

THE DEAD: MASADA AND QUMRAN

Dead Sea

- It is never called the Dead Sea in the Hebrew Bible. It is called the Salt Sea or the Sea of Arabah. Three times it is called the Eastern Sea based on its location on the eastern side of the nation of Israel.
- It is 1,400 feet below sea level. Its bath water is warm. The concentration of salt is 35% which gives a silky texture of oil when rubbed between one's fingers.
- This is the land Lot chose to live in because it was lush and well watered. It was the location of Sodom and Gomorrah which were utterly destroyed. There is evidence that these former cities were covered by the Dead Sea.
- Ezekiel 47 gives a prophecy that at the re-gathering of God's people to the land, fresh water will flow from the rebuilt temple east into the Arabah, what we now call the Dead Sea.



Museum in front, Masada upper right



The Dead Sea

Masada

- It is a plateau or natural fortress one mile north and west of the Dead Sea. The plateau covers 20 acres and rises up 1,320 feet above the surrounding area.
- Once Herod took political control of Judea, he fortified Masada as a place of refuge from those who might try to overthrow him. He built towers, cisterns, storerooms and a palace built on 3 levels, including a Roman-style bathhouse complete with hot, warm and cold water rooms. Large cisterns were built to hold the water for the bathhouse and for the needs of the residents.
- Masada was captured by Jewish Zealots in 66 A.D. In 72 A.D., two years after the destruction of Jerusalem by Roman soldiers, Masada was the last stronghold to survive the war with Rome and was attacked by a large Roman army. Eight camps were set up around the base of Masada. A ramp was built on the west side of Masada which allowed the Romans to reach the summit with siege machines. The wall was breached after the seven month siege.



Sub floor of bath house



Original paint on bath house wall

- The Jewish Zealots, 960 men, women and children decided to commit suicide and die as free people instead of being enslaved by the Romans. When the Romans entered Masada, there were only seven survivors, two women and five children.



Masada Cable Car Lines



Roman ramp built to break into Masada

- Gideon Foerster, *Some scholars question, to varying degrees, the view that the Jewish resistance and mass suicide at Masada was an act of great heroism, but the story has had an extraordinary impact on the psyche of modern Israel.*

- There are two ways to reach the top of Masada today. There is a modern cable car that takes visitors to the summit in three minutes. The other way is by foot on *The Snake Path*, which takes almost an hour.

Qumran: the Dead Sea Scrolls

- Manuscripts from the Qumran caves were first discovered in 1947 by a Bedouin goatherd. The caves are one mile west of the northwest corner of the Dead Sea and eight miles south of Jericho.
- The first grouping of manuscripts were sold to an antiquities dealer in Bethlehem and then purchased by the archbishop of the St. Mark's Syrian Orthodox Monastery in Jerusalem. Others made their way to a professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.
- Cave 4 was the “mother lode” with the discovery in 1952 of nearly 600 fragmentary manuscripts, including copies of every book in the Hebrew Bible except for Esther.



Qumran Caves 1 and 2



Qumran Cave 4 - *The Mother Lode*

- The copies date between 250 B.C. - 50 A.D. The biblical material from the Judaeen Desert is over 1,000 years earlier than medieval copies of the Hebrew Bible. They are several hundred years older than surviving ancient Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible. These early copies of the Hebrew Bible from Qumran address many questions scholars had asked about the quality of the biblical text that had been copied and recopied by many different hands over a long period of time.
- The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has revolutionized the study of the Hebrew Scriptures. They are the greatest find in archaeological history. The Dead Sea Scrolls provide a new background against which one can study the NT and the beginnings of Christianity with greater understanding. They definitely contain references to messianic beliefs similar to those taught in the New Testament.
- Charles Ryrie, *The scrolls show us what books of the Old Testament were recognized as sacred in the period between the Old and New Testaments . . . the scrolls give positive evidence for the canonicity of all but Chronicles, Esther, and the Song of Solomon.*



Replicas of clay jars that held the scrolls