



# **Caves of Enlightenment: Proceedings of the Asor Dead Sea Scrolls Jubilee Symposium (1947-1997)**

*James H. Charlesworth, American Schools of Oriental Research St, Dead Sea Scrolls Jubilee Symposium*

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Fifty years ago Ta'âmireh Bedouin found a Cave to the west of the north end of the Dead Sea. In it were the remains of a Jewish library from the time of the Second Temple. The Bedouin were disappointed at their discovery. Gold had been expected. Only smelly leather rolls were recovered.

For a surprisingly long time, the Dead Sea Scrolls were not seen as inordinately valuable. In the late forties, for example, they were on display in the chapel of Duke University. No one person group, or university in the USA wanted to obtain them. They were advertised for sale in the Wall Street Journal. Eventually, they were purchased by Yigael Yadin for Israel.

The American Schools of Oriental Research played a major role in helping to discern and stress the invaluable nature of these ancient Jewish documents. Passed through numerous middle men, the scrolls wound up at the American School of Oriental Research where John Trever and William Brownlee began to discern their value. Professor William F. Albright first announced that the scrolls antedated the destruction of 70 CE—and that they are one of the greatest of manuscript discoveries. The first publication of the Scrolls was in the *Biblical Archaeologist*. The first fascicles of text and transcriptions of the Dead Sea Scrolls were published by the ASOR. Working efficiently behind the scene was the ASOR Ancient Manuscript Committee which formerly consisted of Cross, Freedman, Sanders, and eventually Strugnell and Charlesworth, as well as several philanthropists. The Committee helped guide the study and preservation of the Scrolls.

In this volume are six papers, presented at the ASOR Jubilee Symposium in November 1997, which reveal the current state of Dead Sea Scrolls research and the tremendous impact it is having on biblical studies and on our understanding of Early Christianity and First-Century Judaism.

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