.

"This is what I call the Big Bang," Paul quipped.

Further inspection yielded the scrolls stored in seven amphoras, or large vases.

The scrolls were taken to an antiquities dealer in Bethlehem, but the script was so ancient, no one could read it. Only person in Israel at that time, a professor in Jerusalem, could read the script.

While the distance between Jerusalem and Bethlehem was not great, hostilities festered, and Jordanian troops prevented the professor from seeing the scrolls.

Finally, he examined the scrolls and bought three of the seven scrolls for \$100. No one knows why he didn't buy the others, Paul said.

However, the professor's son saw an advertisement in the Wall Street Journal seven years later and realized it was for the other four scrolls. The price paid for the remaining four was \$250,000.

The large Genesis fragment in the exhibition would be expected to fetch about \$45 million if put up for auction today, Paul said.

After archaeologists and biblical scholars realized the antiquity and value of the scrolls, they began to scour the caves around Qumran for more.

"But the Bedouins beat us to almost every cave," Paul said. "How did we know? In every cave there was an empty pack of Marlboro cigarettes."

In all, 11 caves contained scrolls. They almost entirely were in fragments,

having deteriorated over the years. Hundreds of thousands of scroll fragments comprise about 300 books, he said.



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"When I say books, I mean portions of books. But if we have fragments, the whole book was once there," Paul explained.

While an Isaiah scroll measures 22 feet, and the Temple Scroll is 26 feet long, many of the fragments are only about an inch in size.

Paul said people attributed all sorts of reasons to why it took so long to publish the Dead Sea Scrolls, but the real reason was they were "not published because you had to be an expert at jigsaw puzzles to put these together."

After the Israeli war in 1967, many more scholars could work on the scrolls, and translation has gone much quicker since then, he explained. To date, 44 books using the source materials of the Dead Sea Scrolls have been published.

Ninety percent of the Dead Sea Scrolls are written in Hebrew, 7 percent in

Aramaic and 3 percent are in Greek, Paul said. They range in date from 250 B.C. to A.D. 68.

He said fragments of every book of the Old Testament have been found except for the Book of Esther.

The great value of the scrolls is that prior to their discovery, the earliest manuscript of the Bible that had been found was one found in Syria dating to A.D. 975, he said.

"The Dead Sea Scrolls get us 1,000 years closer to the source materials," he explained. "It means the text is intact."

Not all the scrolls are biblical, however. Many have to do with everyday life in the community. One scroll de-crees that someone who wanted to join the community could only eat with others there after a year of living with them and doing the work and not causing any problems. If they continued to be in good standing after a second year, they also could drink with the others. After three years of good behavior, the goods the applicant brought and that had been held in escrow were put into the community treasury, and the person was a full member of the community.

Other scrolls describe how no one went to Jerusalem to make sacrifice because they believe the priests and the temple there to be heretical. The people of Qumran believed their sacrifice to be their prayers, in which they believed they joined their voices with the angels'.

Qumran seemed to function as a sort of library, and not all the scrolls found were written there, Paul said.

A copper scroll, the only one found of its kind, seems to be some sort of treasure map, Paul said. Some have speculated it to be a map to the temple treasury, but no treasure has been found.

Tickets for the exhibit and other information can be found at www.SeeTheScrolls.com.