

Discovery by the Dead Sea

Lead: A chance discovery by a shepherd transformed the study of the Bible. From a cave near the Dead Sea came a view into another millennium.

Intro: A Moment In Time with Dan Roberts.

Content: In the spring of 1947 a shepherd, Mohammed el Adib, was searching for a missing goat. The area of his search included the rocky slopes of an 1100-foot limestone cliff towering above the northwestern corner of the Dead Sea in Palestine. He was not having any luck with the goat so he sat

down in the shade where the cliff is honeycombed with countless natural caves.

Mohammed picked up a rock and idly tossed it into a hole in the cliff face. He heard a clinking noise. Startled, he left, but his curiosity brought him back with a cousin the next day. The two shepherds squeezed their way through the hole and found a cave littered with pottery. At the back was a row of eight unbroken covered jars. Most were empty, but from one of the jars they took three rolls of clearly ancient vintage; one leather skin was larger, and two were smaller. Several weeks later they took them to a Bethlehem antiques dealer. In December, scholars at the Hebrew University recognized

the chance discovery as an extraordinary find.

The scrolls were left there by the Essenes, a Jewish religious group who lived along the shores of the Dead Sea during the first century. The so-called Dead Sea scrolls contain large sections of the Old Testament including the Book of Isaiah and have added to an understanding of Palestine during the life of Christ.

The Caves of Qumran produced parts of almost 600 manuscripts hidden for protection when the Essene community was destroyed by the Romans after the Great Jewish revolt in A.D. 68. The Essenes were wiped out, but because of a shepherd's

**chance discovery the life of their
community lives on.**

**The producer of A Moment in Time is
Steve Clark. At the University of
Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

Resources

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