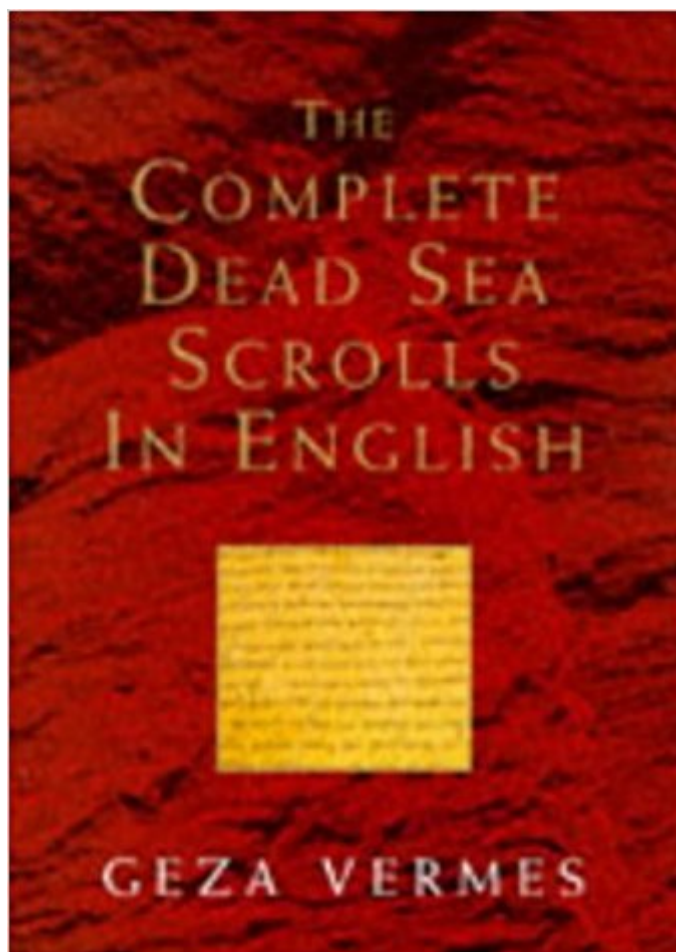


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# The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls In English



## Synopsis

Nothing in the modern study of ancient Judaism and the birth of Christianity can match the 50-year saga of these documents, discovered by a lowly goatherd in the spring of 1947. Now, after years of academic debate and maneuvering as tense as any espionage novel, the Dead Sea Scrolls and fragments are at last available in their entirety, in the established standard English version.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It's been 50 years since a Bedouin youth named Muhammed edh-Dhub went looking for a stray sheep and instead found the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the intervening decades, the scrolls have been enveloped in a storm of controversy and bitter conflict: the scholars entrusted with translating and editing the texts sat on many of them instead, creating suspicions that escalated to conspiracy theories about supposed cover-ups of sensitive, even damaging material. Geza Vermes, a former professor of Jewish studies at Oxford and a noted authority on the scrolls, marks the 50th anniversary of Muhammed edh-Dhub's find with his book *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*; the title, however, is misleading, for the collection of documents is by no means complete. Vermes has left out the copies of Hebrew scriptures that are available elsewhere, instead focusing on the sectarian writings of the Essene community at Qumran and the intertestamental texts, and these are indeed complete translations. Vermes has also included an overview of five decades of research on the scrolls and a thumbnail sketch of the Qumran community's history and religion. For anyone interested in biblical history, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* is a worthwhile

read.

This one-volume translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls joins those of Florentino Garcia Martinez (*The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, Eerdmans, 1996) and Michael Wise and others (*The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*, 1996) and is the latest edition of *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, first published in 1962. In a 90-page introduction, Vermes (emeritus, Jewish studies, Wolfson Coll., Oxford) briefly summarizes the 50-year history of scrolls research. He presents an overview of the sectarian community associated with the scrolls (whom he identifies as the Essenes), its history, and its beliefs. Though dubbed "complete" (the preface explains that "meaningless scraps or badly damaged manuscript sections are not inflicted on the reader"), Vermes's translation is generally the most selective of the three. This sometimes saves the reader from the possible frustration of line upon line of brackets and ellipses, but it gives a limited idea of the extent of the textual material available. However, the translation is good and has stood as the standard for many years. As with Bibles, libraries should have more than one version of the Dead Sea Scrolls. —Craig W. Beard, Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham Lib. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This is nowhere near the complete Dead Sea scrolls, and I'm not referring to the portions that are absent due to the original text being damaged and unreadable, I'm talking about entire sections that exist in English but for some reason are not included in this "complete" collection. Firstly, it only contains the non-biblical Dead Sea scrolls but even those suffer a painful abridgement. For example, the Genesis Apocryphon does not include any text from columns 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 or 10 (and go figure I was specifically needing column 5). The introduction even admits that they exist and have even been translated and is kind enough to provide information on where to look if you wish to read them. Kind, yes, but insulting given the book's title and \$22 price mark. If this were called "Abridged Portions of Selected Dead Sea Scrolls in English" I would respect it as that would be a wonderfully accurate title, but we all know that it would not sell nearly as well as it has if it had been labeled honestly. This blatant marketing deception fueled by greed is probably to be placed upon Penguin Classics and not the late Geza Vermes, who is an exceptional biblical scholar.

I'm taking an upper level history course on Dead Sea Scrolls, and this is one of my two texts for the class. I'm very impressed with the accuracy of translation and the writing competency of the author. It is clearly written and documents all of the non-Biblical writings found in the Dead Sea scrolls. When I first got the book, I was disappointed that the books of the Bible and Torah had been

omitted from the work, but I soon learned in class that these were readily available in (drumroll, please) the Bible and the Torah. The significance of the scrolls is that they confirm the accuracy of the already-known but younger copies of these much-read and loved works. Although the scrolls are over a thousand years older than any of the previously known extant writings, they are almost identical to the newer copies! The scrolls included in this book are peshars, midrashes and targums (commentaries on Biblical books such as Nahum and Habakkuk); a Community Rule for the sect which apparently lived at Qumran, a settlement near the caves where the scrolls were found; eschatological writings regarding the end of times (such as the War Scroll); and directives to the Leader of the sect which presided over the congregation. Very, very interesting window on sectarian life. The only complaint I have--and it's probably one born of ignorance--is that it is somewhat difficult to find specific documents by using the indices at the end of the book. I'm never sure I've completed a reading assignment because of the cluttered way that the manuscripts are referenced. But when I consider how many thousands of fragments were organized and of how many copies of the same text were found in 11 different caves, it's no wonder the index is so complex. Some people use this book to study only ONE of the copies of a document. So all of the works must be referenced and cross-referenced in the index--not just the best preserved of the bunch. Likewise, in reading the translations of the manuscripts, the brackets and parentheses, used in the middle of words and sentences to distinguish between texts from different caves, are rather distracting because they aren't utilized in the manner that I'm accustomed to in reading and writing. It takes a little getting used to. But it is a very effective means for the writer to pull together a fragment of a document from one cave to fill in missing text from another copy of the same document found in another cave. I don't know if any of that even makes sense. This is a book which really needs a companion text, such as James VanderKam's *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*. Unless you already know the history of the sect and how the scrolls were discovered, the manuscripts alone are fairly meaningless to the modern reader. It was a daunting task, assembling the fragments of the scrolls and cataloging all of the documents found in those caves. To organize all of that information into one cohesive anthology and then translate it from Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek into English and other languages is nothing short of heroic. Vermes is a brilliant man indeed.

Great history and insight into the lives, laws and culture of the Jewish inhabitants of the region where the scrolls were found. The scrolls did not nullify anything in the Old Testament, but filled in some blanks and answered some unanswered questions.

Even includes maps inside the cover showing an approximation of where all the scrolls were located. very interesting read! It sort of puts a new view on religions and how we were all raised as children

It is very, very, informative, and re-iterates the truths of the extrabiblical works of Enoch, and other authors. These ancient texts give us a clearer insight into truths hidden until such a time as this, when Jesus the Messiah reveals Himself to those who are truly searching.

Excellent

This book is excellent!!! I had always wondered what the complete dead sea scrolls said. This book satisfied my curiosity. This book is also very thorough and I would recommend it to any Christian and student of the Bible.

Good history book

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