3Q15 Copper Scroll

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3Q15 Copper Scroll is one of the most unusual and puzzling finds of all the Dead Sea Scrolls. A transcription of this manuscript was first prepared by Josef T. Milik and published in 1962. A photograph of a portion of the document was on display in the Qumran exhibit.

The Copper Scroll stands alone among the Dead Sea Scrolls because of its orthography (method of spelling), its use of a Hebrew script and dialect that are unlike that of any other manuscripts found at Qumran, and its use of a copper-based metal as the material upon which it was engraved.

Approximately eight feet long and dating to A.D. 25–100, the document includes an inscribed list of sixty-four deposits of gold, silver, aromatic spices, and manuscripts. Because the text mentions an enormous amount of treasure (estimated at several dozen tons) buried in locations in and around Jerusalem, many scholars are convinced that the treasure is fictitious. Others argue that the list is a record of deposits of treasure from the Jerusalem temple, perhaps tithes collected during the First Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66–74), that needed to be hidden during the time of the siege.

One of the sixty-four deposits is described as follows:

In the cave of the column with two entrances, facing East, in the North entrance, dig for three cubits: there is an amphora there, in it a book, under it Blank forty-two talents. Blank In the cavity at the base of the rock, facing East, dig in the entrance for nine cubits: twenty-one talents.

This unusual document has captured the interest of scholars and lay people alike. For Latter-day Saints, the discovery of an ancient record inscribed on plates of metal brings to mind the gold plates of the Book of Mormon as well as the brass plates that were carried by the prophet Lehi out of Jerusalem.

This article has been adapted from Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., Questions and Answers on the Dead Sea Scrolls for Latter-day Saints (forthcoming).

Notes
