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## QUMRAN AND THE BIBLE

*Studying the Jewish and Christian Scriptures  
in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*



PEETERS

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# **SOME DEAD SEA SCROLLS FRAGMENTS AS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR MY ART**

**Lika TOV, Jerusalem**

While looking at Dead Sea Scrolls fragments you may realize that the writing on them did not change in the course of time, except for textual damages such as faded ink or darkened leather which blackened out the ink. With special photographic techniques this could often be corrected and the original characters were made visible again.

The shapes of the individual Dead Sea Scrolls however did undergo changes. Some broke or fell apart, leaving many small pieces of parchment, leather and papyrus in the caves where they had been put for storage about two millennia ago. Even in the Judean desert the weather was not always dry enough to keep the parchments of the Dead Sea Scrolls in perfect condition. Due to exposure to humidity the parchment scrolls wrinkled, distorting the writing and the outline. Moist papyrus has a tendency to crumble at the edges while drying. Animals and bad human handling also damaged the scrolls and hence altered their shape. For example: insects may have lived in scrolls, mice nibbled on pieces of fragments, snakes soiled them, etc. Each fragment therefore has a unique shape.

As an illustrator, graphic artist and printmaker I use, among others, Israeli and Biblical themes. Many of the book jackets I designed needed Hebrew lettering for titles and I either drew those letters by hand or calligraphed them. At that time I did not like the existing typefaces, so I designed my own. In a way I felt that the texts on the scroll fragments had been written by colleagues, just much earlier, in antiquity.

In 1993, after a DJD volume had been published, the proofs of the plates were discarded. I received those xeroxes as a pile of scrap paper (size A3) to be used for sketching on the unprinted side. Besides using the white side of my new sketching paper, I noticed the black and white images on the used side. The fragments depicted there had sometimes such surprisingly recognizable shapes, that they stimulated my imagination, as in a Rohrshach-test. From that time on I started to collect such pages with pictures of Dead Sea Scrolls fragments.

Some years later, after more volumes of DJD were published, my new “old fragments” collection had grown. Furthermore, the photographic proofs of fragments from the Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Naḥal Ḥever (published in 1987) were in my possession as well. I decided that time had come to try to put on paper what I saw in the Dead Sea Scrolls fragments.

As one watches clouds and sees images in them, I studied the shapes of the fragments that looked special to me. From the first moment when I saw a particular page of my collection, I drew lines between the fragments in my mind. I did not want to draw these lines for real though yet, since I thought that I might change my mind. But after seeing that same page several times more, it became clear to me that I had no choice but to add those lines. It took me some time to overcome my hesitation and to finally complete the ancient fragments by adding those missing lines. As if the fragments had been waiting for this touch, the image of a young woman seemed to come to life immediately. Was this Miriam dancing? (Figure 1a and b)

There were more pages with fragments waiting for my pen, to be changed right away from dull fragments to having exciting appearances. Each of those fragments seemed to have a hidden message about what their real meaning was – even without connection to their text, just as an image. I felt that it was my special assignment as an artist to add those few lines that apparently were meant to be there. It would open the eyes to the visual aspects of the fragments and what they might reveal. Of no less importance were the spaces in between fragments, for these negative shapes became positive by adding the right lines (Figure 2).

Browsing through my new ‘Rohrshach-test’ fragment collection, I had no idea yet what exactly to do with it, but I knew that I would try to integrate the fragments in my printing art. The technique I work with is called “collagraph.” This is a collage of paper cuts, glued on a cardboard backing. Lines and text are impressed with a sharp object or just with a firmly pressed pen. From this plate, which is inked and treated like an etching or an engraving, the print can be made on an etching press. The special advantages to this technique are the free form outlines and the fact that all colors can be printed at once.

In 1996, I attempted for the first time to reconstruct a whole scroll by combining copies of several continuing pages from a DJD volume. On every page is the image of one column with an extra centimeter of the previous and the next column on each side. By overlapping, gluing, and cutting them I succeeded in getting a precise copy of the original. In this

way, I got an impression of what the whole scroll had actually looked like when it was opened for the first time. I made such a reconstruction of the “Psalms Scroll” (11QPs<sup>a</sup>) that is almost completely preserved and on whose parchment the text was beautifully written. The tetragrammata, i.e. occurrences of the name of God, were very clearly visible, written in paleo-Hebrew characters יהוה.

I rolled the reconstructed scroll up, guided by the pattern of its damaged bottom line that was less deteriorated towards the end of the scroll, from where I had to start. In each circumvention one can match up the first damaged part with the next similar one and find out how many circumventions the original scroll had, when rolled up, before being opened. Thinking about the persons who had written the scrolls 2000 years ago, I drew some scribes busy with their writing. Afterwards, I cut them out and glued them together with a few smaller fragments onto a part of the “Psalms Scroll” as the backdrop, calling it: “They Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls.” This piece became my first collagraph inspired by a scroll fragment (Figure 3a and b).

A few months later I was asked to try my hand at making a print of another scroll. This print was going to be on the subject of the “Copper Scroll” for a congress to be held in Manchester a year later. If I could create something interesting, it would be used as an illustration for the conference’s proceedings volume.<sup>1</sup>

After the Copper Scroll was discovered, its brittle columns had been carefully separated with the use of precision dentist’s surgical saws and cutters. By gluing and pasting xerox copies of these parts in the right order, I remade them into the shape of a whole scroll. However, seeing how long it became, I decided to do this only for the first three columns of the Copper Scroll.

The Copper Scroll includes a list of all kinds of treasures hidden in different locations around Jerusalem and in the rest of Israel. The script of this account is similar to that written on buildings and sarcophagi. Scratching or incising its characters into the copper of the Copper Scroll must have been an arduous task. After having scratched a few sentences in the cardboard that I use for making a printing plate, my hand started to hurt. I am sure that the scribes of the Copper Scroll encountered this very same problem. After I finished the collagraph, I studied the different handwritings that I encountered in the twelve columns of the Copper

<sup>1</sup> George J. Brooke and Philip R. Davies, eds., *Copper Scroll Studies* (JSPSup 40; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

Scroll and wrote a short article about my findings. It was published together with the other papers of the Manchester Congress.<sup>2</sup> In my finished picture you can see images of persons hiding treasures or looking for them and finding them. Some identifiable locations that are mentioned in the text of the Copper Scroll I depicted also in this print (Figure 4).

Some pieces of inscribed parchment looked to me like animals, waiting to become part of an illustration. In this case they looked like kissing sheep. Around them I drew some more sheep and goats as well as a shepherd playing a flute. The scene is situated in the Judean Desert next to a cave. This piece I named “Judean Desert Pastoral” (Figure 5a and b).

Another fragment had the appearance of a rooster. I took the whole page with fragments of which this rooster was in the center and drew in the open space a hen and little chicks. The other, smaller fragments, I also made into chicks, adding legs and beaks. For the outline I used an earthenware utensil, found at the site of Qumran. This print I gave the title: “From Leather to Feather” – I could also have called it: “Qumran Chicken Soup” (Figure 6a and b).

One scroll when rolled up deteriorated from its upper left side and its lower right side towards the middle. When unrolled, it had a zigzag pattern. Together with drawings of real snakes that live in the Judean Desert, I turned it into a harmonious desert scene (Figure 7).

There are still some animals that I discovered among the fragments for me to put in their visual surroundings, but they will have to wait. I am sure that more creatures are hiding in the Scrolls and I will eventually find them.

The shape of the top part of a fragment caught my eye since it was similar to a lid covering one of the famous scrolls jars found at Qumran. The architecture of the Shrine of the Book in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem is based on this shape. Therefore I turned the outline of this striking building into a frame for the fragment in question. The fragment fits well inside it. To complete the picture and illustrate the fragment’s text I added some Essenes who are thanking the Lord, to the picture. This became the print called “Essene Scene” (Figure 8a and b).

The “Thanksgiving Scroll” (1QH<sup>a</sup>) had suffered much from the appetite of hungry insects. They had eaten through many of its layers. When

<sup>2</sup> Lika Tov, “Some Palaeographic Observations Regarding the Cover Art,” in Brooke and Davies, *Copper Scroll Studies*, 288-90.

unrolled a series of holes in this scroll shaped like Hebrew letter **ד** (*dalet*) could be seen. From one such part of the “Thanksgiving Scroll” I produced a print. Its text was not so clear because of the many wrinkles in the material. The few words in larger type on the left side of the fragment mean: “I thank you Lord for saving my soul” (the reason for the name of this scroll). Instead of lines with text I put images of small rejoicing human figures on top of faded areas of the fragment. The hole I left untouched (Figure 9).

With these descriptions I hope to have given some insight as to how my collagraphs developed. In this special world of fragments, it is a growing process from my first impressions until the final work of art. Until now I have made more than 30 different collagraphs based on the shapes of Dead Sea Scrolls fragments and their textual contents. Besides interesting looking fragments from Qumran, I have also used in my art copies of actual documents found in other caves, such as a parchment *mezuzah*, a *ketubah*, a receipt for dates and some Bar Kokhbah letters. Archeological sites and finds, such as potsherds from Masada (the famous name tags), Jewish coins, locations in the Judean Desert, and caves from around the Dead Sea area became part of my oeuvre.

I would never have been able to create these new visions of the Dead Sea Scrolls without their Editor-in-Chief who, from the beginning of his vast task, unknowingly provided me with the most important ingredients for making original Dead Sea Scrolls art.

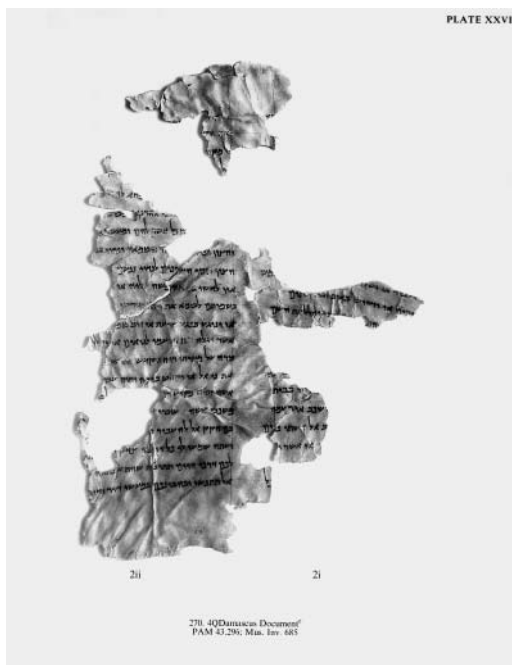
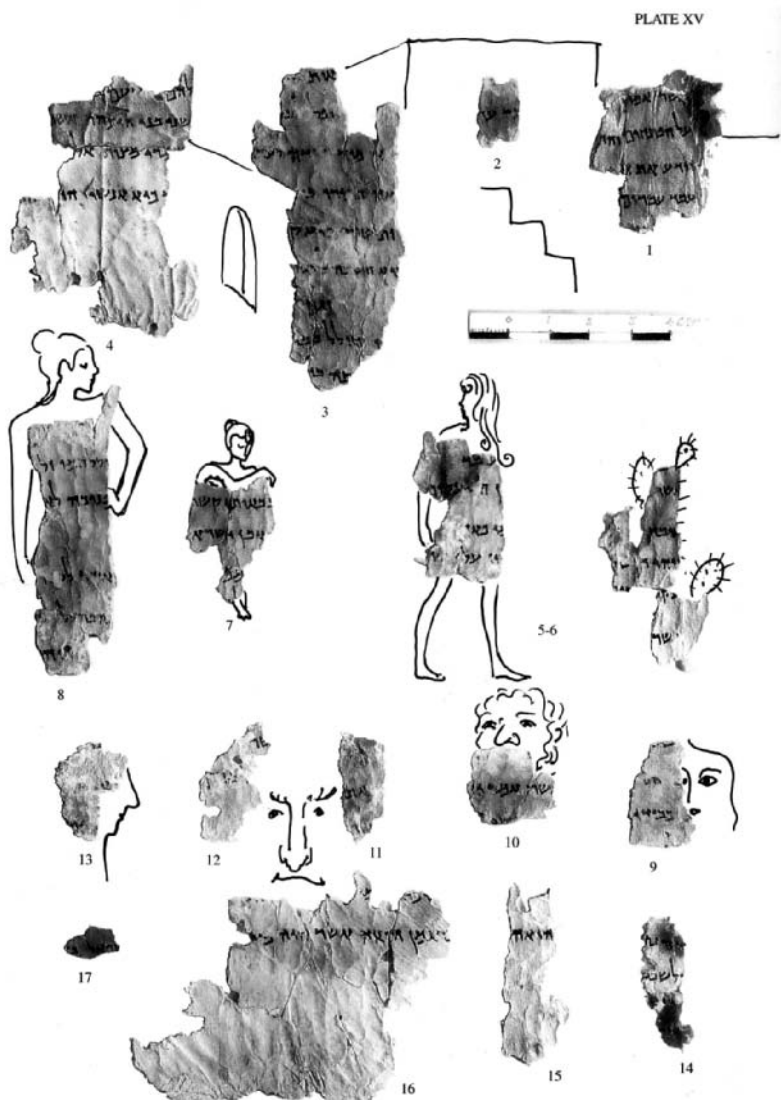


Figure 1a PAM 43.296  
Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities  
Authority



Figure 1b PAM 43.296  
Copyright of drawings Lika Tov





254. 4QCommentary on Genesis C  
PAM 43.233; Mus. Inv. 113

Figure 2 PAM 43.233  
Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority  
Copyright of drawings Lika Tov



Figure 3a

They Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls

© Lika Tov



Figure 3b

They Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls (detail)

© Lika Tov



© Lika Tov

Searching for the Treasures of the Copper Scroll

Figure 4





Figure 5a PAM 43.521  
Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority

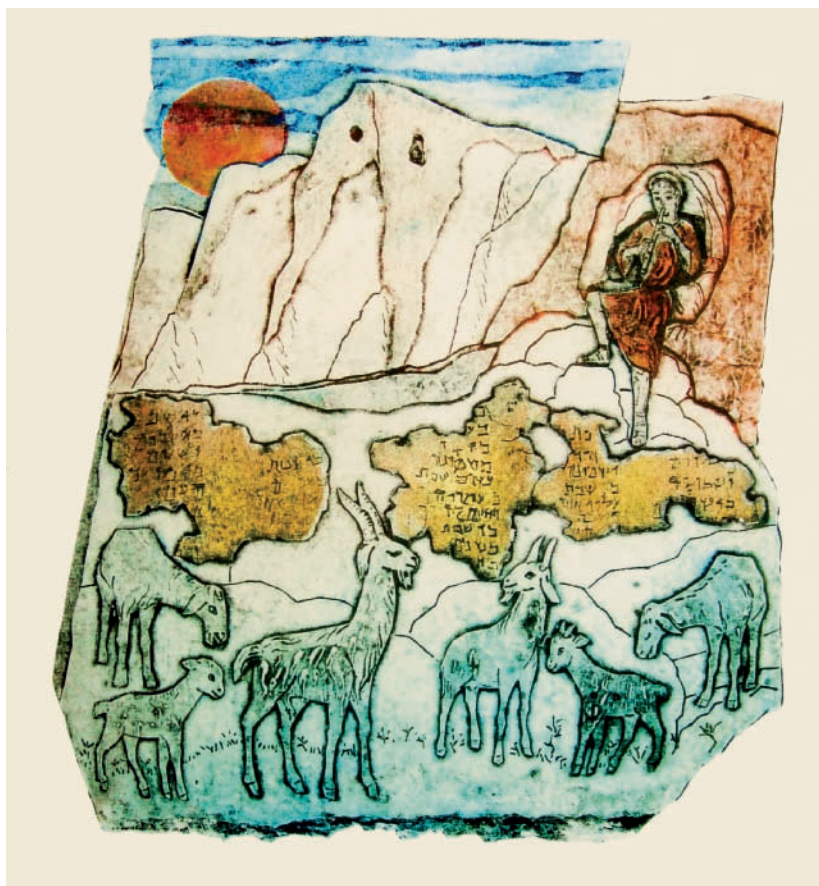


Figure 5b

Judean Desert Pastoral

© Lika Tov



Figure 6a PAM 42.012 (detail)  
 Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority



Figure 6b From Leather to Feather  
 © Lika Tov



Figure 7 Zigzagging through the Judean Desert © Lika Tov

Figure 8a PAM 43.530 and 43.532  
 Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority

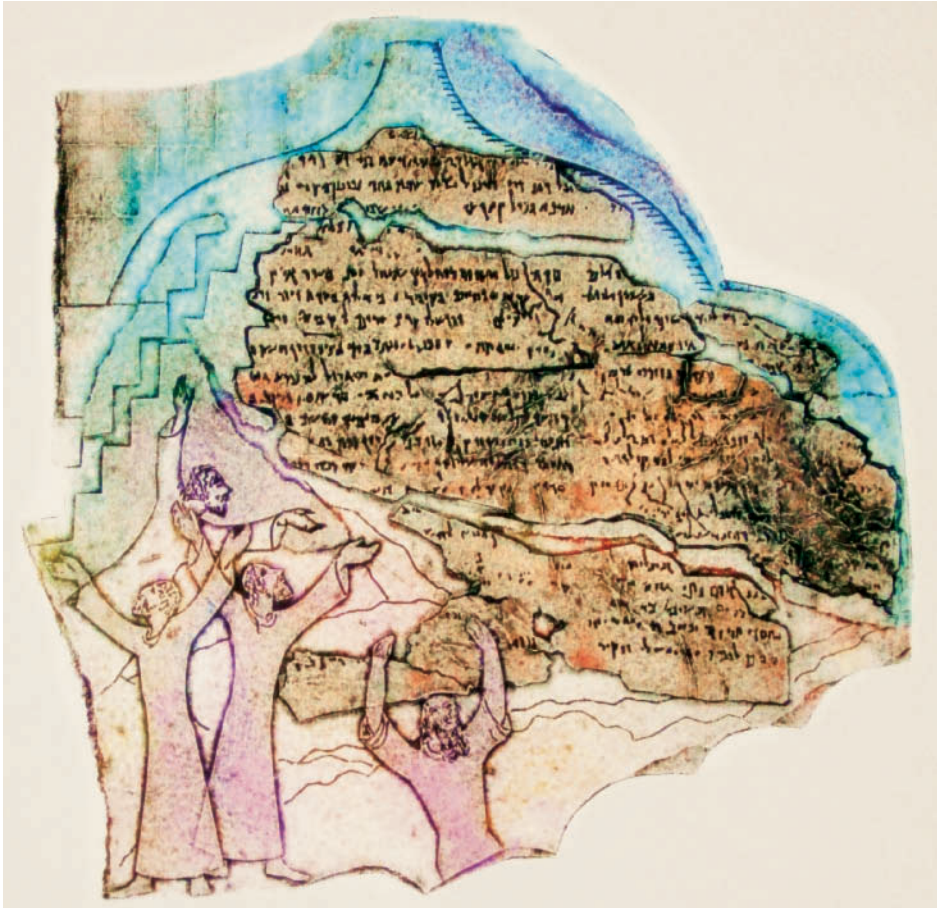


Figure 8b

Essene Scene

© Lika Tov





Figure 9

The Thankgiving Scroll

© Lika Tov