From the First Millennium to the Third, the Content is the Message!

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ABSTRACT

The Dead Sea Scrolls exhibited at the Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem represent not only a unique archaeological discovery but also the religious and cultural message of the Qumran community of the Second Temple and the written word of the Bible. The cultural legacy of these rare documents only opens up new vistas on ancient Judaism and throws light on the background and origin of first century Christianity, but also provides a contemporary vehicle for interfaith study and dialogue.

Identifying the correct digital solutions to illustrate the manuscripts must reflect both their compelling aesthetic presence, scribal features, and historical context as well as a solution to disseminate the cultural and spiritual messages that reflect insights to contemporary questions. This challenge has been met by the curatorial and educational team of the Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. A unique aspect of their pedagogical approach is the inter-disciplinary nature and the use of a wide range of educational activities, including traditional reading and lecture materials, but also video films, multimedia, other state of the art technologies, and active independent research by the students-participants.
This paper will discuss the numerous digital platforms that have evolved out of this project.

KEYWORDS: Qumran, Dead Sea Scrolls, manuscripts, Judaism, Christianity, Bible.

THE MYSTERY OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS OF THE QUMRAN SECT

Since their discovery in1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls have stimulated much public interest all over the world. Symbolizing esoteric wisdom and cloaked in a veil of mystery, scholars and laymen flock to the Shrine of the Book in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem in order to see with their own eyes, the original ancient manuscripts and associated collections. Through the distribution of digital images, scholarly research, translations and transliterations distributed, on CD-ROM, on-line, and across digital networks and today, a newly developing VRML platform, the internationally famed scrolls continue to carry the message of the Dead Sea Scrolls into the third millennium.

The approximately 800 ancient manuscripts were discovered between 1947 and 1956 in eleven caves near Khirbet Qumran, on the northwestern shores of the Dead Sea. The Scrolls can be divided into three broad categories, some two hundred and twenty biblical scrolls, with texts identical to the

modern day Hebrew Bible, representing the earliest evidence for the biblical text in the world. Apocryphal scrolls, those works that are omitted from various canons of the Bible and included in others, and sectarian scrolls, those scrolls describing the life of the commune, including regulations, religious legal writings, biblical commentaries, apocalyptic visions, and liturgical works. The Dead Sea Scrolls date from the third century BCE to the first century CE. Their chronology is supported by historical, paleographic, and linguistic evidence, and carbon-14 dating [2]. The Dead Sea Scrolls are preserved by the curatorial team and exhibited at the Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, where several of the most important scrolls: the Great Isaiah Scroll, the Community Rule (Manual of Discipline), the War Scroll, the Temple Scroll, the Thanksgiving Scroll, the Psalms Scroll and the Habakkuk Commentary are displayed.

The tale of their discovery has fired the imagination of both scholar and layman alike. As the myth goes, searching for a stray goat in the Judean Desert, Bedouin tribesmen, Muhammed Adh-Dhib, also known as Muhammed the Wolf, entered a hidden cave and found jars filled with ancient scrolls. About ten jars were found there; eight of them were empty, one was full of earth, and the last contained three scrolls.Eventually thousands of scroll fragments were to emerge from the other caves subsequently discovered. At the early 1950,s, the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, under the auspices of Father Roland de Vaux and archaeologists from the French Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem were to discover another seventy scrolls in Cave 1 while soon after, fragments of some thirty-three

scrolls, including two small fragments of Ecclesiasticus (Ben Sira) in the original Hebrew were unearthed in Cave 2. At a later date, some 250 further fragments were revealed and Cave 3 yielded one of the more exciting of the discoveries. Amongst the pieces of fragmentary scrolls emerged one almost complete scroll, the Copper Scroll. Altogether, some eleven caves were searched where, in the last, the longest scroll was found, measuring 8.3 meters, the Temple Scroll.

While the discovery ignited public imagination, it was also shrouded in an aura of mystery and the recognition that the scrolls reflected a time during the Second Temple period; the time when Jesus of Nazareth lived was to cause not a little controversy. Emanuel Tov commented,

"Sensationalism was and remains another factor.When no direct reference to Jesus was found in the scrolls, the accusation was made that the Vatican had burned scrolls containing such references. This accusation persists today, propagated mainly by journalists; no serious scholar shares this belief [9].

Today, most scholars agree that a sect of Essenes were either the authors or keepers of the scrolls. This group lived side by side with other Jewish sects, such as Pharisees, Sadducees, early Christians, Samaritans, and Zealots, who together comprised the Jewish society of the land of Israel in the Late Hellenistic-Roman period - from the rise of the Maccabees through the destruction of the Second Temple (167 BCE-70 CE). The way of the life of the Essenes and their dessert community has been preserved by writers of the first century CE: the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria the Roman

historian Pliny the Elder, and the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus [17].

The Mystique.

Since the initial discovery over fifty years ago, both the scrolls and the identity of the community that guarded them have been the focus both of scholarly and public interest. Many questions were asked. Who had hidden the scrolls in the caves some twenty centuries earlier and why? Who were these people living is this isolated desert community? Do the Dead Sea Scrolls provide clues to hidden treasures? Does the "War Rule Scroll" refer to a pierced or piercing messiah? But, perhaps what provoked the most passionate debate was their significance both to Judaism and early Christianity. The scrolls and scroll fragments discovered near the Dead Sea represent a capacious corpus of ancient texts emerging fragment by fragment from a prototype archive and perhaps the greatest manuscript find of the twentieth century. In 1897, the Cairo Geniza, a repository of 10th through 19th century manuscripts was discovered, written mainly in Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic, and Aramaic [18] but the Dead Sea Scrolls discovery, reflects an even more impressive link to the past. The thousands of fragments, manuscripts and scrolls represent a rich literary collection and contains some books or works that have been re[produced by hand in a number of copies, written in three different languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

As the Khirbet Qumran Sectarian Center was gradually excavated, the site revealed various living and working areas; a two-storey high tower built for defense, communal pantry with over 1,000 ceramic dishes excavated in situ, a refectory, larder, kiln, pottery workshop, cistern, ritual baths, stables and a courtyard. To the south of the tower, a room containing plaster tables was discovered, each table measuring some five meters. The room where the two tables with hollows scooped out of the plaster were found was presumed to be a scriptorium [6, 11], a workshop for copying out scrolls. Further evidence supported this premise, three inkwells, two made of clay and one of metal reminding us that manuscripts were copied out laboriously by hand, often in several copies. Some ten copies of "Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice were discovered in Cave 4. It is not clear whether these duplications were actually authored in Qumran or had been brought here for safe keeping. What most scholars presume is that the Qumran community, numbering some 200 people had served as a center for a religious group who had been actively engaged in producing, re-producing, or safeguarding the precious manuscripts as vehicle of preserving the religious, cultural and history messages they contain for future generations.

The Shrine of the Book and Educational Activities.

The Dead Sea Scrolls and other ancient artifacts are on permanent display at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem in a stunning building designed by the American architects Armand Bartos and Frederick Kiesler. It took four years to complete the building of the Shrine of the Book (1961-1964) and was inaugurated in April 1965, a month before the Israel Museum officially opened its gates to the general public.
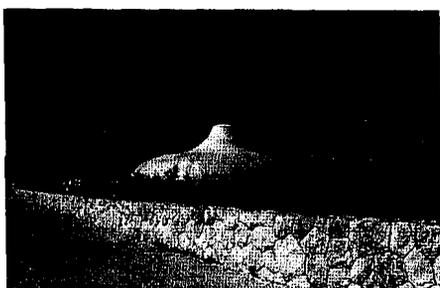
Figure 1: The Shrine of the Book

The Shrine of the Book is located at the heart of the political and cultural center of the State of Israel, close to the Knesset, (Parliament), government offices, the Hebrew University, the Bank of Israel, and the Supreme Court Building. The white, ceramic covered dome covers the galleries, which are two-thirds below the ground and house the permanent collection. The striking juxtaposition of the gentle curve of the dome and the black, angular, basalt wall, both stark yet opposing geometrical shapes, together create a stunning vista and contribute an unique architectural phenomenon to the Jerusalem horizon [17].
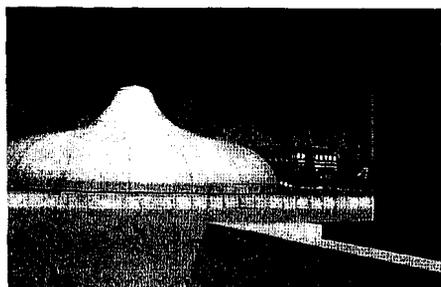

Figure 2: The Shrine of the Book

The curatorial and educational team of the Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem has taken upon themselves to preserve not only the material evidence of the scrolls themselves but also the message contained within them. These educational projects include traditional reading and lecture materials, as well as video films, multimedia and other state of the art technologies providing new archival methods that reiterate the message from first millennium.

The Gallery Visit.
The visit to the Shrine of the Book begins in the cave-like atmosphere of the space that houses the permanent exhibition " A Day at Qumran". The exhibition follows the daily routine of the Yahad community from morning to night, illustrated by documents and artifacts from Qumran. The exhibit includes ritual objects such as phylacteries (tefillin - which are still used by Jews in morning prayers), agricultural implements, oil lamps, and various clay and stone vessels. Especially noteworthy is a unique measuring instrument, thought to be a sundial that helped the Jews of Qumran to keep time and to establish the dates of their festivals. Related texts in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek are displayed alongside these artifacts.

The main hall of the Shrine is shaped like a giant pottery jar, emulating the vessel in which the first of the Dead Sea Scrolls was found over fifty years ago. Some of the biblical manuscripts, apocryphal works, and sectarian writings that reflect the history and religion in this period are on permanent display in the galleries. The two thousand-year-old manuscripts, the Isaiah Scroll B, testifies to the antiquity of the biblical text we know today, while the sectarian documents (the Rule of the Community, the Habakkuk Commentary, the War of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness) shed

light on the fervent messianism of the people who authored them [17].

Dead Sea Scrolls Research.

Several web-sites, CD-ROM,s and databases have emerged from the research of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the realization that the distribution of the historical, cultural and religious message contained within manuscripts was or great urgency, not only in response to popular interest generated by the manuscripts, but also an imperative for scholarly research all over the world. The first CD-Rom developed, The Dead Sea Scrolls Revealed, was produced in 1994, by Pixel Multimedia, Tel Aviv, and Aaron Witkin Associates, London.

Figure 3: The Dead Sea Scrolls Revealed Pixel Multimedia, Tel Aviv, and Aaron Witkin Associates, London, 1994

This was perhaps the first electronic tool that brought the secrets of the mysterious manuscripts onto the computer screen. The popular multimedia interface, presents the critical historical texts and sources from the Second Temple Period, and a comprehensive section on the excavations at Khirbet Qumran. This is illustrated by photo-realistic walk-throughs, and fly-overs, across the ancient settlement as it might have appeared two thousand years ago, a section on scroll research, with details about how the scrolls were written and the laborious processes of deciphering and analyzing the texts, and extensive background material on the debates that arose during the many excavations of the Essene Compound. The intuitive navigation tool guides the user through the texts, images, CAD simulations, and video clips and provides a stimulating and informed introduction to the Dead Sea Scrolls.

A leading, Jerusalem-based, academic institution, The Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature at the Hebrew University, was stablished in 1995 as part of the Institute for Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Their scholarly web-site provides many resources for the study of the Scrolls, and stimulates and fosters research on the Scrolls, integrating such areas such as biblical studies, Jewish literature and thought of the Second Temple Period, earliest Christianity and the New Testament, the study of early rabbinical Judaism [16]. The resources page offers a meticulous bibliographical listing of publications in fourteen languages; French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, Dutch Polish, Portuguese, Hungarian, Afrikaans, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish. The on-line bibliographies are updated every Monday.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, Electronic Reference Library, published by Oxford University Press and Brill Academic Publishers, and published in 1997 makes available the complete set of digitized images, (2,700 photographs) and all eight hundred or so texts from the eleven caves of Khibet Qumran.
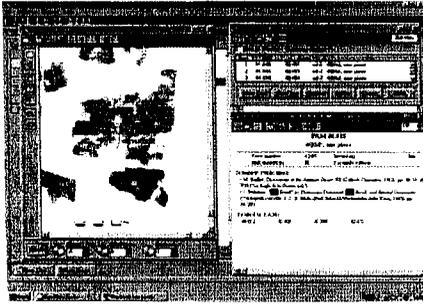
Figure 4: The Dead Sea Scrolls, Electronic eference Library, Volume I, Oxford University Press and Brill Academic Publishers, 1997

The publication of the CD-ROM came soon after the Israel Antiquities Authority announced the release of the Dead Sea Scrolls to the world at large in 1991 and soon to follow would be the publication of extensive Microfiche Collection [9] and a Facsimile Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1991) in book format, in two folio volumes [3]. Soon after that, in 1991 the Huntington Library made its collection available to the public on microfilm.

The images in the Electronic Reference Library Volume 1 are annotated with; cave number, text title, inventory number, and links to other images containing the same scroll or fragment, with cross-references to the microfiche edition published by E.J. Brill and the facsimile Edition of the Biblical Archaeology Society. A searchable list of biblical passages attested to the Qumran corpus is also included. All images were scanned at 300 dpi. and may be manipulated on screen with zoom, brightness and contrast buttons embedded in the interface. As well as the panning and zooming tools, individual images can be flipped 90 degrees clockwise and counter-clockwise and the copying; printing and

comparison of the images are easily manipulated within the program. The archived index is fully searchable using specific terms, wildcards and/or Boolean operators. The Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Reference Library provides researchers with a comprehensive collection of reference material, extensive search options and pliant digitized images, making individual scholarly research away from the original manuscripts feasible all over the world.

The Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Reference Library, 2 is a CD-ROM produced by Brill Academic Publisher, the Netherlands, with Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies and edited by Emanuel Tov, 1999. The CD-ROM is composed of a comprehensive, fully indexed, and cross-linked collection of non-biblical texts, both in Hebrew and English translation, as well as a selection of high-resolution digitized images of Dead Sea Scrolls fragments.
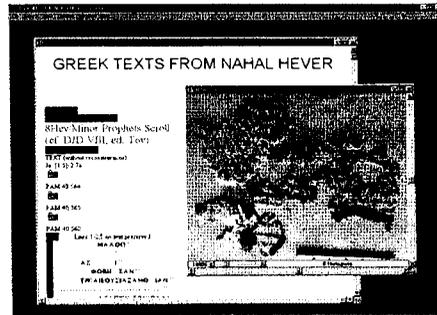
Figure 5: The Dead Sea Scrolls, Electronic Reference Library, 2 Edited by Emanual Tov, Konininkijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands, 1999

In addition, the CD-ROM contains

relevant reference material for scholarly work on the Scrolls and related literature. The search capabilities of the WordCruncher® software allows users to find any or all occurrences of words and phrases in any or all texts. This practical reference tool contains edited Hebrew and Aramaic transcriptions and English translations of all the non-biblical scrolls. Presented on facing pages, the manuscripts or fragments are arranged by serial number from Cave 1 to 11. The Database,s approximately 900 images were scanned at 400 dpi on an Agfa Arcus scanner. Each of the images is tagged to, and corresponds with, a particular transcriptional text, which allows the user to view more than one image simultaneously and may be enlarged to 500% within the interface. There is an unlimited distribution of the database, allowing images and transcriptions to be made available to an individual or institution at a relatively low cost [4].

New Dimensions.
Educational activities at The Shrine of the Book include both traditional and contemporary pedagogic methodology that illustrates the manuscripts and their compelling aesthetic presence. In order to explore new avenues to disseminate the cultural and spiritual messages, the Israel Museum in partnership with the Politecnico di Milano are researching an innovative digital platform to reach out to local and international visitors across the World Wide Web. While still in an early stage of development, the online VRML environment, will present a shared 3D space for visitors to visit the Shrine of the Book and the exhibits while interacting with each other is groups under the direction of a trained guide. This will provide a compelling experience for the visitors to take part in a real-time discussion on the Dead Sea Scrolls, evaluate the manuscripts while activating exhibits as they go.

According to Dr. Ing. Thimoty Barbieri, Politecnico di Milano, Italy,

"A Networked Virtual Environment (Net-VE) is a computer application that provides a digital representation in three dimensions of an ambient, the objects it contains, and the people which are present in it. This representation allows visitors to share space and time, meaning that experiences of one visitor can be shared in the same moment and in the same digital environment by other people who are participating to the system.

Net-Ves bring the notion of CSCW (Computer Supported Cooperative Work) one step further, because the use of 3-D makes possible to represent concepts, objects and ideas in a fashion more similar to the visitors' everyday experience.

The use of Internet and the Web makes possible to inter-network all visitors, giving them all access to the virtual environment. The scenario that opens up is of ambients in which complex cooperation between people is possible, using all representation means conferred by 3D modeling".

The new Shrine of the Book project is modeled on the Politenico team,s Virtual Leonardo Project. The Virtual Leonardo Project, an online version of Italy's National Museum of Science and Technology, includes ten working models of Leonardo da Vinci's inventions. This 'Virtual Leonardo', unlike other science museum sites using the page metaphor and HTML coding,

presents the inventions in a three-dimensional metaphor. (WebTalk evolved out of a previous project called JavaTalk. It is composed of a Client and a Server, which allows navigation in 3D VRML environment. Both the Client and the Server are written in Java). In the quasi-museum, the guide, Leonardo invites visitors to wander around the public (digital) space of the museum. Unlike other net spaces, visitors are encouraged to 'bring a friend' in order to share the 'real-time' experience. After selecting an avatar of choice, visitors may walk or fly around the museum in tandem with a friend, or in a group, activating the exhibits as they go. Users can enjoy a guided tour in a virtual museum, where they can talk each other and get to, virtually activate all the Leonardo machines.

Paolo Paolini, of the Politecnico di Milano, Italy explains:

"the virtual world, created in VRML-Talk, encourages visitors to talk to each other or the guide, or listen to each other. Traditional visitors in the real museum point to exhibits and follow each other and therefore museum web designers should seek an online solution that allows for these complex human interactions and a way to make the experience much more rewarding (Paolini, 1999)".

During this novel experience, visitors may temporarily leave their avatar, and peek though a wormhole at other groups in the shared space. Paolini points out that the most rewarding experience for the virtual visitors; apart from flying seemed to be the ability to look at the world "through the eyes" of another user and both active, (the flyers, walkers and talkers) and passive participants find this novel experience fascinating.

How more wondrous can a space be, where one can walk, talk and fly with a friend?

Members on both teams are excited by the possibilities that such a project will offer. Virtual curators in both cities have begun to prepare the material to be transformed into an electronic stage and designs for interactive exhibits are flying of the drawing boards.

In 6 C.E., Rome formed Judea, Samaria, and Idumea into one province governed by procurators. A Judean revolt against Rome in 66 C.E. was put down and in ca. 68 C.E Qumran fell to the Roman legions. Today, through the distribution of digital images, scholarly research, translations and transliterations distributed on-line, and the developing VRML platform, the internationally famed scrolls still continue to carry the message of the Dead Sea Scrolls into the third millennium.

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