About the Scrolls

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Scrolls from Qumran

The scrolls found at Qumran form a significant body of religious literature. Chief among them are many biblical manuscripts, along with a number of what could be called parabiblical manuscripts, texts that were circulating at the time but were not considered part of the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible). In addition, because they appear to describe the religious beliefs and practices of a specific religious community—presumably the one centered at Qumran—many of the Qumran scrolls can best be described as sectarian in nature.

Scholars date most of these scrolls from the mid-Second Temple period, around 166–164 B.C., to possibly as late as the first century of the Common Era. Some of the Qumran documents may be as old as the third century B.C. Most of the scrolls consist of leather parchment, some of papyrus, and the text of one scroll is engraved on copper.

The importance of the Qumran scrolls becomes evident when their contents are described.

Biblical Manuscripts

About a fourth of the Qumran scrolls are copies, in whole or in part, of every book in the Old Testament except the book of Esther. An example is 1QIsa, The Great Isaiah Scroll, a scroll more than twenty-four feet long containing the entire text of the book of Isaiah. (A full-size replica of this scroll was on display in the Qumran exhibit.) Among the documents found at Qumran are several copies of the same books of scripture, some of which were copied in ancient paleo-Hebrew, not the Hebrew script of the time.

Some of the biblical texts from Qumran differ significantly from conventional wording and even among themselves. And there is evidence of additions and deletions in some texts, suggesting that in some instances scribes felt free to alter the texts they were working on. No list was found in this collection that would indicate which texts the community considered part of the Bible. Indeed, the evidence suggests that those at Qumran may not have had a clear notion of what constituted an authoritative collection of sacred books.

However, other biblical manuscripts are very close to the text found in the Hebrew Bible, known as the Masoretic text, which was composed by Jewish authorities centuries later, between A.D. 600 and the middle of the tenth century. This consistency is remarkable because these manuscript copies are at least a thousand years older than previously known biblical manuscripts and even predate the canonization of the Hebrew Bible!

This range of fidelity to the Hebrew Bible illustrates the fact that at this time several versions of the same biblical texts were in circulation and that views differed about which versions were more authoritative. Needless to say, it would be difficult to overestimate the value that some of these scrolls have had in present-day biblical studies.

Parabiblical Manuscripts

This category includes copies of (1) apocryphal writings, or texts of questionable authorship or authenticity; and (2) pseudepigraphical texts, so designated because they have been determined to be spurious writings, falsely
attributed to biblical figures or times. (For instance, one of the Masada documents that was on display, Mas1j, may be a copy of a portion of the pseudepigraphical work known as the book of Jubilees.)

**Sectarian Manuscripts**

Writings in this category fall into three groups: those that describe what could be called the rules and regulations governing community life, those that are distinctive biblical commentaries, and those that are apocalyptic and liturgical works. The first group is represented by fragments from a work known as the *Damascus Document* (medieval copies of which were also discovered in Cairo in the last century and have now been identified with the Qumran community), 1QS*Rule of the Community* (a replica of which was in the Qumran exhibit), and the *Halakhic Letter* (several copies of which were found, all containing, among other things, mention of twenty-two religious laws applying to this community).

The second group includes commentaries on the teachings of the biblical prophets Habakkuk, Nahum, and Hosea. (In the Qumran exhibit was a replica of 1QpHab *Habakkuk Pesher.*) These commentaries differ from modern reflections on scripture because their interpretations of scripture reveal aspects of the group’s history and future, along with its dealings with its leaders and adversaries, in a manner believed to be properly understood only by members of the community.

Apocalyptic writings foretelling the ultimate triumph of good over evil are represented by such manuscripts as the *War Scroll* (technically *The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness*), while liturgical works, along with hymns and psalms, illustrate the central importance of prayer and worship within the community.

The Qumran collection of scrolls also includes miscellaneous material such as legal texts, contracts, and lists of names.

**Access to and Study of the Scrolls**

Soon after the scrolls were discovered at Qumran, they were studied at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and at the American Schools of Oriental Research, also in Jerusalem. Eventually the effort was somewhat consolidated at the École Biblique et Archéologique Française in East Jerusalem.

In 1952 G. Lankester Harding, head of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, asked Roland de Vaux, a Dominican priest and renowned scholar associated with the École Biblique, to head an international team of seven Hebrew and Aramaic experts. These scholars began the task of transcribing, editing, and publishing the rapidly increasing number of manuscripts. Oxford University Press agreed to publish the material in a definitive multivolume series entitled Discoveries in the Judaean Desert.

At the outset the international team decided to impose strict rules of secrecy on the project and to limit access to the manuscripts only to team members. Unfortunately, this decision, which was to have enormous impact on subsequent scroll scholarship, fueled speculation in the media, among the general public, and even among some scholars that the scrolls must contain “revolutionary or explosive revelations about Jesus and the New Testament.” But this speculation proved to be incorrect.

After the 1967 war, when Israel occupied East Jerusalem, virtually all the scroll material housed in the Palestine Archaeological Museum (now the Rockefeller Museum) came under the control of the IAA. What remained in Jordanian hands was the famous Copper Scroll found in Cave 3 and a few other fragments (four of which were
included in the Qumran exhibit). As a result of this political sea change and other factors, work on the scrolls slowed considerably. De Vaux died in 1971, and Pierre Benoit succeeded him as director of the international team and chief editor of the Judean desert texts. Unfortunately, in the fifteen years of Benoit’s leadership very little was published on the scrolls. The British biblical scholar John Strugnell, then at Harvard University, was appointed to head the team in 1987 but served for only a brief period.

Because of the slow pace of scholarship and for other reasons, during the 1980s the Biblical Archaeology Review began a public campaign advocating access to the scrolls. In 1990 the Israeli authorities disbanded the original team of scholars and appointed Emanuel Tov, professor of biblical studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, as the new editor in chief. Tov subsequently formed a new team that eventually grew to nearly sixty members.4

Despite these significant changes, outside scholars who were vitally interested in the scrolls and desired access to them continued to press for more openness in the process. At about the time the new international team was assembled, two scholars from Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio, reconstructed the text of several scroll fragments from Cave 4 with the help of a computer. The international team objected and threatened legal action. Meanwhile, a California philanthropist with a long-standing interest in the scrolls obtained two sets of scroll photographs from the Jerusalem Department of Antiquities. One set was given to the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center in Claremont, California. The other set was donated, without restrictions, to the Huntington Library in San Marino, California.

In 1991 the Huntington Library announced it would open its collection of scroll photographs to all qualified scholars. The IAA and the international team protested, but before the end of the year they changed their policy and allowed all qualified scholars and researchers access to the photographic collections of the scrolls at Oxford, Cincinnati, and Claremont.5

It is estimated there will be well over thirty volumes in the Discoveries in the Judaean Desert series. Since the first volume was published in 1955, sixteen additional volumes have become available, ten of them since 1990.

In an effort to increase access to these invaluable ancient documents, FARMS, in cooperation with BYU, is producing and will distribute, mainly to Dead Sea Scrolls scholars, the Dead Sea Scrolls on CD: The FARMS Electronic Database. The database will consist of a comprehensive, fully indexed, and cross-linked computerized collection of nonbiblical (and eventually biblical) Dead Sea Scrolls transcriptions, a selection of digitized images (from photographs) of scrolls and scroll fragments, translations, and reference material of importance for scholarly work on the scrolls and on related literature and subjects.

The Community at Qumran

On the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea, two miles south of its upper rim, is an ancient ruin called Khirbet Qumran. In 1947, in one of the nearby caves, the first of what turned out to be a massive collection of ancient biblical and nonbiblical scrolls and scroll fragments was discovered.

Sometime after this first discovery, the cave was located through the efforts of Captain Philippe Lippens, a Belgian officer in the United Nations Armistice Corps. Because of the cave’s proximity to Khirbet Qumran, it seemed likely that the two sites were related. But when the ruin was initially excavated in 1949, nothing was found to establish a connection.
Nevertheless, beginning in 1951 and proceeding more systematically from 1953 to 1956, a team of archaeologists thoroughly explored the site. Harding and de Vaux directed this series of excavations with assistance from representatives of the Palestine Archaeological Museum in Jerusalem. The archaeologists uncovered several large structures that they believed to be the center of a small monastic Jewish group where the scrolls had been collected, copied, and written. They speculated that this was the group that later hid the scrolls in neighboring caves.

The theory was that the group lived in the immediate area and used the center complex of buildings for such communal activities as sharing meals and engaging in common acts of worship, prayer, and ritual purification. Several large cisterns discovered at the site may have been used for purification ordinances as well as to collect drinking water. The complex included a large assembly hall, several other facilities used for a variety of living purposes, and a large workroom understood to be a scriptorium where presumably the scrolls were copied, written, and stored. On display in the Qumran exhibit are some of the artifacts found at this site: wooden bowls, oil lamps, incense altars, and a large terra-cotta jar of the type in which the scrolls were stored.

According to archaeological evidence, Qumran was occupied late in the second century B.C., during the Maccabean era. Over time a larger area was occupied until an earthquake and fire destroyed the site sometime in the reign of Herod the Great (37–4 B.C.), probably around 31 B.C. Rebuilt early in the Common Era, the settlement was inhabited until the time of the First Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66–73), when Roman troops destroyed it before laying siege to Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Roman troops then occupied the site for another twenty years, until A.D. 90. It then became a stronghold for Jewish freedom fighters during the time of the Second Jewish Revolt (also known as the Bar Kokhba Revolt), which took place between A.D. 132 and 135. After that the area was abandoned, and it has been desolate to this day.

Today scholars are less inclined to view the site as a monastic center. While they agree that some inhabitants may have lived a celibate life, they point out that there simply is not sufficient evidence to support the claim that this was the case for all the inhabitants. Furthermore, as can be expected, scholarly opinion varies about which particular Jewish group might have occupied the site. Hebrew University archaeologist E. L. Sukenik, one of the first to acquire and study some of the newly discovered scrolls, claimed that Qumran was an Essene community. This is still the prevailing theory.

The Essenes were one of four distinct Jewish groups living in Palestine before and during the early part of the Common Era. Another group, the Sadducees, was relatively small in number and counted among its followers the priestly class in Jerusalem, along with the more wealthy aristocratic members of society. The Sadducees were closely associated with sacrificial rites performed at the temple in Jerusalem, claiming to be direct descendants of Zadok, the high priest at the time of Solomon’s Temple.

While officially opposed to the Maccabean authorities in Jerusalem, the Sadducees more often than not allied themselves with these forces politically if not religiously. As a result of these and other factors, the Sadducees were often in opposition to the majority of common-class Jews who followed the teachings of a third group, the Pharisees. Among other things, these Jews supported the practice of ritual observance in the home and in the synagogue, further undermining the priestly authority of the Sadducees. Rabbinic Judaism emerged out of the teachings and practices of this group.

The Sadducees and Pharisees each in their own way sought to accommodate themselves to the reality of Roman rule. But not the Zealots. This small, often violent group made no effort to keep itself apart from Judean politics.
The Zealots thoroughly opposed Jews who paid tribute to Rome or who otherwise acknowledged Roman rule. They were also in opposition to any Jewish leaders or groups who sought accommodation with Rome. Not surprisingly, at the time of the First Revolt it was the Zealots who occupied Masada and, when their cause was lost, committed mass suicide rather than let themselves be taken captive by the Roman Legion.

In contrast, the Essenes (literally the “healers”), known for their piety and distinctive beliefs and practices, separated themselves from the rest of society. They were described by contemporary historians, both Jewish and Roman, as pious Jews who viewed themselves as the only true Israel. Although they paid tribute to the temple in Jerusalem, they sought to distance themselves from those who practiced sacrificial worship there and from the form of Judaism represented by the Maccabees, the priestly family who reigned in Palestine from about 142 B.C. until the time of King Herod’s rule. The Essenes formed themselves into ascetic communities, some of whose members may have been celibate.

According to contemporary historians, the Essenes lived in several cities in Judea, even possibly in an isolated section of Jerusalem, and in villages in the wilderness, some in the area of the Dead Sea. They lived a largely communal life, supporting themselves by farming and plying various trades. They adhered to a hierarchical organization led by priests, observed rules of initiation for new members, performed daily purification rituals, held all property in common, took meals together, and worked, studied the scriptures, and prayed together.7

Certain Qumran scrolls—for example, 1QS Rule of the Community—tell us that the inhabitants of this desert community, like the Essenes, lived in a communal and highly structured social order led by priests, required a probationary period for new members, performed daily acts of ritual purification, allowed common use of property, and ate meals together. Seeing themselves as the sole possessors of the correct means for interpreting scripture, they prepared themselves for the impending end of the world.8 Indeed, according to the War Scroll, this community believed in an imminent and final war that would pit the forces of light against the forces of darkness and bring about an end to evil and destruction in the world, thereby making way for the coming of the Messiah and the formation of a new covenant. Some scholars even refer to this group as the “Community of the Renewed Covenant.”9

Despite the similarities between descriptions of the Essenes and the community described in the Qumran scrolls, not all scholars agree on who wrote the scrolls, exactly when they were written, or where they were composed. For instance, the word Essene has not been found anywhere in this large collection of documents. Some scholars identify the community with the Sadducees and others with the Pharisees, depending on how various writings are interpreted. Other scholars think that the rather odd assortment of scrolls found in the caves does not necessarily have anything to do with the nearby site of Qumran (which they contend was a fortress rather than a settlement) and are not necessarily linked to any one particular religious group. In this view the scrolls are the remains of libraries in and around Jerusalem, maybe even from the library at the temple in Jerusalem, and were all carried to this remote site for safekeeping when the Romans threatened the city. Still other scholars remain convinced that the scrolls are the writings of forerunners of those who became the followers of Jesus, the so-called Jewish Christians, who still observed the Jewish law.

Instead of focusing primarily on what the scrolls tell us about the identity of the Qumran community, other scholars stress that the important point is that these rare documents reveal that Judaism in the mid–Second Temple period reflected a range of beliefs and practices apparently centered on scripture study and the interpretation of Jewish law, the practice of ritual purity, and an expectation of the end of time and the coming of
In this view the real value of the Qumran scrolls is the information they provide about the many forms of Judaism that thrived before and during the early period of the Common Era and the considerable contribution they make to our understanding of the religious world in which Jesus lived and taught and out of which Christianity emerged.11

**Scrolls from Masada**

Another significant collection of Dead Sea Scrolls was discovered in the 1960s in the mountaintop fortress of Masada. Deemed to be associated with the Zealots who occupied the fortress from A.D. 66 to 73, these were the first scrolls discovered in the Judean desert in a location other than caves.

It has now been determined that seventeen scroll fragments were found in various locations at Masada.12 This collection has been grouped into the same categories as the Qumran scrolls: several are biblical manuscripts, others are apocryphal or pseudepigraphical writings, and at least one is sectarian and seems to be identified with the Qumran community, whose members presumably took them to Masada when they fled there to escape the Romans’ destruction of their wilderness community. All the documents are parchment except for one small fragment inscribed in paleo-Hebrew on papyrus.

Seven scroll fragment are biblical manuscripts. Two are texts from the book of Leviticus (Mas1a and Mas1b), one is a passage from Deuteronomy (Mas1c), and another, which was on display in the Masada exhibit, is from Ezekiel 31:11–37:15 (Mas1d). The remaining three manuscripts contain texts from the book of Psalms (Mas1e, Mas1f, Mas1g). The first includes the passage from Psalms 81:6–85:6 and was also in the Masada exhibit. Unlike those found at Qumran, all of the biblical texts found at Masada are virtually the same as the Masoretic text.

Scroll fragments of several apocryphal and pseudepigraphical books are also included in this collection. One is an apocryphal work known as the *Proverbs (Wisdom) of Ben Sira* (Mas1h), sometimes referred to as *Ecclesiasticus*. Copies of this text were also found at Qumran. Another (Mas1j) is either a selection from the pseudepigraphical book of *Jubilees* or possibly a fragment of a Genesis scroll.13

Two other scroll fragments in this category—*Prince of Hatred* (Mas1j) and *Mount Gerizim* (Mas1o)—were also on exhibit. The first fragment, copies of which were also discovered at Qumran, was initially thought to be from *Jubilees* but is now thought to be from another as yet unidentified source. The second fragment, the only document found at Masada written on papyrus in ancient paleo-Hebrew script, has been identified as a Samaritan document. Five additional Masada fragments grouped in this category have yet to be fully identified.

One scroll fragment found at Masada known as *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (Mas1k) is clearly sectarian in nature and deals with the Qumran community.

**The Masada Fortress**

Located on an isolated rock cliff west of the Dead Sea and approximately thirty miles south of Qumran, Masada was one of a series of fortresses built in the Judean desert by the rulers of Judea, principally Herod the Great. These locations served as places of refuge. For instance, when Herod fled to Masada with his family and a rather large following, the group stayed there from 40 to 37 B.C. and withstood a siege until Herod returned with sufficient forces to free them. At this time Herod began an extensive building effort that included an elaborate water collection system.14
Excavations at Masada revealed structures and artifacts identified with various periods of occupation. After Herod’s death, Masada was occupied by a Roman garrison until about A.D. 66, when it was captured by a band of Zealots at the outbreak of the First Jewish Revolt. A crucial refuge during the revolt, Masada was home to many who fled Roman forces, including some inhabitants of Qumran who sought safety there when their community was destroyed just before Jerusalem fell to the Romans in A.D. 70. In A.D. 73 Roman troops retook the fortress, but the 960 inhabitants chose to commit suicide rather than be taken captive.

For the State of Israel, Masada is much more than a rich source of priceless ancient artifacts. Yigael Yadin, the late professor of archaeology at Hebrew University who directed the excavation of Masada in the mid-1960s, aptly expressed this sentiment:

> Masada’s scientific importance was known to be great. But more than that, Masada represents for all of us in Israel and for many elsewhere, archaeologists and laymen, a symbol of courage, a monument to our great national figures, heroes who chose death over a life of physical and moral servitude.

**Other Judean Desert Caves**

Early in 1952, while directing excavations at Qumran, Harding and de Vaux, along with Dominique Barthélemy, a researcher at the Ecole Biblique, investigated reports of written documents having been found in caves in the vicinity of Wadi Murabba’at, about eleven miles south of Khirbet Qumran. Among the documents found were several biblical fragments and what turned out to be the first of several documents dating from the time of the Bar Kokhba Revolt, including two letters from Bar Kokhba himself.

In 1960 and 1961, soon after a brief survey of caves just north of Masada yielded some success, an expedition sponsored by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Israel Exploration Society, and the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums (now the IAA) explored caves in all the canyons between En-gedi and Masada. This area was divided into four sections, and an archaeological team was assigned to each section.

Expedition D, headed by Yadin, was established on the north bank of the Nahal Hever canyon, one of the deepest canyons in the Judean desert. The team focused its effort on a rewarding site called the Cave of the Letters. Unlike the caves containing the Qumran scrolls and fragments, the Cave of the Letters was one of several hideouts for followers of Simeon Bar Kokhba (whose original name was probably Bar Koseva).

Among the documents found in the Cave of the Letters, of particular interest is a collection of fifteen letters dictated by Bar Kokhba and addressed to his various military commanders in the area. All these letters were written on papyrus, except one that was carved on four pieces of wood that were joined together to form one document. Most of the letters were written in Aramaic, a few were written in Hebrew, and two were written in Greek.

Biblical scroll fragments found in the cave include one with text from Psalm 15 and the beginning of Psalm 16 and another small fragment containing part of the book of Numbers. Among the nonbiblical documents recovered, thirty-five belonged to a woman named Babata. Many of these documents deal with personal matters such as her marriage, her children, and legal and other business transactions that she and her family entered into with others in the En-gedi region.
Six documents unrelated to the Babata collection pertain to the Bar Kokhba Revolt and reveal information about the administrative organization of the Bar Kokhba government. In this collection are legal documents relating to land deals and business transactions of some of the residents of En-gedi. It is most likely that the original Bar Kokhba document that was on display in the Qumran exhibit (5/6Hev 46) is a land deed of this sort.

The Bar Kokhba documents have yielded insights in many areas. For example, historians and others value the letters, as well as the coins minted with Bar Kokhba’s name on them, for the facts they contain about the social and economic conditions that prevailed during Bar Kokhba’s reign. Before this discovery, scholars relied primarily on secondhand accounts of his administration and rebellion.

The finds at the Cave of the Letters give us a snapshot into the material life of people living near the Dead Sea at the time of the Second Revolt. We now have physical evidence—an empty jewelry box, wooden bowls, sandals, keys that could be worn as rings, knives, and a mirror, among other artifacts—reflecting aspects of life that previously were described by historians and other scholars working only with records from that time period. Furthermore, we also have documents that, because they were never intended to be passed down from generation to generation, provide an unbiased record of daily life.

The Bar Kokhba documents, along with the scrolls found at Qumran and Masada, contribute significantly to our understanding of the languages, the social and economic conditions, and the harsh political world of Palestine from the second century B.C. to well into the Common Era. As a result of these most important discoveries, we now understand better and ought to appreciate even more our common cultural and religious heritage.

Notes

1. Some scholars contend that certain scrolls may reflect an early version of the book of Esther.

2. According to David R. Seely, a member of the international team of scholars working on the Dead Sea Scrolls, “Biblical texts were found [at Qumran] that demonstrated many significant textual variants from individual books” (“The Masada Fragments, the Qumran Scrolls, and the New Testament,” BYU Studies 36/3 [1996–97]: 291). Geza Vermes makes the same point and adds that at Qumran “the concept ‘Bible’ was still a hazy and open-ended one” (“The War over the Scrolls,” New York Review of Books 41/14 [1994]: 12).


4. Four BYU faculty members were recently appointed to this team: Donald L. Parry, professor of Hebrew language and literature; Dana M. Pike, professor of ancient scripture; David R. Seely, professor of ancient scripture; and Andrew C. Skinner, professor of ancient scripture and recently appointed chairman of the Department of Ancient Scripture.

5. For a brief review of the controversy over access to and study of the scrolls, see Vermes, “War over the Scrolls,” 10–1, from which this account was taken.

7. Lawrence H. Schiffman identifies the chief characteristics of the Essenes and compares them to what is known about the inhabitants of the Qumran community, based on what is in some of the scrolls. See his article “Essenes,” in The Encyclopedia of Religion, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1995), 5:163–6.


10. This is the position of Professor Schiffman. See his “Dead Sea Scrolls,” in Encyclopedia of Religion, 4:248–50. Writing from a Latter-day Saint perspective, Hugh W. Nibley contends that the more we know about the religious teachings and practices associated with groups such as the Essenes and the Qumran community, the better we will understand the religious world out of which the Book of Mormon, as well as the distinctive characteristics of early Christianity, emerged. See “More Voices from the Dust,” in his Old Testament and Related Studies (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1986), 239–44.

11. Geza Vermes, for instance, contends that “Essenism, Rabbinic Judaism, and early Christianity all arose in Palestine during a period of profound spiritual ferment. It is no exaggeration to say that none of these movements can properly be understood independently of the others. Their fundamental similarities of language, doctrine, and attitude to Scripture clearly seem to derive from the Palestinian religious atmosphere of the period” (“War over the Scrolls,” 12–3). Hugh Nibley seems to agree. He points out similarities between beliefs and practices recorded in the Book of Mormon and beliefs associated with certain forms of apocalyptic Judaism before the Common Era, as well as beliefs and practices common to the Qumran community. See “The Dead Sea Scrolls: Some Questions and Answers,” in his Old Testament and Related Studies, 245–51.


12. Shemaryahu Talmon, Hebrew University professor of the Bible and member of the international team working on the scrolls, has been assigned to work on the Masada scroll fragments. See his account of this collection in Hurvitz, The Story of Masada, 101–7. See also Seely, “Masada Fragments,” 287–301.

13. David Seely deals at length with both of these texts, particularly in relation to the New Testament. See his “Masada Fragments.”


15. Yigael Yadin’s detailed summary of the finds at Masada references these periods of occupation. See his “Masada,” in Encyclopaedia Judaica, 11:1078–91.


18. Samuel Abramsky gives a brief yet detailed account of this revolutionary leader in his article “Bar Kokhba,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 4:228–32. He notes that Bar Kokhba (literally “son of a star”) was fully in charge of both the economy and the military and that he ruled imperiously, often ruthlessly. According to Abramsky, “The appellation Bar Kokhba was apparently given to [Bar Koseva] during the revolt on the basis of the homiletical interpretation, in a reference to messianic expectations, of the verse (Num. 24:17): ‘There shall step forth a star (כּוכָב, kokhav) out of Jacob’” (ibid., 229).

19. For a detailed description of what was found in the Cave of the Letters, see Yigael Yadin, “Cave of the Letters,” in *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations*, 3:829–32.