58. *Do the scrolls contain previously unknown religious writings?*

Many of the writings represented among the Dead Sea Scrolls were unknown before the scrolls’ discovery in the
years 1947 through 1956. These writings include legal texts (Temple Scroll, Community Rule, Some Observances of
the Law [4QMMT]), hymns and poems (Thanksgiving Hymns, Apocryphal Psalms, Noncanonical Psalms), calendrical
texts (Phases of the Moon, Calendars of Priestly Courses, Zodiacal Calendar with a Brontologion), biblical commentaries
(Commentary on Micah, Commentary on Habakkuk, Commentary on Psalms), apocryphal works (Prayer of Enosh and
Enoch, Elisha Apocryphon, Joshua Apocryphon), bibliically related or based works (New Jerusalem, Prayer of Nabonidus,
Words of Moses, Book of Noah, Ages of the Creation), prayers and liturgical works (Liturgical Work, Purification Ritual,
Blessings, Benedictions, Prayers for Festivals), and other miscellaneous texts.

These texts provide significant information regarding the Hebrew and Aramaic languages, how some Jews
worshipped during the centuries before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, and the religious views of the
Jews of the Qumran community.

59. *Is the plan of salvation attested in the scrolls?*

Responding to this same question, Brigham Young University professor Dana M. Pike discussed possible parallels
between Latter-day Saint doctrine concerning the plan of salvation and the beliefs set forth in the nonbiblical
scrolls. Pike cautiously concludes that a “clear or comprehensive understanding of this plan is not evidenced at
Qumran.” Continuing, he notes: “Though there are concepts that I have described as corrupted echoes of true
doctrines, there are simply too many key points of the plan of salvation absent from the preserved texts. Doctrines
such as the fall, the infinite atonement of the Savior, clear indications of a universal, physical resurrection, and
eternal ordinances requiring the holy Melchizedek Priesthood are not attested.” Pike adds that the scrolls “cannot
teach Latter-day Saints anything about the plan of salvation that has not already been revealed by the Lord
through his authorized servants.”

60. *Do the scrolls mention premortal life?*

The scrolls do not speak of premortal life, although it is possible to see “corrupted echoes” in them because the
people who lived at Qumran were “heirs to the prophetic legacy that is partially preserved in the Hebrew Bible
(the Christian Old Testament).” Dana M. Pike further observes that “the Qumran sectarian scrolls indicate that
God created all things, including good and evil spirits, as well as the spirits or souls of people before they existed in
the flesh, and that God determined which people would be saved and which people would be destroyed. These
passages suggest . . . corrupted echoes of the war in heaven and of God’s foreordination of his spirit children,
concepts that Latter-day Saints believe were known and understood in previous gospel dispensations. However,
by the time of the Qumran community it appears that their understanding was well off the track of true
doctrine.”
61. What were the community’s hymns of praise?

Several scrolls contained hymns used by the Qumran community during daily worship and annual festivals. One scroll comprises forty-nine psalms, forty-one of which are the same as those in our biblical book of Psalms (the remaining eight psalms are apocryphal). According to this scroll, King David composed a great number of psalms and songs:

YHWH [Jehovah] gave [David] an intelligent and brilliant spirit, and he wrote 3,600 psalms and 364 songs to sing before the altar for the daily perpetual sacrifice, for all the days of the year; and 52 songs of the Sabbath offerings; and 30 songs for the New Moons, for Feast-days and for the Day of Atonement.

In all, the songs which he uttered were 446, and 4 songs to make music on behalf of those stricken (by evil spirits).

In all, they were 4,050.

All these he uttered through prophecy which was given him from before the Most High. (An Account of David’s Poems)

In addition to these psalms, the Dead Sea Scrolls include thirty nonbiblical hymns that are called the Thanksgiving Hymns (see question 57). Brigham Young University professor David Rolph Seely explains that “five of these are part of Barki Nafshi—a single text of hymns blessing the Lord, named after the opening phrase ‘Bless, O My Soul!’”

Seely translates a portion of one of the hymns as follows:

Bless, O my soul, the Lord, for all his wonders forever, and blessed be his name. For he has delivered the soul of the poor and the humble he has not despised, and he has not forgotten the distress of the helpless. He has opened his eyes to the helpless, and the cry of the orphans he has heard, and he has turned his ears to their cry. In the abundance of his mercy he was gracious to the needy and he has opened their eyes to see his ways and their ears to hear his teaching. And he circumcised the foreskin of their heart and he delivered them because of his grace and he set their feet to the way.

In this hymn the Lord is praised because he has “delivered [the unfortunate] because of his grace.”

62. What was the Qumran community’s attitude toward prayer?

Similar to other Jewish groups of the period, the Qumran community prayed regularly. According to David Rolph Seely, “Prayer could be offered at any time, in any place, in any circumstance, and at Qumran there were also set times for regular prayer in the morning and in the evening. The Community Rule specifies prayer when the light of day first appears in the morning and when it disappears in the evening.”

A hymn located at the end of the Community Rule describes the beautiful attitude that the Qumran community held toward prayer:
When I stretch out hand and foot I will praise his name. When I go out and come in, sit and rise, and when laid on my couch, I will cry for joy to him. I will praise him with the offering of the utterance of my lips in the row of men, and before I lift my hand to enjoy the delights of the world’s produce. In the beginning of terror and dread, and in the abode of affliction and distress I will bless him for (his) exceedingly wondrous activity. I will meditate upon his power, and upon his mercies I will lean all day.62

63. Were any business records discovered among the scrolls?

A few of the scroll fragments are business records of one type or another. These documents pertain to land sales, debt, money, grain, personal property, and related items.63

64. What about the name Alma, discovered in one of the Bar Kokhba texts?

In the years 1960 and 1961 Israeli archaeologist Yigael Yadin excavated a cave in a wadi known as Nahal Hever, located west of the Dead Sea at a point north of Masada and south of Qumran. Properly speaking, the cave does not belong to the group of caves near Qumran where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. Yadin and his team discovered a number of significant artifacts, including one pair of women's sandals, kitchen knives, wooden bowls, cooking pots, a mirror, pieces of clothing, and a jewelry box. The cave also yielded a bundle of more than forty papyrus documents bound in rags and tied with palm-frond strings.

The documents comprised letters and deeds belonging to the leader of the Second Jewish Revolt (a.d. 132—35), Shimeon bar Kosiba (or Simeon Bar Kokhba). Among the documents was land-lease agreement written in Hebrew and containing the name Alma. The papyrus sheet consists of twenty-six lines and about two hundred words. Part of the text reads as follows:

Of their own free will, on this day, have Eleazar son of Eleazar son of Hitta and Eliezer son of Samuel, both of En-gedi, and Tehinnah son of Simeon and Alma son of Judah both of ha-Luhith in the (coastal) district of Agaltain, now resident in En-gedi, wished to divide up amongst themselves the places that they have leased from Jonathan son of MHNYM the administrator of Simeon ben Kosiba, Prince of Israel, at En-gedi.64

The so-called Alma deed is significant for Latter-day Saints because it reveals that the name Alma did in fact exist as a male name in antiquity just decades after the mortal ministry of Jesus Christ.

65. What is known about Enoch in the scrolls?

Hugh W. Nibley, a professor emeritus of history and religion at Brigham Young University, has observed that “aside from brief genealogical notes, all that the Bible tells us about Enoch is that ‘he walked with God, and was not’ (Genesis 5:25), and that he prophesied the coming of the Lord to execute judgment (Jude 1:14).”65 Though
Enoch is also found widely in the Dead Sea Scrolls texts of 1 Enoch, Jubilees, and the Aramaic Genesis Apocryphon, revealing him to be a mighty prophet with special gifts. According to these texts, he was a great writer, “the first among men that are born on earth who learned writing and knowledge and wisdom” (Jubilees 4:17). He was granted access to divine books and great knowledge, and he “observed the heavenly tablet, and read them carefully, and read the book of all the deeds of mankind to the remotest generations” (1 Enoch 81:1, 2).

The Dead Sea Scrolls identify Enoch as an astronomer. The book of 1 Enoch is referred to as Enoch’s “Astronomical Book,” or “the book of the courses of the luminaries of the heavens” (1 Enoch 72:1). One scholar believes that the sources attribute “the solar calendar of 364 days . . . to Enoch, the original astronomer.”

While the scrolls add much to the scanty information about Enoch in the Bible (see Genesis 5), the account of Enoch in the Latter-day Saints’ Pearl of Great Price comprises the most complete and accurate record of this great prophet.

Nibley also observes that “in giving us a much fuller account than the Bible of how the flood came about, the Book of Enoch settles the moral issue with several telling parts: (1) God’s reluctance to send the Flood and his great sorrow at the event. (2) The peculiar brand of wickedness that made the Flood mandatory. (3) The frank challenge of the wicked to have God do His worst.” The Dead Sea Scrolls record many of the people’s iniquities as well as God’s weeping over the necessity of destroying his own creation.

There is a further note of interest. In the Book of Moses account in the Pearl of Great Price, there appears “out of the blue . . . the name of the only nonbiblical individual named in the whole book—Mahijah (Moses 6:40).” Strikingly, the name Mahujah (MHYW—“the semi-vowels w and y are written very much alike in the Aramaic script and are sometimes confused by scribes”) also appears in the Enoch materials in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Moses 6:40 reads: “There came a man unto him, whose name was Mahijah, and said unto him: Tell us plainly who thou art, and from whence thou comest?” This is strikingly similar to 4QEnoch Giants 1:20: “And they summoned MHWY and he came to them: And they asked him and sent him to Enoch.”

66. Are the names Zenos or Zenock found in the scrolls?

Neither Zenos nor Zenock is mentioned in the scrolls. However, the name Mahujah is found in the Enoch fragments (see question 65), and the name Alma is found on a document found in a cave in Nahal Hever (see question 64).

67. What may be learned about Judaism from the scrolls?

The scrolls, more than any other archaeological find, have increased our awareness of the Essenes, a group of Jews whose practices and beliefs differed from those of other Jewish groups active in the first two centuries B.C. and the first century A.D.
Besides illuminating the rich variety of Judaism in antiquity, the scrolls permit us to see one group of Jews who took a more comprehensive and embracing view of scripture (because their writings “are unaffected by either Christian or rabbinic censorship”) and who took a more exacting view of the observance of festivals and sacrificial practices and of community leadership inspired by the Holy Spirit.

68. Do the scrolls refer to Joseph Smith or other latter-day figures?

The Qumran writings make no references, explicit or implicit, to Joseph Smith or other latter-day religious or historical figures.

69. Has the LDS Church taken a position on the scrolls?

General Authorities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have never taken an official position or made an official statement on the Dead Sea Scrolls with regard to their discovery or content. Although a few Latter-day Saint scholars have done extensive work on the scrolls and have occasionally published their findings in periodicals of the LDS Church, such as the Improvement Era, Church News, and Ensign, these findings represent the opinions of individual scholars and are not to be considered as representing the LDS Church’s position on any given topic.

70. Where can I learn more about the scrolls?

We have prepared a suggested reading list of articles and books on the Dead Sea Scrolls. The list includes studies by Latter-day Saint scholars, English translations of the scrolls, and general studies.

**Studies by Latter-day Saint Scholars**


**English Translations**


**General Studies**


