

Museum Review

San Diego Natural History Museum

Dead Sea Scrolls

June 29, 2007-January 29, 2008

On June 29, 2007, the San Diego Natural History Museum will open the largest, most comprehensive exhibition of the Dead Sea Scrolls ever presented to the public. The exhibition—created and assembled by the Museum—includes authentic Dead Sea Scrolls, ancient illuminated manuscripts, artifacts, landscape and aerial photography, and interactive displays about science, discovery, and exploration. Because of the generosity of the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, 27 Dead Sea Scrolls will be on display over the course of the exhibition.

The unprecedented six-month exhibition displays materials never before exhibited together: Dead Sea Scrolls from Israel and Jordan reunited for the first time in sixty years, rarely seen ancient Hebrew codices from the National Library of Russia, medieval manuscripts from the British National Library, and stunning modern interpretations of the texts. Tracing the scrolls and their meaning through time, the exhibition connects the ancient world to the modern. The exhibition will span two floors and over 12,000 square feet.

According to Dr. Risa Levitt Kohn, curator of the exhibition and director of San Diego State University's Judaic Studies Program, "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to encounter some of the world's most significant documents and artifacts, all in the same space. The scrolls are the oldest discovered copies of the books of the Hebrew Bible, and the ideas in them have shaped our world. They shed light on life, faith and culture in ancient Israel, which influenced Judaism and Christianity."

The Dead Sea Scrolls, dating from 250 BCE–68 CE, are indisputably one of the greatest archaeological finds of all time. Discovered beginning in 1947 in eleven caves along the shores of the Dead Sea in Israel, the scrolls are a bridge to the period when the foundations of western civilization were being laid. These ancient



11QPsalms. Photo by Tsila Sagiv, Courtesy of Israel Antiquities Authority.



Qumran ruins. Courtesy of Israel Antiquities Authority.

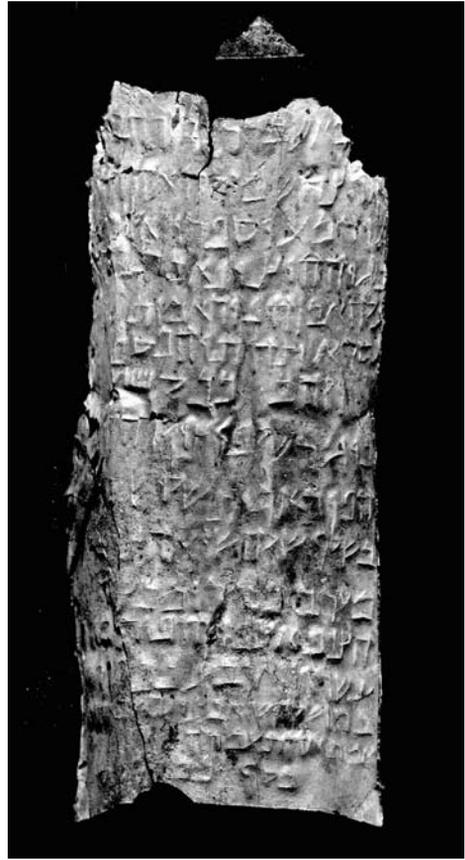
manuscripts embody universal values and bring to life a vanished world. Upon entering the exhibition, visitors will be surrounded by landscapes from top Israeli photographers Neil Folberg, Doby Tal, and Yossi Eshbol that explore Israel's unique beauty and varied climate. The photographs will also show the similarities in San Diego's and Israel's climate—two of the five Mediterranean climate regions on Earth.

The next area explores scientific methods, new and old, that unlock the mysteries of the scrolls and help researchers better understand them. The exhibit investigates scroll preservation, DNA and chemical analysis, infrared technology, Carbon-14 dating, and digital document reconstruction. Visitors will then explore Qumran, an archeological site near where the scrolls were found (thought by some to be where some scrolls were copied and written). This area of the exhibit will partially recreate Qumran at the height of its existence around 100 BCE to 68 CE. Authentic artifacts — coins, sandals, and an inkwell—provide insight into the lives of this ancient community.

Twenty-seven scrolls will be on display throughout the course of the exhibition: visitors will see 15 at any given time, scrolls will change in the fall. Scroll highlights include: scrolls of the biblical books of Leviticus, Isaiah, Job and others;



Scroll jar. Courtesy of Israel Antiquities Authority



Copper Scroll. Courtesy of West Semitic Research.

scrolls such as the Damascus Document and the War Scroll highlighting the life and thoughts of the Qumran community; Psalms scrolls containing passages from liturgy still in use today; a section of the Copper Scroll from Jordan, the only Dead Sea Scroll inscribed on copper; the best preserved of all Deuteronomy manuscripts containing the text of the Ten Commandments; and scrolls written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.

Ancient Qumran: A Virtual Reality Tour will be featured in the Museum's giant-screen theater and is included in admission. The Museum will offer an educational program that will include 22 lectures by world-class scholars and archaeologists, films, classes, and audio tours. Additionally, a curriculum will be prepared for use in schools, home schools, synagogues and churches.

Tickets and more information are available at www.sdscrolls.org. Joan and Irwin Jacobs are the presenting sponsors of *Dead Sea Scrolls*.