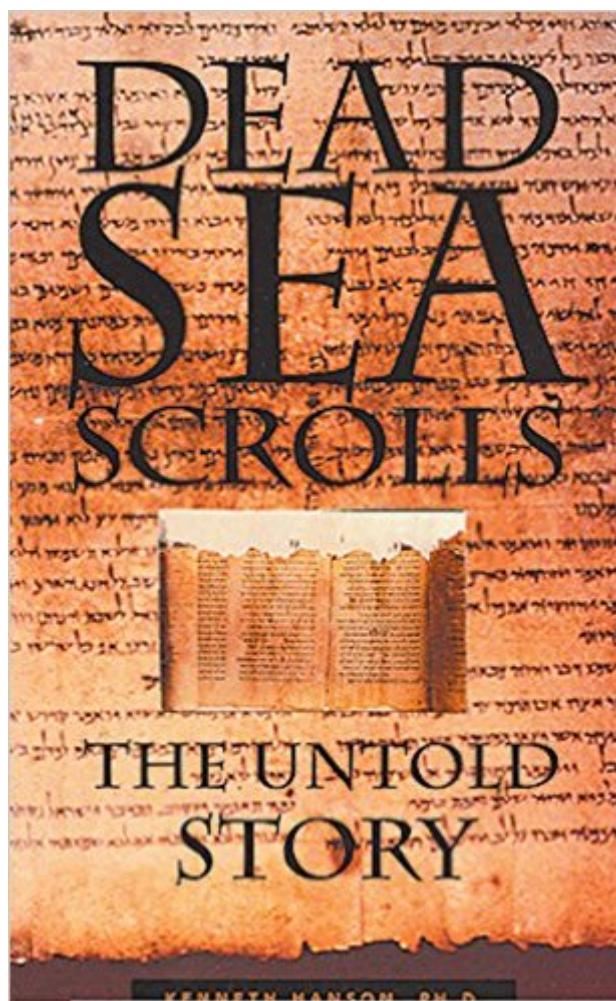


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Dead Sea Scrolls: The Untold Story



Synopsis

Hebrew scholar Kenneth Hanson captures all the mystery and excitement of the rediscovery of the scrolls, the half-century of intrigue that followed, and the ancient Hebrew sect that wrote, preserved, and died defending these treasured works.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Dr. Hanson's effort is the first Dead Sea Scroll book I was able to finish. From beginning to end, I felt like I was transported in time to the fantastic and miraculous events so well described by Hanson. Other books about the Scrolls are packed with such weighty detail and self-righteous importance that the "man on the street" reader can hardly get through the initial chapters. Hanson, however, gives a clear and concise account of the Scroll discoveries written in a prose that humbly acknowledges the supernatural aspects of this remarkably important find. As a linguistics instructor at a major university, an amateur historian, and an ordained minister, I recommend Dr. Hanson's book to anyone wanting to understand the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls without having to become an expert in ancient languages or wade through the political ideologies of elitist academicians. Specifically, this book belongs in the library of every minister or lay minister who seeks a deeper understanding of the events that shaped the life and times of Jesus of Nazareth.

I heard Dr. Hanson both times he has been on the well-known(inter)national talk radio show, "Coast to Coast," though he was never interviewed by the show's mainstay, Art Bell. Dr. Hanson is a very

competent and highly enthusiastic speaker. On the show and certainly in "The Untold Story" he adds life to what could be a "dead" subject. He is the rare Christian, not in that he accepts Judaism as the undoubted precursor to Christianity (a pointfully proven by the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), according to him), but he knows Hebrew fluently from years of study, and more importantly, having lived in Israel for many years, and not always in the safest places! You feel his deep love for religious studies in the book, and his sincere, humble conviction for the religious path. On the radio and in the Introduction of the book Dr. Hanson promises to tell the DSS saga to non-scholars, without the verbose and dry prose of the many scholarly but unfulfilling tomes that have been produced since the remarkable discovery of the scrolls in 1947, amazingly synchronistic with the founding of the modern state of Israel. For the most part Dr. Hanson succeeds very well, giving a very clear, thorough, lively, and from what I know, factual account of the finding, history, and meaning of the DSS - all this in relatively few pages. I think that even those (non-experts) who are familiar with the story will find Dr. Hanson's account enjoyable reading. Another aspect of the DSS that Dr. Hanson's covers admirably are the many controversies surrounding the scrolls, and he explains why the scholarly consensus is usually to him the most plausible. For example, most scholars think that the authors and creators of the scrolls were Essenes, but some feel that this is not the case. Dr. Hanson not only shows why the philosophy and lifestyle(s) of the various Essenes sects point to the Essenes, but on p. 61 he cleverly speculates that the Hebrew word *Osin*, which means "doers of God's will," could have been "corrupted" to form "Essenes," who most certainly consider themselves doers of God's will. I much appreciated Dr. Hanson's extensive use of Josephus' writings, for example discussing John the Baptist, as well as the Romans account of the almost total annihilation of the Jews in Israel by the *Kittim* (DSS term for "the dark forces") in the late 60's AD. Finally, I also enjoyed Dr. Hanson's contention that Jesus himself must have known about the DSS, and while he might have been the Messiah the scrolls predicted, he constantly drew a distinction between their extreme positions and disciplines and his more lenient, compassionate teachings. (I will assume Jesus existed for this discussion). Yet parts of the book were a little troublesome for me, and these were always Dr. Hanson's commentaries (as opposed to his always lucid accounts of the details of scrolls-related topics). Indeed he quotes Josephus extensively for interesting historical context, and even states that Josephus was a contemporary of Jesus, yet he says not one word as to why there is maybe only 1 brief "legitimate" reference in Josephus to Jesus, when according to the author, Jesus' miracles, predicted by the DSS, were perhaps the most essential aspect proving his being the Messiah! One would think that anyone who did such things would be mentioned in detailed volumes in more than a very passing way. On p. 92 the cruel King Aristobolus dies after a short reign, it is as if

"divine judgement," but when there is a severe earthquake in 31 B.C., that greatly affects the DSS community, there is no "Godly" (my words) reason. Perhaps the Essenes and the author need some background in science! And on p. 116 there is a paragraph that stunned me given the quality of most of the book. Dr. Hanson claims that through the Jewish ritual, the "Bar Mitzvah," the 13-year-old "son of the Most High," bypasses adolescence. Having gone through a serious preparation of quite a bit of Hebrew and Torah reading myself at that age, I can assure the author that the "High" was only very, very temporary, and I went through my puberty like everyone else! Whatever its faults, I still highly recommend "The Untold Story" for a great overview and fine insights into the many aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

I was just learning about the Dead Sea Scrolls when I first read this book, and I must say, I found it an intriguing and informative source of information. It was easy to understand and provided me with valuable information. This is a great book for virtually any age--young or old, who is interested in learning about, or expanding their knowledge of, the Dead Sea Scrolls.

This Dead Sea Scrolls book is somewhat different than some of the other scroll books I have read. Kenneth Hanson writes a book that answers simple, common sense questions that people have about these documents and he conveys his genuine enthusiasm about these important finds. The Dead Sea Scrolls, as most people are aware, were discovered in the caves near Khirbet Qumran by Bedouin shepherds in 1947. Since then, 11 caves have produced fragments of some 800 Hebrew documents from the first and second century BCE. 90% of these documents are written in Hebrew, while others are in Aramaic and Greek. The majority of the scrolls were found in cave four. While there is still some debate, most scholars attribute the scrolls to the Essenes. The scrolls were considered placed there for safe keeping during the Jewish revolt against the Romans or "Kittim" in 66 CE. Of the many scrolls found printed on animal hides, fragments from all of the books of the OT were present with the exception of Esther. Other scrolls were listed as 2. Commentaries, 3. Hymns, 4. Ordinances and laws, 5. Eschatology, and 6. Apocrypha, Pseudepigraphia, and miscellaneous texts. The complete scroll of the Law of Moses is 60 feet long. So the story goes that the Essenes were disillusioned when the powerful Sadducees priests had taken over the temple in Jerusalem. Only those from the priestly class could become priests and the ruling priesthood was passed down as was kingship in those days. The Sadducees priests were allied to King Herod the Great who in turn was a vassal to the Romans, the most hated of all. The Essene priests, the sons of Zadok took flight to the desert and established their community there. Much of what Hanson writes is

speculative, hinging on what he believes was the probable course of events and actions in that region during those times, and the effect it had on the people. Towards the middle of the book, he goes a little off course when he brings Jesus, John the Baptizer and the NT into the polemic. I assume he is trying to make some kind of correlation between the beliefs of Essene Jews and the early Christians and a correlation between the OT scripture and that which was developed by the NT writers. He does cite, however, that the scrolls contain no Christian documents. The book contains just a few color and B&W photos and a rudimentary map. There is no index. Otherwise, the tome has an acceptable format. I found the book interesting but thought parts of it concerning Christianity were a bit of a stretch.

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