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An Interpretation and Brief Synopsis as a Historical Text of Scroll 8 HEV1 from the Dead Sea Scrolls as a Physical Object

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ABSTRACT

In the fall of 2013 an exhibit of the *Dead Sea Scrolls* was on loan to the Leonardo Museum in Salt Lake City, Utah from the Israel Antiquities Authority. For an academic librarian, this was a unique opportunity to examine parchments that were created between 408 BCE to 318 CE not as religious texts, but as physical objects. The duplication of a number of these objects relates to modern library and archival best practices as defined by the practice of LOCKSS (Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe). This article will examine on particular piece of parchment (Book of Micah 4: 6-6:4) and the environment that it was found in and the archeological context of the discovery.

Keywords: Library, scrolls.

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1.0 Introduction

The initial discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in caves located in the West Bank by Bedouin shepherds in 1946 has been well documented in scholarly (Wise (part 2), 1986), religious (Wise (part 1) 1986) and popular literature (Lim, 2005). The ancient scrolls contain texts from the Old Testament as well as texts that set forth rules for everyday living among various Jewish sects (Abegg, et al. 1999). Recently the Israeli Antiquities Authority announced that it is, "... embarking on a major archeological expedition to find yet undiscovered Dead Sea Scrolls" (Estrin, 2016) A previous expedition in 1993 did reveal any new scrolls (Najman, 2015). With continued interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls, I believe that many will look at the scrolls not just as religious works, but as physical objects. ("Israel, Google Launch Dead Sea Scrolls Web Site", 2013).

In 1955, an expedition to the caves at the southern point of Nahal Hever, a stream in the Judean Desert in the West Bank of Palestine, was conducted by scholars in various disciplines from the Hebrew

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University of Jerusalem, as well as members of the Israeli Defense Forces, as part of the continuing exploration and excavations for materials related to the Dead Sea Scrolls. This cave was designated “Cave 4” by the archeological team exploring it (Aharoni, 1962).

One of the more interesting points of the Dead Sea Scrolls from the standpoint of librarianship is the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Cave 4. All of the documents discovered thus far that are a part of the collection that consisted of biblical texts and 21 copies of the Book of Isaiah (Parker, 2013). The Israeli Antiquity Authority believes that the scrolls were used for “...biblical texts, non-biblical literary works, and documents such as deeds and letters” (Israeli Antiquity Authority, 2013). Also, the fact that some scrolls discuss ritual practices such as cleansing or bathing, has suggested to some that these multiple documents were copies for distribution and were not original texts (Abegg, et al., 1999). From the viewpoint of librarianship, these documents were copies for distribution and are not original texts. These objects represent an early, application of the model of LOCKSS (Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe) (Society of American Archivists, 2015). Just as today where digital objects are housed at Stanford University, the LOCKSS program is a method for academic libraries that “...provides libraries and publishers with award-winning, low-cost, open source digital preservation tools to preserve and provide access to persistent and authoritative digital content.” (LOCKSS, 2016). In short, if digital content from a publisher disappears from the web, it can still be available via LOCKSS (What is LOCKSS?, 2016); “Having copies of the archive on many servers is meant to ensure that at least one copy will be available even in the wake of a technical disaster.” (Carlson, 2000). At the same time these multiple copies stored in Cave 4 were purposed to provide additional copies in the event that others were destroyed mirroring the ideas behind LOCKSS.

2.0 The artifact

Among the documents discovered in Cave 4 were fragments of Greek translations of the “Twelve Minor Prophets” in the Old Testament (Wise (part 1), 1986). A small fragment written in Ancient Greek is the topic of my examination of one artifact from the Dead Sea Scrolls. The artifact may have been used for religious education and perhaps in worship. This fragment of a scroll contains text from the Book of Micah 4: 6-6:4, a prophetic writing in the Hebrew Bible that states “On that Day, says the Lord, I shall lead the shattered and the outcast.” This fragment of Greek text is cataloged at Scroll 8 HEV₁ of the Dead Sea Scrolls collection, which is housed at the Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum in West Jerusalem (Israeli Antiquities Authority, 2013). The *Oxford Dictionary of Jewish Religion* defines the work of the “Twelve Minor Prophets,” including Micah, as “...the last book of the Jewish Tanakh. The collection is broken up to form twelve individual books in the Christian Old Testament, one for each of the prophets” (Werblowsky, 1997). The Dead Sea scrolls were written in the languages of Ancient Greek, Aramaic, and Biblical Hebrew (Parker, 2013).

3.0 Description of the physical characteristics and context

The physical characteristics of this fragment are approximately 10–20 mm in height with a width of 10–15 mm. These are accurate numbers based on the writings of scholars (Liftshitz, 1962). The material of scroll is papyrus. According to the *American Bible Society* (2013), “The papyrus plant, which grows abundantly in Egypt, provided the material for scrolls. Carbon-dating has shown that the Egyptians were using papyrus for writing as early as 3000 B.C. Making scrolls involved a series of steps: (1) Strips were cut from the center of the papyrus plant's stalk, (2) soaked in water to soften them, (3) and laid in crisscrossed rows. (4) The sheets were pounded with a mallet to break down the fibers and force them to join together and then (5) rubbed smooth with shells. When the sheets were dry, they could be written on. Black ink made from carbon soot mixed with water and tree sap was applied with pens made from reeds. Errors in writing could be erased with water. Papyrus scrolls today are rare because moisture causes them to decay. Most surviving papyrus scrolls were discovered in dry, desert-like climates.”

3.1 Archaeological context

The discoveries associated with the dig at Cave 4 were given the name of the “Cave of Horrors” from the discovery of approximate forty human remains. The human remains discovered in Cave 4 consisted of the skeletal fragments of adult males and females as well as children. Since Cave 4 was unfortunately ransacked by local inhabitants shortly before the archeological team discovered the human remains, it cannot be determined whether these remains were scattered as a result of violent events or were simply in ransacked graves. Some members of the archeology team have argued that these remains were both scattered and dug up; however, what was also discovered in the human fragments was that there was no trauma caused by others and that the forty occupants of the cave perished when they lit a fire to burn all of the possessions in the cave to keep them out the hands of the invading Romans. The cause of death of these inhabitants was that the fire engulfed them, causing death by smoke inhalation and extreme heat. Evidence as to the intensity of fire that caused the death of the inhabitants of Cave 4 was found in the warping of several pieces of pottery, which could have only been caused by very high and sustained heat from fire (Aharoni, 1962). Other items discovered in Cave 4 consisted of various coins, utensils (made of wood, iron and clay), pieces of clothing, and shoe leather. The date of the events that occurred in Cave 4 was determined from four (bronze) coins that were discovered in the cave. Scholars determined that these coins were minted sometime between 133/4 C.E. and 134/5 C.E. (Rahmani, 1962).

3.2 Artifact interpretation and context

Depending on how one defines a Scroll (VanderKam, 2003) (Oxford English Dictionary, 2013), there are approximately 200–300 Scrolls in the Dead Sea Scrolls Collection, as well as approximately 25,000 cataloged fragments of parchment (Israeli Antiquity Authority, 2013). In a number of cases where duplicate fragments of scrolls have been found, handwriting analysis has proven that many of these scrolls were copied by various scribes. Based on this, I would surmise that a number of these scrolls were for everyday use by the common man, not necessarily the political or religious elites of the community (Lim, 2005).

4.0 Conclusion

Based on observations at the *Dead Sea Scrolls: Life and Faith in Ancient Times* exhibit and the writings of Lim, Aharoni and Liffshitz, it can be that the interpreted primary works found in the exhibit may not be religious or sacred texts but rather guides to various worshipping or day-to-day practices (Israeli Antiquity Authority, 2013). This suggests that the multiple copies discovered were intended to be shared among the populace to educate them or may have been created to sell to others in the event that contact was made with other tribes or traders traveling through the area. In the same manner that libraries with multiple copies of collections at different sites share the mission of preserving collections or that online bookstores sell copies of materials globally, these ancient peoples were creating materials to increase the marketplace for ideas and the distribution of ideas across borders and cultures.

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