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Dead Sea Scrolls & The New Testament

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Prof. Garcia

Lecture Review: Week 1

The Dead Sea Scrolls are a collection of Jewish texts, including the earliest surviving copies of the Hebrew Bible, discovered between 1947 and 1956 in eleven caves near the Dead Sea. The texts are of great historical and religious significance, as they provide insight into the development of Judaism and the origin of the Hebrew Bible.

The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered by a Bedouin shepherd in 1947 in the vicinity of the Dead Sea in the West Bank. The shepherd stumbled upon a cave containing jars with scrolls, some of which were later sold to antique dealers and eventually made their way into the possession of scholars for study and preservation.

The Ben Ezra Synagogue is a historic synagogue located in the Fustat neighbourhood of Cairo, Egypt. It is believed to have been built in the 8th or 9th century and is one of the oldest synagogues in Egypt. In 1896 a genizah (a storage room for worn-out or discarded Hebrew manuscripts) was discovered at the Ben Ezra Synagogue, containing over 200,000 fragments of Hebrew and Aramaic documents. Some of these fragments were later found to be part of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The discovery of the Ben Ezra genizah was significant because it provided new insights into the history and culture of the Jewish community in Egypt and the broader Mediterranean world.

Solomon Schechter was a Romanian-born scholar of Judaism and a leader in the Conservative movement in the early 20th century. He is best known for his role in the discovery and acquisition of a significant portion of the Dead Sea Scrolls for the Cambridge University Library in England. In 1897, Schechter was approached by a Jewish manuscript dealer who offered to sell him a collection of biblical texts that had been discovered near the Dead Sea. Schechter recognized the importance of the texts and worked to secure their purchase and preservation. Today, the Dead Sea Scrolls are considered one of the most important archaeological finds of the 20th century and are a valuable resource for understanding the history of Judaism and the origins of the Hebrew Bible.

The Dead Sea Scrolls consist of over 900 manuscripts, written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, and include fragments from every book of the Hebrew Bible, as well as a variety of other Jewish texts. Here are seven of the most significant manuscripts among the Dead Sea Scrolls:

The Isaiah Scroll: The longest and best-preserved of the Dead Sea Scrolls, containing the entire book of Isaiah.

The War Scroll: A military manual that describes a future war between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness.

The Thanksgiving Hymns: A collection of hymns of gratitude and praise to God.

The Community Rule: A manual for the organization and governance of the community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Temple Scroll: A text that describes a vision of a future, ideal Temple in Jerusalem.

The Habakkuk Commentary: A commentary on the book of Habakkuk, offering a unique interpretation of the prophetic text.

The Copper Scroll: A unique document written on copper sheets that lists the locations of hidden treasures.

These manuscripts offer insight into the beliefs, practices, and daily life of the Jewish community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, and they continue to be the subject of scholarly study and debate.