

Orion Center News Update

The Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature

מרכז אוריון לחקר מגילות מדבר יהודה והספרות הקרובה להן

May 2000

Spring 2000 Activities

During the spring semester of the year 2000, the Orion Center was privileged to host two well-known international scholars under the auspices of the Jonas Greenfield Memorial Scholars Seminar. In addition to their many contributions to the academic community, both scholars are unique in that they also reach out to a broader audience of students and the public at large. We are happy to have hosted these two individuals who exemplify the Center's goals to address both the international scholarly community and the general population, in Israel and abroad.

The FARMS-BYU Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Database

One of Prof. Parry's major projects was the creation of a computerized database of the Qumran scrolls. The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), in conjunction with Brigham Young University, developed this reference library which includes photographs of the scrolls and scroll fragments, transcriptions of the writings on the scrolls into modern Hebrew characters and English translations of the Hebrew texts.

In the past, limited access to the scrolls hindered the studies of scholars and students of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In recent years the situation has dramatically improved because of increasing publication of DSS material. The FARMS-BYU database aims to provide comprehensive reference materials in an easily accessible computer format. It presents the most accurate readings that have already been offered by DSS scholars.

The database contains over eleven hundred photographs of the scrolls that were scanned from negatives and transparencies belonging to the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center collection in Claremont, California. The selection of images includes photographs from the Palestine Archaeological Museum (the Rockefeller Museum), the Israel Antiquities Authority, and the Shrine of the Book. The database allows the user to view and manipulate the photographs on the computer.



Professor Donald W. Parry Brigham Young University

Prof. Donald W. Parry is an Assistant Professor of Hebrew Language and Literature at Brigham Young University, Utah, USA, and a member of the international team editing the Dead Sea Scrolls. Together with Prof. Frank Moore Cross, he is responsible for the publication of the manuscripts of the biblical book of Samuel found in Cave 4 at Qumran. These texts are possibly the most significant of the biblical manuscripts discovered in the Dead Sea region. The scholarly world eagerly awaits their publication, which is to take place by the year 2001. Parry has authored and edited eight books, some intended for experts in the fields of Bible and Second Temple literature, and others intended for the general public. These include *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism* (Deseret Book, 1994) and *Current Research and Technological Developments: Proceedings of the Conference on the Judaean Desert Scrolls, Jerusalem, April 30, 1995* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996). Of special note is Prof. Parry's efforts to combine technological advances with current Dead Sea Scrolls research, resulting in the creation of the FARMS-BYU Electronic Database, used by scholars, students, and lay people all over the world.

Prof. Parry spent the spring semester as a visiting lecturer at the Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies, affiliated with Brigham Young University. He and his wife Camille and their six children resided in the French Hill neighborhood during their stay in Jerusalem.

At the Orion Center on March 8th, Prof. Parry addressed a room filled with Hebrew University professors and students, as well as his own students from the Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies. He lectured on "Text-Critical Aspects of the Non-Aligned Readings of 4QSam^a," discussing differences between the longest copy of the book of Samuel found in Qumran, 4QSam^a, and the other known versions of the book, such as those found in the Masoretic Hebrew Bible or the Septuagint, the Greek translation of Scripture. A lively discussion followed, during which numerous suggestions were offered to help understand this hitherto unpublished document.

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Professor Eliezer Segal, University of Calgary



Eliezer Segal was born and raised in Montreal, Canada, where he obtained his BA in Jewish Studies in 1967. He pursued his graduate degrees in the Department of Talmud at the Hebrew University (MA 1976, PhD 1982), concentrating on textual and redactional studies of the Babylonian Talmud. Since 1985 he has been on the faculty of the Dept. of Religious Studies at the University of Calgary, Canada, where he presently holds the rank of Full Professor and serves as Department Head.

Segal's scholarly publications reflect his interest in the text and structure of the Babylonian Talmud. His monographs include: *Case Citation in the Babylonian Talmud: The Evidence of Tractate Neziqin* (Atlanta, 1990) and *The Babylonian Esther Midrash: A Critical Commentary* (3 vols., Atlanta, 1994). In recent years his research has focused largely on the homiletical and exegetical dimensions of rabbinic midrash, with special reference to the aggadic interpretations in the Babylonian Talmud.

In addition to his strictly academic research, Segal has been involved in bringing the fruits of Judaic scholarship to non-specialist audiences. Towards this end he has served as the authority on Judaism for several comparative projects, covering such diverse topics as afterlife beliefs, religious practice, scriptures and oral traditions, and judicial reform. He is active in Calgary's Jewish community, and represents the community at many interfaith activities and projects. He contributes regular columns on Jewish scholarly topics for the Calgary

Jewish Free Press. A collection of these articles has recently been published by Jason Aronson, New York (*Why Didn't I Learn That in Hebrew School?*, Northvale, 1999); and a second volume, *Holidays, Halakhah and History*, is scheduled for release in 2001.

Segal has an extensive site on the World Wide Web (<http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal>). In addition to posting class notes and copies of his non-technical articles, he has also developed interactive pictorial guides to Talmudic literature, Kabbalah, modern Jewish movements and more.

One of his most unusual achievements has been

Uncle Eli's Passover Haggadah, a rhymed version of the Passover meal liturgy in the light-hearted spirit of Dr. Seuss. After attracting a devoted following on the Web, it has been published in book form by No Starch Press, San Francisco, with lively



illustrations by Bonnie Gordon Lucas. A sequel for Rosh Hashanah ("Uncle Eli Repents") is currently in production.

During the 1999-2001 academic year, Segal has been on sabbatical at the Hebrew University, supported by a grant from the Lady Davis Fellowship Trust. While pursuing his own research on midrash in the Babylonian Talmud and teaching a course at the Hebrew University, he has also found time to present papers at several conferences, and to participate in the activities of the Orion Center.

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Bollag-Herzheimer Foundation Grant

The Orion Center received a generous grant from the Bollag-Herzheimer Foundation to continue work on the Dead Sea Scrolls Bibliography Project. This contribution will allow us to prepare the manuscript of the bibliography for publication. The bibliography project is headed by the Center's Chief of Publications, Dr. Avital Pinnick, with the aid of Orion Intern David Emanuel and our part-time researcher Dorit Gordon.