



# The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English

*Anonymous , Géza Vermès (Translator)*

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**The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English** Anonymous , Géza Vermès (Translator)

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Judean desert between 1947 and 1956 was one of the greatest archaeological finds of all time. Hidden in the caves at Qumran by the Essenes, a Jewish sect in existence before and during the time of Jesus, the Scrolls have transformed our understanding of the Hebrew Bible, early Judaism, and the origins of Christianity. This fully revised edition of the classic English translation by Geza Vermes, the world's leading scholar on the subject, offers an astonishing look into the organization, customs, and beliefs of the community at Qumran. Enhanced by much previously unpublished material and a new preface, this will remain the authoritative translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls for years to come.

## The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English Details

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# From Reader Review The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English for online ebook

## Ethan says

An accessible translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS).

Vermes was a great scholar, well-attuned to Rabbinic texts and thus the history of Judaism, and this is reflected in his treatment of the DSS. The introduction may be long but it is thorough, discussing the circumstances of the discovery of the DSS, a history of the translation of the DSS, what is to be learned from the DSS, a survey of scholastic opinion regarding the relationship between the DSS and Qumran, and of course a great analysis of the Essene Jewish community at Qumran as reflected in the DSS. Furthermore, each individual text has an introduction describing its contents to the best of our understanding.

It should be noted that this collection does not include the Biblical texts discovered in the caves around Qumran but does include everything else: the community's sectarian texts, apocryphal and pseudepigraphal texts, commentaries on the Biblical texts, compositions written according to the themes of the Biblical texts, etc. Vermes consolidates texts which feature many manuscripts and notes which manuscripts underlie which sections.

The translation effectively communicates the meaning of the texts in English. Many of the texts demand some level of understanding of Second Temple Judaism, and this is where the introduction will prove quite helpful to the non-specialist.

This is a highly recommended translation of the DSS especially for those who are interested in learning more about them but are not specialists in the field.

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## Roberta Wall says

disappointing

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## Frank Peters says

This was a very interesting book, and I am very happy to have read it. The edition I read (Folio Society) was also beautiful. The volume is an introduction and description of the Essenes, the people responsible for the dead sea scrolls, and provides a description of the scrolls themselves. Both aspects were tremendously interesting. For those who may be interested in reading the book, I would have the following warnings: First, the editor operates from a naturalistic/atheistic worldview; that is, he implicitly denies anything supernatural, such as prophecy. Thus, Daniel is assumed to be contemporary with the dead sea community, etc. The book only refers in passing to the many biblical books found in the dead sea scrolls, and highlights other writings that would be less familiar. What was disappointing to me is that that some non-biblical books (e.g. book of Enoch) that were found in the scrolls were only included in part, while other writing that I didn't care about (e.g. the Temple Scroll, which was a repeat of the book of Leviticus) was included.

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**Tom Menke says**

saw them first hand

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**latner3 says**

I will always respect the religion of others.We all bleed red.

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**Ana Rodrigues says**

It is an intriguing read, however, I feel it is a little upsetting that the translation cleaves to the Christian way of translating scriptures instead of using a more contemporary way to translate, More faithful to the original text and less Old/Middle Englishy

It is high time we depart from the Christian tyrannical influence over religious texts, translations included. I was very happy however to see a very early little fragment of the Megillah Esther, which shows that it is not a late invention as many like to claim... and for sure the story has a solid basis and is much older than Christians and Anti-Semitic Zealots say it is. It also shows that the Anti-Semitic theories that Jewish knowledge derives from Greco-Romans and is “younger” than Christianity is yet another baseless anti-Semitic claim, and even though these scrolls are mostly sectarian, being derived from other Jewish texts proves they are far older than the Heathens like to deride they are ( Whenever I discuss this they claim Jewish liturgy emerged as late as the 5th century C.E and is therefore a derivative of Aristotelian/ Greek Thought... when in fact Greeks did derive their knowledge and philosophical systems from Hebrew/Babylonian Knowledge and Philosophy... once more Archeology places Jewish scholarship back ahead of all other historical currents.

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**Pam Baddeley says**

I read this a few years ago but from notes made at the time: I read the first article type bits of the book and then read a few of the translations and skimmed the rest as it was all the 'rule' of the Qumran order rather than alternate gospels etc which would've been more interesting.

As this is an old book published in 1962 I imagine knowledge has grown since then. I've read since that the scrolls were under tight ownership for a long time, and a full transcription was only issued in 1991. So that would explain why the book omits the more interesting aspects! Also, they were poorly stored at various times so have deteriorated quite a bit which doesn't help matters. Perhaps it would be worth reading a more recent study at some point.

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## **Anthony Dalton says**

A thorough translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Damascus Document, with an historical background, and Vermes interpretation of their context in history. The essential guide in discerning an understanding of the Scrolls themselves and the community at Qumran over 2000 years ago.

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## **Kath says**

These were really cool. The "Prolegomena" (which just means the introduction to the texts) was quite helpful to anyone who wants to read the Scrolls with any understanding of who wrote them, when and why. It's also a good discussion of scholarly debates about the dating of the scrolls and other controversies regarding their discovery and translation. The system of numbering the scrolls by cave and columns is also explained, which gives the reader a good insight into the archaeological process of discovering such texts. The texts themselves are sometimes very fragmented, but what's helpful are the authors' introductions to each of the texts. Each introduction introduces the type and purpose of the text and attempts to situate them in historical context. There are various types of writings in the entire collection. Some are commentaries on Torah and the Prophets, some are additional stories (such as the Enoch cycle or the Daniel cycles), some are apocryphal, while others are just instructions for living, for festivals, and some for those who belonged to a particular Jewish sect (mostly thought to be the Essenes, though this is a point for scholarly debate). My favorites were the War Scroll and other writings on the last days. Some of the passages were very cool and could be fodder for a sci-fi or dystopian novel. Another text I particularly enjoyed were A Commentary on Consoling Passages in Scripture which are similar to very familiar passages from Isaiah. There is a "Reader's Guide to the Qumran Calendar Texts" which is very helpful and interesting for those who are into mysticism and cosmology. The stuff about the phases of the moon and its relationship to festivals would be important to anyone studying comparative Middle East religions. The biggest benefit to me was having a better understanding of the historical context into which Jesus was born and the Gospels and Epistles were written. If you're into the historical Jesus, I'd say The Dead Sea Scrolls are a must-read. I'm very excited I have the chance to see them because there are a few of the fragments on display at the Jordan Museum.

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## **Danny Daley says**

My score is, of course, for this edition, rather than the Scrolls themselves, which is a 5 star find. Vermes was, at one point, a leading DSS scholar. This edition was updated just before he died, in 2012. It is simultaneously helpful and frustrating. It is helpful because it opens with an account of the Scrolls discovery, and a brief analysis of some of the overlapping content. The translations are mostly well done and readable.

However, Vermes was one of the earliest Scrolls scholars, doing initial research on them shortly after their discovery, and he maintained, until he died, some traditional views on the Scrolls which have now become extremely outdated with newer analysis. Vermes was certainly aware of recent work, but he defends older views without giving a proper treatment to newer (and in my view more likely) accounts of important issues. For example, it was long held that certain compositions, such as the Damascus Document, the Community Rule, and the War Scroll, were sectarian and foundational to the Qumran sect. However, the relationship between these texts is now in question, and large portions of them are now widely regarded as nationalistic rather than sectarian. What's more, many aspects of the texts are likely not nearly as "foundational" as once believed. Vermes maintained the traditional views on this despite recent scholarship.

The translations are also based on a "composite" working of the manuscripts, and such a method flattens out vital aspects of the various manuscripts. Composite translations can be extremely misleading, but Vermes does not take note of the problems.

Overall, having a volume such as this is helpful, but it is in severe need of an update by a scholar more in tune with the changes in Scrolls research over the past 15 years.

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## **David Sarkies says**

### **A rare look inside an isolationist Jewish cult**

14 September 2012

I suspect that Vermes is probably the foremost expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls since it seems that every book about it is either written, or edited, by him, but then that is simply an observation that I have made. For those not familiar with these ancient documents they were found hidden in a cave by the Dead Sea in about 1947 by a young shepherd and they have been classified as one of the most significant archaeological finds of the last century. Basically they are a collection of scrolls written by a Roman era Jewish sect known as the Essenes and among the many non-biblical scrolls they also contain a complete copy of the book of Isaiah and pretty much sections of every other book of the Old Testament, and most importantly, some of these scroll date back to at least 100 BC. In fact, other than the Babylonian tablets and the Egyptian wall writings, they are probably some of the oldest texts that we have.

The Essenes were an isolationist Jewish sect that had become disgusted with both sides of Jewish politics, being those collaborating with Rome and those rebelling against Rome, and took the third option: leave society and go and establish your own, pure, society in the middle of the desert. These scrolls actually contain details of their cleansing rituals as well as admission requirements for new members. In fact, they appear to be very cultish, effectively rejecting the world of the day and having pretty much nothing to do with it. They would be very similar to some of the isolationist Christian cults that we see around the place, though probably closer to say the likes of Branch Davidian than some of the cults that actually abide by the rules of society, while living separate from them (remember, the whole Branch Davidian fiasco really came down to the fact that they were so isolationist that they refused to pay taxes, which is why the FBI came down so hard on them - they were not terrorists like the Jewish Zealots were).

These scrolls also give us an insight into the ways that the Old Testament books were written, in that we have a number of scrolls which contain merely outlines of the books rather than the complete text itself, as well as commentaries on various aspects of these books. The Essenes were very traditional Jews, so the scrolls really only contain literature that relates to Jewish Literature than to any of the foreign influences that we find in the Gnostic Gospels. The Jewish mind set of the day was generally to reject anything that was not Jewish (unless you were a collaborator and then all bets were off).

These scrolls are pre-Christian, and in fact pre-Christ, so despite suggestions to the contrary, there are no New Testament documents among the collection. However, we do have glimpses of the idea of the Messiah in these texts and what the Essenes at least were looking for. However, it appears that they were not looking for one, but two, separate Messiahs, one being a teacher and another being a ruler. Many of the fundamentalist Jews of the day were expecting a warrior King, along the line of David and Joshua, rather than a king of Wisdom, along the line of Moses and Solomon. This also comes out amongst the scrolls, particularly with references to the Kittim, which we understand as being the Romans.

Remember, things were different in those days in that it was a lot easier to isolate oneself from society that it is now. Despite the vast tracks of emptiness that cover the world, it is difficult for us Westerners to live a self sufficient lifestyle; the government will always intrude. Now I do not necessarily consider modern government to be a bad thing, but I am not all in favour of the current practices either. In a way I consider that governments are a necessary evil. It differed for the Jews than to me though because I am a citizen of my nation-state, whereas the Jews were an occupied people. Whatever freedoms they had were always dictated to them by the Roman legate.

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### **Bettie? says**

The Prayer of Enosh and Enoch (4Q369) page 511

The Book of Enoch (4Q201-2, 204-12) and the book of Giants (1Q23-4, 2Q26, 4Q203, 530-33, 6Q8)

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### **Matt Kelland says**

Well, this took me a long time to get through! It's a much more comprehensive edition than the 1950s John Allegro version I read years ago, and it's filled with detailed notes about the Essenes and the scrolls themselves.

I wasn't much interested in the hymns or even the Biblical variants. My interest was much more in the scrolls detailing their way of life, covering everything from the type of sacrifices to be performed and purification rituals to their relationships with outsiders and their vision of a religious war.

I have to admit, I found the Essenes themselves pretty repulsive. They seem to have been total religious bigots, and their view of a goodly life certainly doesn't square with mine. However, it was interesting to think that this was the world in which Jesus was flourishing: his message of brotherhood and caring was very different to that of other religious sects of the time.

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### **Melissa Yael Winston says**

A bit dry and took some discipline to get through. I enjoyed the commentaries most of all.

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### **Mark says**

First, I will admit, I did not read this entire book, I used this as a reference guide to accompany a lecture course I listened to from Great Courses on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

As a reference book, this book is excellent. I did read the introduction which gives a background of the discovery and significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The bulk of this book however, is the Translation of

every Dead Sea Scroll that has been found to date. Each scroll has a caption, a brief explanation of the scroll and then the actual translation.

Each scroll is labeled according to the number system (i.e. 4Q266) and then which column or fragment is being translated. Missing parts or questioned parts are indicated with [...]s or ?.

This book allows you to read along with famous scrolls like the War Scroll, The Words of Moses, the Treasure map of the Copper scrolls, Commentaries on Isaiah, Commentaries on the Psalms and much much more. There is so much detail and information in these scrolls, it is overwhelming.

The book has a very well organized Table of Contents and Index that guides you to the scrolls about the particular Bible book or subject that you are interested in.

This is certainly not a vacation reading book, but it is a valuable reference book that is fascinating. I read many of the scrolls as I listened to a Great Course lecture by Professor Gary Rendsburg and it really added to my learning and understanding of these historical finds.

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