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Week 2: Lecture Summary
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Lesson: What are the Dead Sea Scrolls

In this lecture, I learned the overview of the Dead Sea Scrolls, including their history and significance to our understanding of the ancient world. The Dead Sea Scrolls are a collection of ancient manuscripts discovered in caves in the Judean Desert near the Dead Sea in the 1940s. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is a fascinating history that goes back over two thousand years. In 1952, a copper scroll was discovered and sent to England to be cut into 24 pieces to open. This scroll contained a list of buried treasures in the desert, but unfortunately, they could not find any of them. There is only one surviving picture of the scroll, the Ensisu scroll, which was found where it was originally two thousand years ago. In the late 18th and 19th centuries, two women discovered manuscripts in the Cairo Genizah, prompting Cambridge University's professor to come and find more. This led to the discovery of the Damascus Document, which they called the Zadokite Document. The documents that were found were put into the collection of the Tailor Chektor and were not recognized as coming from the Dead Sea Community until fifty years later.

The scrolls, which included Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek manuscripts, were believed to originate from a Jewish community that inhabited the area around 200 BCE. The scrolls provide evidence of the development of Judaism and include portions of the Hebrew Bible, works written by the community, and works reflecting the larger world of Judaism. Bedouin shepherds initially discovered the scrolls, but they soon made their way into the hands of scholars and collectors. The scrolls were initially examined by European scholars such as Solomon Schechter and

Eleazar Sukenik, and they were soon published in the Hebrew University's Dead Sea Scrolls series. Unfortunately, some scrolls became private collections, and scholars could not examine them. It was not until 1990, 43 years after the initial discovery, that scholars were given full access to the scrolls, and even then, there was much controversy over their publication.

The scrolls have been published in the Discoveries in the Judaean Desert series. They include manuscripts of the Old Testament, with all books, present except Esther, and manuscripts of the New Testament, of which there are none. They also include the "Sons of Light," which references Jesus and his teachings in the New Testament. The Psalms scroll from Qumran has 151 psalms, and some of the Jeremiah and Ezekiel manuscripts are longer than the ones we have today in the Bible. The Dead Sea Scrolls provide a unique insight into the development of Judaism, and the discovery and eventual publication of the scrolls have been an important event in archaeological and religious history. The scrolls are a valuable source of evidence for historians, and they continue to be studied and debated by scholars today. I learned that the scrolls could illuminate our understanding of the Bible and shed light on the history of the Jewish community in the Judean Desert.