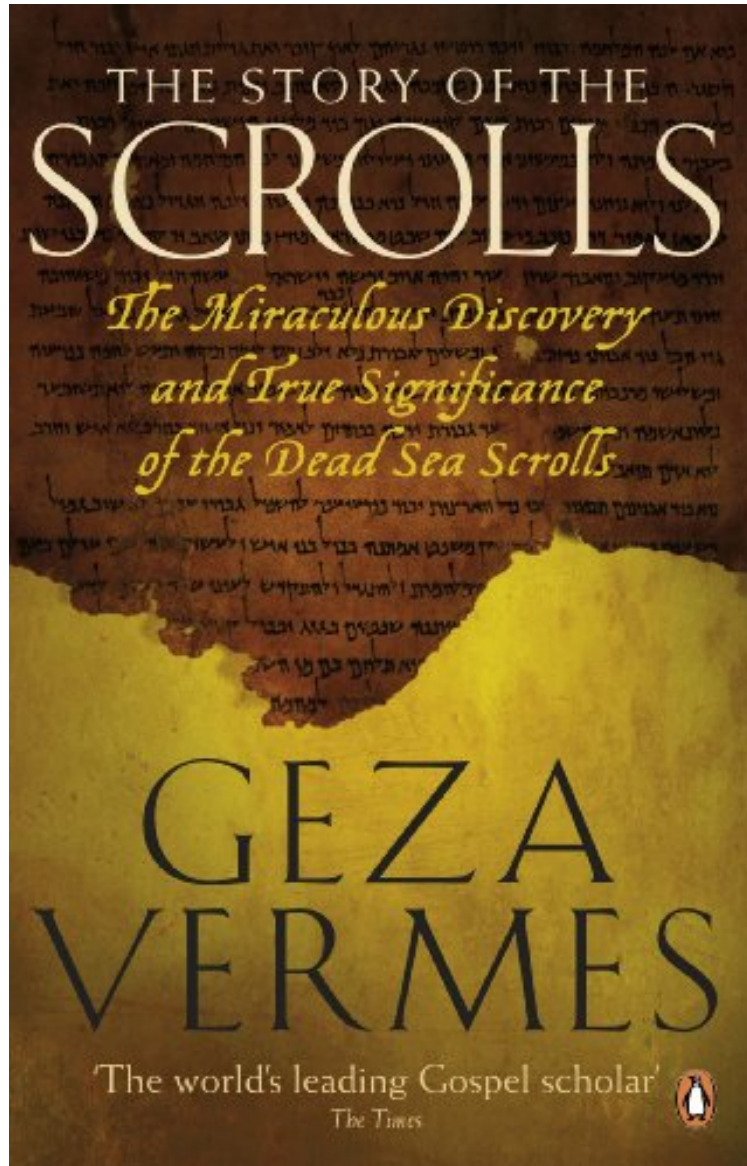


[Download free pdf] The Story of the Scrolls

The Story of the Scrolls

Geza Vermes

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Geza Vermes : The Story of the Scrolls before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Story of the Scrolls:

31 of 32 people found the following review helpful. The Academic Scandal of the Century By Etienne R P Geza Vermes published his first article on the Dead Sea Scrolls in a Parisian periodical in 1949. The news of a sensational manuscript discovery in the Palestine of the British Mandate had first broken the year before, and the public was already thrilled by the new light these texts could shed on ancient Judaism, Bible studies, and the life of Jesus. But the

eager public was to be kept for decades from accessing the documents: even now, more than half a century later, many questions surrounding the Dead Sea Scrolls remain open, and what has been called "the greatest ever manuscript find in the field of biblical studies" has not yielded all its secrets. The Dead Sea Scrolls continue to be a matter of controversy and media attention. In a time when religion no longer inspires passion in our de-christened societies, they have become the stuff of legend and fiction, and they fuel the modern thirst for conspiracy theories and pseudo-scientific speculations. This book substitutes facts for fiction, history for legend, and scholarship for superstition. It is the Story of the Scrolls by a person who, as he tells jokingly, has practically written them. Indeed, nobody other than Geza Vermes has done more to make their content accessible to the general public and to explore their true significance in a dispassionate and scholarly fashion. In 1949, by the time the young Vermes swore he would devote himself to solving the mystery of the manuscripts, he already had led a tumultuous life. Born in Hungary in an assimilated Jewish family that had converted to Catholicism, he had lost both parents to the Holocaust, he had survived Nazi occupation and the arrival of the Red Army, he had fled westward in search of freedom and enlightenment, and along the way he had taught himself a score of modern and ancient languages, including Greek and Hebrew. Having entered priesthood, he was pursuing his studies that had begun in a Hungarian-Romanian theological college in the more hospitable environment of the French religious society of the Fathers of Zion in Louvain. He had at last found a safe haven where he could pursue his passion for knowledge and ancient documents, undisturbed by the vagaries of history and the political turmoils of the day. Yet more adventures laid ahead. His life would become inextricably interwoven with the saga of the Dead Sea Scrolls, a story of passion and hatred, of treasons and cover-ups, of blunders and academic in-fightings. Along the way he would leave France, the priesthood and Catholicism, he would become the first Professor of Jewish Studies at Oxford, and he would write a dozen of books about the historical figure of Jesus as revealed from the Scriptures and other texts written at or around the time of his life. Apart from New Testament writings, no text other than the Dead Sea Scrolls would contribute more to our modern understanding of the true face of Jesus, by placing him in the context of contemporary Jewish civilization in the first century. The first scrolls discovery occurred in the spring of 1948 in Qumran, not far from the Dead Sea, when a Bedouin shepherd stumbled upon a jar in a cave while looking for a stray goat. After the discoveries of ten other caves, the twelve scrolls and many fragments fell under the stewardship of an official editorial team headed by a French Dominican, Father Roland de Vaux, director of the prestigious Ecole Biblique et Archeologique Francaise. Thus began a series of blunders and procrastinations that would result in what Vermes has labelled "the academic scandal par excellence of the twentieth century". Indeed, the main reason Vermes wrote this book is to record the dissatisfaction, frustration and anger that has accumulated over the years towards the editorial team and its snail pace of publication. Their policy of closed shop has prevented scholars and the learned public to access the original text for forty years before photographs of the Scrolls were ultimately leaked and then made public. It was only in 1991 that all the restrictions were lifted: the "Qumran revolution", fighting for research freedom, had at last triumphed. Vermes, one of the main freedom fighters, could enjoy a personal victory. In his book, Geza Vermes holds no personal grudge against Roland de Vaux. He mentions that "de Vaux made many valuable contributions to Qumran archeology, but they were mixed with mistakes mainly attributable to haste." De Vaux had visited Qumran at the time of the first discovery and given the site only a cursory glance. He had led an investigation party three years later, and had come to the conclusion that the Qumran ruins were the remain of a settlement of a Jewish religious group identified as the Essenes, a thesis to which Vermes and most other experts now subscribe. Vermes acknowledges that when he visited the Ecole Biblique in 1952, with the permission of de Vaux, he was "charm and kindness personified while I was his guest". The material and observations that Vermes collected with the team of researchers allowed him to complete the first doctoral dissertation devoted to the subject. But he would be remiss not to mention de Vaux's procrastination and lack of methodological rigor. As he notes, "the thirteen years separating the final dig in 1958 from his death in 1971 were not enough for de Vaux to start, let alone complete, the writing of the official report he was duty-bound to issue about the Qumran excavations." "Fifty years after the digs, and nearly four decades after de Vaux's death in 1971, the full publication of the archeological's record is still awaited," he laments. Almost since the time of their discovery, the Qumran manuscripts were the object of controversies and legends. An influential critic rejected the view that the texts belonged to antiquity at all and suggested instead that they were recent forgeries planted in the caves by crooks in order to deceive and extract money from credulous collectors. Some read in them bizarre stories about the life of Jesus Christ and the origin of Christianity, casting the historical Jesus, John the Baptist, and Maria Magdalena in various roles. It didn't help that one member of the editorial team, John Allegro, published a book attributing the origin of religion, Judaism and Christianity included, to a hallucinogenic mushroom that might have determined the course of history. Countless theories about a Catholic conspiracy were planted, and the delay in the editing activity were attributed to censure by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a Vatican watchdog formerly chaired by the current Pope. "The truth is that the delays in publishing were due not to machinations and conspiracy from Church authorities, but to very human failings", Vermes writes. As for stories linking the Qumran sect with early Christianity and attributing a wife and a descendance to Jesus, they are better left to cranks and novelists, from Dan Brown to Eliette Abecassis. Geza Vermes shows that one doesn't need to invent fictions to demonstrate the exceptional value of

the Dead Sea Scrolls. The discovery made at Qumran has revolutionized our understanding of Judaism in the age of Jesus, and has transformed our approach to the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Having been associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls for almost all his adult life, Vermes has greatly contributed to this deeper understanding. Reading him is a feast for the intelligence: his presentation is both rigorous and enlightening, his style witty and never dry. Readers of all persuasions are invited to partake of that last offered book.⁵ of 5 people found the following review helpful. The Best Popular Introduction to the DSS By William Varner There is a lot of what I call "media hype" about the Dead Sea Scrolls. Reporters love to report a sensational "discovery," like finding Jesus or James in the scrolls, or even as one tabloid headlined: "Elvis Found in the Dead Sea Scrolls." I have dozens of books on the Scrolls, including translations into English of all of them. My advice to laymen is not to buy and read one of those translations. You will be disappointed, because most of the non-Biblical scrolls are quite tedious and boring, even to the interested Christian reader. I just finished the book on the DSS that I will recommend without reservation as the best semi-popular introduction. It is titled *The Story of the Scrolls*, by Oxford scholar, Geza Vermes. You will have every one of your questions about the scrolls answered in a sensible and informed way. It is good to read someone, now over 80 years of age, who has been with the DSS almost since day one of their discovery in 1947. As a young scholar, Vermes was right there in Jerusalem in 1952, when the first scrolls from Cave One were released and excavations had just begun at Qumran. He conveys an insider's account with many personal encounters and observations - and he writes with clarity. He has written a half dozen other books on the scrolls and Qumran, including a complete translation of all the scrolls into English. There is no one in the world more qualified to tell us about the Dead Sea Scrolls than Geza Vermes. Every person ought to read at least one book on the Dead Sea Scrolls, even if only to counter the sensationalists mentioned above. Vermes will help you maneuver among those minefields and will also show you the real relevance that the scrolls have (1) for the text and canon of the Bible; (2) for a better understanding of the Intertestamental Period; and (3) for helping us to better comprehend the Jewish thought world into which the New Testament writings were birthed. also has it priced quite attractively at the moment! 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. They remain mysterious By Leonard The authors credentials would seem to be excellent for the project he persued over his lifetime. For a person like myself who was interested in the discovery itself and what historical information it provided, the book was not informative. The author states: "As is well known, the Qumran caves have not yielded one single strictly historical document. Hence any attempt at reconstructing the origin and development of the Dead Sea community must rely on an interpretation of theologically motivated data couched in cryptic language such as Teacher of Righteousness, Wicked Priest, Furious Young Lion, Kittim, etc." The actual discovery occurred in 1947 and the author describes it in this way: "The story of the first scrolls discovery is an amalgam of fairy tale, hesitant scholarship and heaps of erroneous judgements, perfectly understandable in a totally novel domain of research" The book has an academic approach to the translation and meaning of the scrolls in which there are numerous arcane references that are no doubt meaningful to those knowledgeable in the field, but not to the average reader. As for what the scrolls say, has a few complete translation offerings.

From the world's leading Dead Sea Scrolls scholar, Geza Vermes' *The Story of the Scrolls: The Miraculous Discovery and True Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls* is an ideal introduction to understanding these ancient documents. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Qumran, between 1947 and 1956, was one of the greatest archeological finds of all time. Written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, and hidden in caves by an ancient Jewish sect, these mysterious manuscripts revolutionized our understanding of the Bible, of Judaism, and of the early Christian world. Geza Vermes's English translations brought these extraordinary documents to thousands, and his life has been inextricably interwoven with the scrolls for more than 60 years. In *The Story of the Scrolls*, Vermes relates the controversial story of their discovery and publication around the world, revealing cover-ups, blunders, and academic in-fighting, but also the passion and dedication of many of those involved. He shares what he has learned about the scrolls and, evaluating passages from them, gives his views on their true significance and what they can teach us, as well as those areas where scholarly consensus has not yet been reached.

"Vermes has the rare gift of wearing his immense scholarship lightly." Independent