

**THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS CONTROVERSY:
HOW IT HAPPENED AND WHERE IT STANDS TODAY***

Norman GOLB

University of Chicago

n-golb@uchicago.edu

President Briukhovetsky, Professors Shcherbak and Zalizniak, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me tell you how happy and honored I am to be with you here first of all because the Ukraine is the birthplace of my parents – my father hailing from Bila Tserkva, and my mother from Berdychiv; secondly, because of the proud tradition of scholarship in this land and this city, as exemplified so brilliantly by my late friend and collaborator Prof. Omeljan Pritsak; and thirdly because, ever since, in the ninety-sixties, first laying eyes at Cambridge University Library on the Hebrew Genizah document written in Kyiv a thousand years ago, I have yearned and vowed to come to this city with my dear wife Ruth and to tread the ground of its most ancient quarters, only to have this happen now, suddenly and unexpectedly, after all these forty years.

We now move to our topic.

During the past half century, there has, surprisingly, been a remarkable development of interest in the subject of Hebrew manuscripts and their effect on our knowledge of past history. Undoubtedly, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has played the major role in this development, and well it should have – for people in many countries around the world have felt personally connected to the very contents of these texts, whether for religious or purely

* The lecture was given at National University of “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy” on September 18, 2006.

humanistic reasons. It is quite likely the spillover from this effect that has in recent decades aroused many scholars and students to awaken from a certain lethargy and ponder the valuable new insights that await them from a perusal of still other old Hebrew manuscripts – both those never before published, and others once condemned as mere forgeries or deviations from a view of history thought to be certain beyond doubt. I will deal in my final two lectures with some of the most important of these latter texts, while concentrating this evening on that most compelling of topics, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the controversy that now envelops them.

It is a matter of great satisfaction to me to see the continuing interest that the topic of the Dead Sea Scrolls arouses among the educated public. In addition to what I've suggested just now, there are at least two other main reasons for this interest. First, there was the sheer sensation inherent in the discovery of seven ancient parchment scrolls hidden in caves near the Judean Desert site of Khirbet Qumran (pict. 1), and of fragments from hundreds of additional Scrolls unearthed during lengthy, painstaking archeological digs during the ensuing decades. Then too, there was the undeniable charisma of the great archeologists who, initially on the basis of those first seven parchment scrolls alone, formulated a theory of great importance to account for the discovery they had made. According to that theory, which we will call the traditional theory of Scroll origins, the Dead Sea Scrolls are the writings of a small, purity-loving sect, generally said to be the Essenes, which is claimed to have had its home at Khirbet Qumran, and whose members, it is said, wrote and copied books there which they later hid in caves to the west and north of that site while Roman troops were making plans to attack it.

This theory – itself of a mesmerizing, almost religious quality – was, quite naturally, bound to have considerable consequences for the study of the history of ideas and religious thought. In particular, because some of the Scrolls contained certain beliefs that later recurred in passages of the New Testament, it became widely accepted that the Essenic sect must have had a formative influence on earliest Christianity. It is no doubt this aspect of the theory that led to its popularity among the reading public and to its development into a near dogma propagated by encyclopedias, museum catalogues, textbooks, and even scholarly journals and doctoral dissertations. Indeed, by 1980 hardly a

single scholar of antiquity could be found who did not accept the Qumran-Essene theory as an article of scientific faith.

During the past twenty years more or less, this situation has changed dramatically. For a sharp debate has emerged among scholars as to precisely who wrote these manuscripts and what they tell us. A new theory of Scroll origins has now taken root, strikingly opposed to the old Qumran-Essene theory, and this conflict has helped generate a further wave of interest in Scrolls scholarship.

According to the new theory, no sect lived at Qumran, and the Scrolls themselves are in fact testimony to a previously unknown, yet highly significant episode of the Jewish revolt against Rome: they are the writings, not of a small sect, but of many different groups of the Jews of Palestine – part of a vast collection removed from various libraries in Jerusalem and stored away, along with other items of value, in sundry hiding-places in the Judean Wilderness in response to the Roman siege of Jerusalem in 70 C. E. We will call this the Jerusalem theory.

Depending on which side one takes, these two theories lead to very different conclusions concerning a period when two great religions – Rabbinical Judaism and the earliest forms of Christianity – were beginning to evolve on the soil of Palestine. And these religions, of course, would later come to play a very important role in the modern world, even up to the present day.

In a few moments, I hope to guide you through a brief history of this debate, and to bring you up to date about a number of current developments. But first, there is an important problem that I need to raise, and that we need to bear in mind as we proceed. And this is an ethical problem.

Unhappily, at the present time, Scroll scholarship is divided into two opposing camps grouped around the two theories, and this situation has resulted in a not-too-edifying power struggle among scholars internationally. Exhibitions of the Scrolls, which are controlled by traditional Qumran scholars, as well as presentations made during official guided tours of the Khirbet Qumran site, always champion the traditional Qumran-Essene theory, omitting any reference to artifacts or texts that contradict that theory. And scholarly meetings organized to discuss the Scrolls, with a few exceptions I will mention later, usually do not feature representative figures of both

schools of thought willing to engage in serious debate with one another, but rather a preponderance of representatives of either the one school or the other.

It is, unfortunately, not difficult to understand how a growing polarization of ideas has led to the current situation, in which even personal enmities have sometimes come to overshadow scholarship in international conferences and major newspapers. Moreover, as knowledge of the *contents* of the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves has increased, and as an awareness, by archaeologists and others, of the actual physical nature of the Khirbet Qumran site has grown, this knowledge and awareness have come into conflict with a formidable colossus – namely, the reverence that many people naturally hold for the ideas of eminent scholars and teachers now mostly passed away. The irony of the situation is that there has been no anomalous or bizarre result obtained through greater reflection on the topic over the course of time, but rather developments similar in character to those in many other scientific fields during the past few centuries, which have often resulted in the relinquishing of ideas of even the most revered scholars of the past.

Let us now look at the evidence as it has unfolded.

Khirbet Qumran is the large plateau near the various caves where the scrolls were found. Ever since its excavations in the 1950s it's been described as "the home of the sect that wrote the Scrolls". Signs have been put up greeting visitors to individual rooms of the excavation: "scriptorium" for one room (pict. 2), "refectory" for another, "council-hall" for still another, "ritual baths" for others and so on – reinforcing the impression that the site was inhabited by monk-like Essenes or some closely related group.

One of the first seven scrolls found in 1947, the Manual of Discipline, actually expressed a number of ideas reminiscent of those of the Jewish sect of Essenes described in the first century by Philo and Josephus. Since in that same century Pliny the Elder had described a sect of celibate Essenes as actually living near the Dead Sea somewhere north of En Gedi, it seemed entirely reasonable, early on, to assume that the few other scrolls then known were also written by Essenes, and that they had had their home near the cave in which the first scrolls were found – a home, namely, at Khirbet Qumran, the closest site of demonstrable habitation to the first scroll cave as well as to

the others where additional scrolls were subsequently found. Here we have a translation of Pliny's statement:

On the west side of the Dead Sea, but out of range of the noxious exhalations of the coast, is the solitary tribe of the Essenes, which is remarkable beyond all other tribes in the whole world, as it has no women and has renounced all sexual desire, has no money, and has only palm-trees for company. Day by day the throng of refugees is recruited to an equal number by numerous accessions of persons tired of life and driven thither by the wave of fortune to adopt their manners. Thus through thousands of ages... a race in which no one is born lives on forever: so prolific for their advantage is other men's weariness of life.

No one, however, could have known in 1950 and 1951 – when the theory of celibate Essenes living at Khirbet Qumran was first formulated, that *none of the Dead Sea Scrolls espouses the doctrine of celibacy*. We must keep in mind that all the Scrolls have now been published.

Not having had this knowledge in the early days of Scroll discoveries, however, various scholars had concluded by the early 1950s that what they called "Essene monks" had lived and written the scrolls *at Khirbet Qumran* itself, which was interpreted (I quote) as an "Essene monastery". Members of the sect, it was claimed, hastily gathered up and hid the scrolls in caves to the west and north of the settlement when Roman soldiers besieged and conquered it in 69 or 70 C. E., during the First Revolt of the Jews against Rome. And yet by Pliny's statement that both Jerusalem and En Gedi were already destroyed, his description of the Essenes living above En Gedi would clearly seem to imply that members of the Essene community of *Jerusalem* settled as refugees near En Gedi after the war. (We know from Josephus that an Essene community was living in Jerusalem before and during the revolt of 67 to 73 C. E.). There is nothing whatever either in Pliny's statement or in any statement of Josephus to connect Khirbet Qumran with Essene inhabitants *during* that war.

On the contrary, however, in the twenty years following the discovery of the first seven scrolls and the original formulation of the Essene theory, a large mass of evidence was to come to light that gradually showed – as so often happens in the history of science and learning – that the old theory was

a blunder of scholarship, resulting from its formulation at the *earliest stage* in the process of discovery and investigation, rather than after the present totality of evidence had been revealed and fully assessed.

The excavations by Father Roland de Vaux and his team in the early 1950s uncovered a site showing all the signs of a well-developed *military* settlement, with remnants of fortifications, a siege-wall, and a reservoir system capable of supplying over 700 people with water during an entire eight-month period of Judean Wilderness drought – that is, under circumstances of a siege.

Further contradicting the idea of a celibate, peace-loving group within a monastery was the discovery of graves of women along with those of men in the ancient 1000-grave cemetery adjacent to the site. The graves themselves were laid out row after row without any variations in style, as characteristically in military, post-battle cemeteries.

The excavations moreover revealed a complex of reinforced, well-built stone buildings and a prominent buttressed defence tower from the top of which one could have a strategic view over the entire northern half of the Dead Sea region – a view that extended even to Machaerus, the Hasmonaean Jewish bastion across the Jordan River in use intermittently from about 130 B. C. E. to 72 C. E., when the Romans captured it in the final stages of the First Revolt.

Father de Vaux, the chief excavator of the Khirbet Qumran site, himself described the evidence of a ferocious battle fought there between attacking Roman forces and Jewish defenders, who in the end succumbed to the Romans; he also states that after capturing the site the Romans themselves used it as a “bastion” (I quote his word) at least until the end of the Revolt in 74 C. E.

In a word, Qumran bore the salient hallmarks of a fortress – one of many built during the time of the Hasmonaean (i.e., the Maccabaeans) in the 2nd and 1st centuries B. C. E. to protect Jerusalem from attack by foreign troops. It is absurd to think that such a strategic site could have been handed over to a pacifist sect such as the Essenes during that period or, all the more so, during the Revolt itself. Pliny describes his Essenes as “throng of refugees” and implies that they lived a rudimentary existence “among the palm-trees” – hardly a description to fit the fine stone buildings of the Qumran fortress.

With this in mind, we may now turn to what growing numbers of scholars are beginning to perceive as the most important single Qumran manuscript. I refer to the **Copper Scroll**, the only text of a genuine *documentary* character ever discovered in the caves. This text contains, exclusively, descriptions of treasures and artifacts hidden away in various locations of the Judean desert. In one column the author indicates that an item is buried at a certain place “on the way from Jericho to Sekhakha” – and there are many such genuine localities of the Judean Desert mentioned throughout the scroll. At the end of the final column the author states that at one site “a copy of this writing” may be found.

Thus this text, from which the copy was made, is an *autograph*. Put more fully, the handwriting characteristics, the reference to a copy of the text, and the frequent occurrence of place-names all point to the fact that the Copper Scroll is a genuine autograph document considered important enough to be recopied and then concealed: it is in a prime category of manuscripts, a genuine documentary autograph.

The mention of *Jericho*, on the other hand, reminds us of reports of discovery of Hebrew manuscripts near Jericho in the third and ninth centuries: Origen in the 3rd century states that a scroll used by him for his famous Bible edition known as the Hexapla was found along with other Hebrew scrolls “*in a jar near Jericho*”. On the other hand, the Nestorian archbishop Timotheus in the 9th century describes the discovery of many Hebrew manuscripts, including many non-Biblical Hebrew poetic texts, “*in a cave near Jericho*”.

These statements all together point still more insistently to a much wider phenomenon of manuscript hiding than that envisioned by the Qumran-Essene theory. In the Copper Scroll, in fact, there are at least *eight* passages referring to the concealment of *scrolls* (*sefarin*) or *writings* (*ketabin*) along with other artifacts, many of silver and gold. The treasures are described as being hidden in cisterns, aqueducts, wadis and, to be sure, various caves. We find reference, for example, to a deposit “in Harobah, in the Valley of Achor”; and another to “the dam in the canyon of the Qidron [river-valley]”. Both of these were part of a ramified system of wadis leading out from the area of Jerusalem, and the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in caves throughout this area.

By the size and complexity of the treasures and their location in areas readily accessible through the wadi-system reaching out from the capital, we are ineluctably led back directly to Jerusalem in seeking the source of these great deposits. Moreover, in the light of the statements in the Copper Scroll, we can perceive that the earlier reported discoveries of scrolls near Jericho, as well as the actual manuscripts found in large numbers in caves near Qumran, point to an interconnected phenomenon on a large scale whose cause must be sought in significant events of the First Revolt (66–73 C. E.)

In addition to these discoveries, Qumran-like manuscripts have also been found at Masada (at the southern end of the Dead Sea) in excavations conducted by the famous Israeli archaeologist Yigael Yadin. They include passages from the Five Books of Moses, Psalms, Wisdom of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus), fragments of two copies of the Book of Jubilees, fragments of several otherwise unknown literary texts, some documentary papyri fragments in Hebrew, Latin and Greek, and, most remarkably a part of the so-called “Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice”, of which other parts, but in different handwritings, had earlier been found in Qumran caves 4 and 11 over a decade earlier.

When I studied the reports on Masada that came into the Oriental Institute, I could not refrain from thinking about what might have been the likely history of interpretation of the various discoveries in the Judean Wilderness if only Prof. Yadin’s dig at Masada in the 1960s had *preceded* the discoveries at Qumran rather than following them. That refugees fled in considerable numbers from Jerusalem to Masada when the capital fell to the Romans in the summer of 70 C. E. has been carefully documented by Josephus. In sum, the discovery of the Copper Scroll, as well as of Hebrew texts at both Masada *and* Qumran, as well as near Jericho much earlier on, serves as important testimony to events that occurred in Jerusalem after the fall of Galilee to the Romans in the late autumn of 67 C. E.

Josephus describes that fall and the arrival at Jerusalem of the refugees, and he states that, while some in the city were incited to war, nevertheless “of the sober and elder men there was not one who did not foresee the future and mourn for the city as if it had already met its doom”.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem, as of any city facing an impending siege, obviously would have had to begin hiding their objects of wealth and precious

writings once apprised of their enemies' intentions. As the Copper Scroll clearly indicates, they took the treasures from the Temple and perhaps other strongholds of wealth, and scrolls from various libraries in the city, those of sects, parties, individuals and the Temple priesthood, and stored away as many of these artifacts and writings as they could. Some, as Josephus tells us, were hidden away in secret hiding-places under the city itself. Others were taken to the Judaean Wilderness – the only area left to the Jews as of 70 C. E. Some of the hidden scrolls were found in the third and ninth centuries near Jericho. More were found between 1947 and the mid-50s in eleven of the caves near Khirbet Qumran, and still others later on at Masada.

(I add parenthetically that just last month, on March 14th, we were able to read in Israel's *Haaretz* newspaper that archaeologists have discovered, in the Galilee near Nazareth, [I quote] "underground chambers and tunnels constructed by Jews... for hiding from the Romans during their revolt in 66–70 C. E." further corroborating the conclusion that the Palestinian Jews *planned* their revolt and took *precautions* in the effort to fend off disaster).

Returning now to the Scrolls as a whole, we must keep in mind that the theory of a pious, celibate community of scribes inhabiting Qumran was based, originally, only upon the first *seven* scrolls, discovered in 1947, especially on that particular one that came to be known as the **Manual of Discipline**. However, in addition to the finds of the 3rd and 9th centuries, during the 1950s fragments of over *eight hundred* scrolls were found in the caves, including *over six hundred* non-Biblical ones, 90% of them writings never heard of nor seen before. Reasonably, such a large number of scrolls could have been produced nowhere else than in a large urban centre: what's more, we must bear in mind that the poor state of preservation of most of the fragments makes it evident that *many more* scrolls had once been stored in the caves and totally destroyed. We are obviously dealing with a *very large* phenomenon of manuscript hiding that involved at least a few thousand scrolls. What is more, since the freeing of the Scrolls and the publication of photographic reproductions, we have been able to count the number of handwritings of the scribes who copied them: namely, over five *hundred* different handwritings, demonstrably reflecting the copying activity of at least that number of scribes – not a tenth of whom could have squeezed in at

any one time into the so-called “scriptorium” of Qumran where these many manuscripts were supposed to have been penned.

One group of scrolls is especially intriguing, namely the *phylacteries* found in some of the caves. These amulets containing verses from Exodus and Deuteronomy are to this day put on daily (except on Sabbath and holy days) by strictly observant Jews, in literal fulfilment of the words of Deuteronomy to “bind these words that I command you this day as a sign upon your hands and as frontlets between your eyes”. (The practice of wearing them in antiquity is attested by Josephus, by the Gospel of Matthew, and elsewhere). What is so unusual about the phylactery texts found in the caves near Qumran is that they do not match up with one another – instead, they reflect different understandings as to what Biblical verses were to be bound upon arm and forehead. This unusual phenomenon has led a young scholar (David Rothstein) to state in his exhaustive dissertation on this subject that “the precise identification of the practitioners during the late Second Temple period remains uncertain, though it appears probable that these circles constituted a *broad spectrum of Palestinian and diaspora Jewry*”. These simple bits of parchment, in other words, would appear to tell the same story as the evidence I’ve discussed earlier.

Until today, however, traditional Qumran scholars have supplied not the barest answer to the problem that the finding of such diverse phylactery texts poses for the original Qumran-sectarian theory. It is not reasonable to think that a pious group of sectarians under an authoritative leader living, according to the traditional theory, in an isolated spot in the desert could have had individually divergent understandings of the manner in which the precept was supposed to be carried out. The texts of the **Yahad** (or Unity) group found in some of the caves, pointed to by traditional Qumranologists as those texts that were actually operative at the claimed sectarian settlement of Qumran, explicitly encourage unified observance of the laws by the brotherhood members, and oppose individual divergencies.

These small phylactery texts can, however, be reasonably explained by recourse to the presently known abundance of doctrinal variations and spiritual streams within the Scrolls. They indicate by *their* contents too, that they derived from groups and individuals associated with various currents in ancient Judaism, not just one or two. With the increasing Roman pressure on

Jerusalem and its eventual fall, the Jews of these various groups and parties – so we may legitimately infer from where the phylactery texts were hidden – fled not only southward towards Herodium and Masada, but also eastward towards the Khirbet Qumran area and the Dead Sea and finally – to the great fortress of Machaerus lying on the eastern side of the sea. (Josephus explicitly describes the mortal plight of the refugees who fled to Machaerus).

We may surmise from the locations where the phylacteries were found that those refugees from Jerusalem fleeing eastward placed or threw their amulets into caves along the way. The reason for this act may have been twofold: on the one hand, they would have sought to prevent the Romans from finding holy writ upon their bodies and desecrating it, while on the other hand their actual wearing of the phylacteries – which many Jews of antiquity practiced through each day’s fullness except for Sabbaths and holy days – could easily have hastened their death at the hands of Roman troops. As we in fact already knew from Josephus’s account, many of the refugees succeeded in reaching Machaerus. The Romans pursued after them, besieged the fortress, eventually persuaded the Jews massed inside to leave with the promise of safe passage, and then, once outside the walls, all of them, in their thousands, were massacred by the Roman troops.

Thus by the evidence of the full contents of the Dead Sea Scrolls including even the phylacteries, and the presently-known totality of archaeological evidence, the conclusion becomes palpable that the Scrolls are the heritage of the Palestinian Jews as a whole, representing various parties, sects and divisions that were the creative source – so we can now conclude – of a multitude of spiritual and social ideas. Before the discovery of the Scrolls, and before they could be read in their fullness, we could not draw so emphatic a conclusion about the Jews of intertestamental times. Much of their literature is still lacking, and little chance exists that we will ever be able to grasp the full magnitude of the creative power of this people in the days of the Hasmonaeans and their successors. But those scrolls that were saved, relatively few though they may be, are like the proverbial “mast at the top of the mountain”, inviting us toward gradually more advanced historical reflection.

I hope this will help to explain why the challenge to the traditional view of Scroll origins is not only one of mere opinion clashing with opposing

opinion, as though in a top of-the-head argument, but rather results from a configuration of hard facts that were unknown to the early Scroll scholars and which, to this day, have not been adequately dealt with by their traditional disciples and followers. And it is not only I who am concerned about this singular matter, but rather other researchers as well who have come to see that various ideas about the Scrolls created in the 1950s are no longer operable.

Among these scholars I should point out first of all Profs. Robert and Pauline Donceel of the University of Louvain. They had been appointed already in the eighties by the École Biblique to take over the work of the late Father de Vaux – and after studying the unpublished artifacts stored away during his excavation of Khirbet Qumran, they actually *distanced themselves* from his conclusions about the nature of the site, stating that it could not have been a place where an Essenic sect had ever lived, and opposing de Vaux and all of his disciples in the identification of each of the individual rooms and chambers of the site. (For this honest candor they would later be relieved of their École Biblique responsibilities.)

Theirs was one of twenty-five lectures delivered at the conference we organized in 1992 at the New York Academy of Sciences, in which for the first time a conscious effort was made to bring together, for collegial give and take, scholars of mutually opposing views on the identification of the Scrolls and of Khirbet Qumran. Coming just after the freeing of the Scrolls in 1991, and featured in a detailed article in the *New York Times*, the conference had as its main goal to bring researchers together in the truthful pursuit of knowledge. In retrospect, however, the goal was met only briefly, for the period of the conference itself. Subsequent meetings on the Scrolls have again reverted to a stage of dire polarization. But the conference did have the effect of encouraging independent thinking both by archaeologists and text-scholars, who now in increasing numbers express their dissatisfaction with the standard theory of the 1950s and reach out to understand the Scrolls, and the phenomenon of their hiding, within the context of events of the First Revolt and prior aspects of ancient Jewish history.

Among Israeli archaeologists, Prof. Yizhar Hirschfeld has, since the late nineties, written articles and more recently an important book in which he joins with the Donceels in rejecting the Khirbet Qumran site as a place of sectarian

religious activity. Dr. Rachel Bar-Natan of the Israel Antiquities Authority has, several years ago, published a Hebrew volume in which, by comparing the pottery of Khirbet Qumran with that of inhabited sites nearby, including the Hasmonaean and Herodian winter palaces at Jericho, draws the conclusion that there was no material difference between the one site and the others, and no proof whatever from Qumran pottery that a sect of frugal Essenes ever inhabited it. (This same view was expressed earlier by the Donceels on the basis of other archaeological evidence).

Prof. Rachel Elior of the Hebrew University has in the meanwhile published a work, in both Hebrew and English editions, in which, analyzing various poetic and mystic texts of Qumran, she rejects the notion of their Essenic origin, opposes the identification of Khirbet Qumran as an Essene site, and draws the inference that the texts came from Jerusalem. In France, Bruno Bioul has published a book (2004) in which he dares, even in a land of piously traditional Qumranology, to speak of the Qumran-Essene hypothesis as an hypothesis. In it he has posed various pertinent questions to several traditional Qumranologists, and the same questions to several of us who stand in opposition to their theory, and the answers make enlightening reading for anyone who can handle the Gallic subtleties of his text. More recently, in the new and enlarged edition of their excellent English translation of the Scrolls, Prof. Michael Wise and his co-authors Abegg and Cook now state that, “more and more... it is becoming clear that the archaeology of Qumran cannot bear the weight of a theory that it has too long been forced to support. Even the strongest proponents of the Standard Model”, they state, “are beginning to admit as much... One can no longer reasonably argue for a strong connection between the [Qumran] site and the scrolls, though the two may have a weak connection...” In terms of the actual findings, however, I am obliged to state that there is no actual basis for positing even a weak connection.

Yet more significantly, on July 30th of 2004 the *Haaretz* newspaper published a story pointing out that a “10-year dig at Qumran claims to overturn the Essene connection”. The article stated that two Israeli archaeologists, Yuval Peleg and Itzhak Magen, both of them attached to the Israel Antiquities Authority, had “recently completed ten seasons of excavations at Qumran”, with the conclusion that “the Essenes never inhabited Qumran and did not

write the Scrolls". Their findings had earlier been detailed in part at a 2002 conference organized at Brown University by Dr. Katarina Galor, whose speakers mostly expressed opposition to the traditional theory of Scroll origins, causing the *New York Times* report on these talks to describe the traditional Qumran-Essene theory as being represented today by a "crumbling consensus". In a further article appearing just last month in the *Times*, the statement is made that "Despite the rising tide of revisionist thinking, othe scholars of the... Scrolls continue to defend the Essene hypothesis, though with some modifications and diminishing conviction". The proceedings of the Brown conference have just recently been published, and I do hope that it will encourage traditional scholars of the Scrolls neither to be dismayed by the findings nor to categorically reject them, but rather to welcome them and to discuss and debate them in collegial fashion with their opponents, as we hoped to do at the New York Academy meetings of 1992.

These are my own conclusions in the light of the totality of evidence. The scrolls in effect offer a portrait of the underlying spiritual factors that generated events leading up to the First Revolt. We observe the tortured evolution of Jewish thinking from its early basis in Mosaic belief toward new religious and social values. The evolution was accomplished by struggle between various groups and individuals. The dynamics of a vigorous interchange of ideas created a climate of fervor and zeal in Jewish Palestine eventually leading to militant opposition to Roman rule. These passions undoubtedly smoldered throughout those regions of Palestine where the Jews were heavily settled. It was, however, in Jerusalem, the religious and political capital, that they found their most intense expression (pict. 3).

The Romans knew that Jerusalem would be their chief prize. This was not only because it represented the polity of the Jews. Beyond this, they perceived that by its stubborn will to exist, the city continued to carry the message to the pagan world that a final time would arrive when Rome's own swords, which had conquered so much of that world, might be beaten into plowshares, and all mankind come streaming up to the Temple in Jerusalem (Isa 2:2-4; Mic 4:1-4). The Jews, for their part, deeply feared that the Romans intended to destroy the Temple, the physical embodiment of the Jewish ideals. They hoped that by saving their collections of scrolls and thereby the words that expressed their

beliefs and aspirations – that is, by literally hiding those words until the terror had passed – the time would yet come when the message of the Jews and of Judaism to the nations of the world might be heard again.

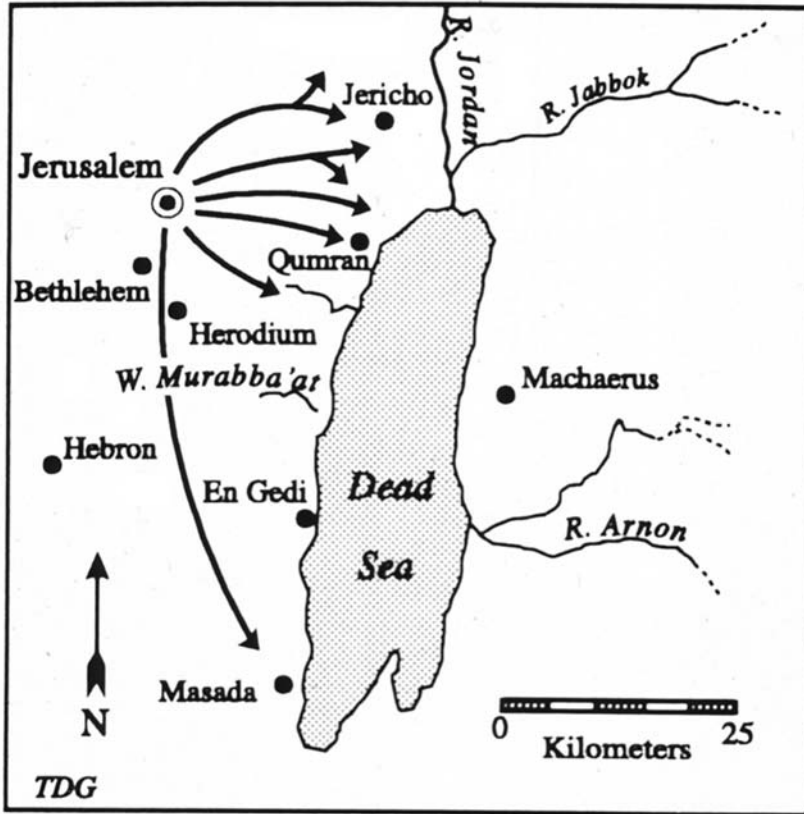
The hiding of their writings by the Jews at the time of the First Revolt thus emerges as an historic act of desperation. Through such efforts, the Hebrew scriptures and many other writings of the Palestinian Jews were given the chance of survival. When the Temple burned and blood flowed through the streets of Jerusalem, who would have believed that the daughter religion spawned in relative obscurity in the Jews' midst would adopt those scriptures and some other writings as her own and go on to flourish and shape so much of the thinking of the western world? Who could have believed that the Jews themselves, with the message they continued to carry, would yet return to vigorous life and renewed creativity of spirit?



Pict. 1. Khirbet Qumran. Courtesy of Norman Golb.



Pict. 2. Khirbet Qumran. The supposed scriptorium. Courtesy of Norman Golb.



Pict. 3. Jerusalem origin of the Dead Sea Scrolls.
Geographical representation. Courtesy of Norman Golb.