

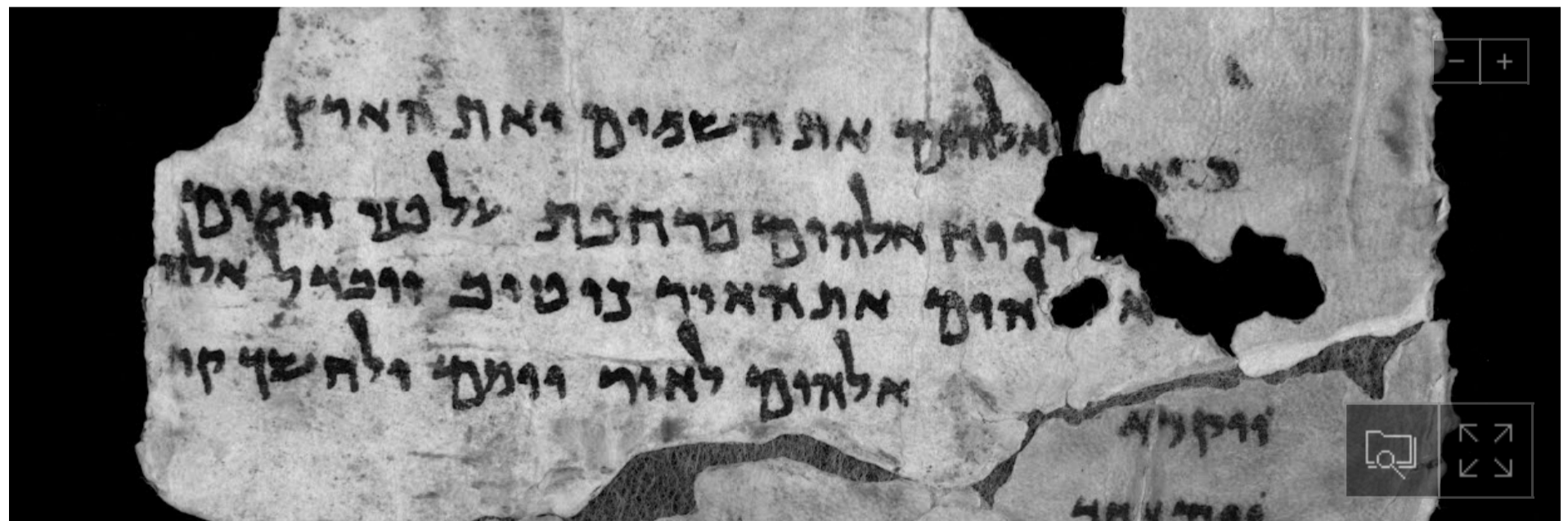
Featured Scrolls

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The discovery of the first Dead Sea Scrolls in a remote Judean Desert cave in 1947 is widely considered the greatest archaeological event of the twentieth century. Bedouin treasure hunters and archaeologists ultimately found the remains of hundreds of ancient scrolls. These fragile pieces of parchment and papyrus, including the oldest existing copies of the Hebrew Bible, were preserved for two thousand years by the hot, dry desert climate and the darkness of the caves where they were placed. The scrolls provide an unprecedented picture of the diverse religious beliefs of ancient Judaism, and of daily life during the turbulent Second Temple period when Jesus lived and preached.

Biblical Scrolls

Fragments of every book of the Hebrew Bible (except the Book of Esther) were found in the Qumran caves, the most famous of the Dead Sea Scrolls sites. Remarkably, some of these ancient copies are identical to the traditional text of the Hebrew Bible that is used today. Other copies preserve differences in the text, which was in the process of standardisation.



GENESIS

[4Q Genesis⁸](#)

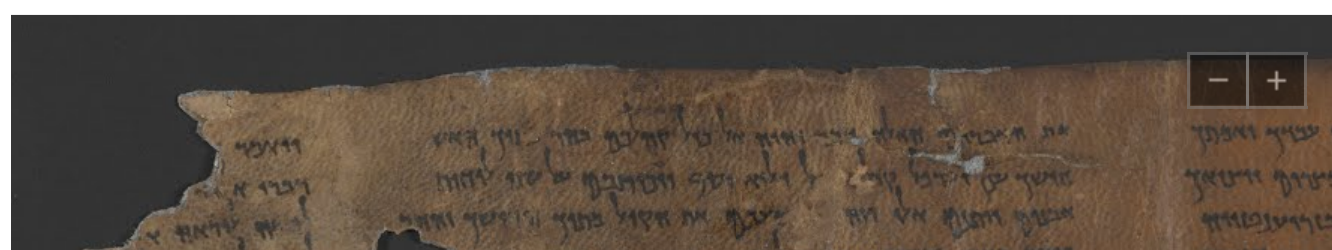
Date: 100–1 BCE, Late Hasmonean Period

Language: Hebrew

Among the oldest known copies of Genesis, the fragment of the Scroll shown here contains the description of the first three days of the creation of the world.

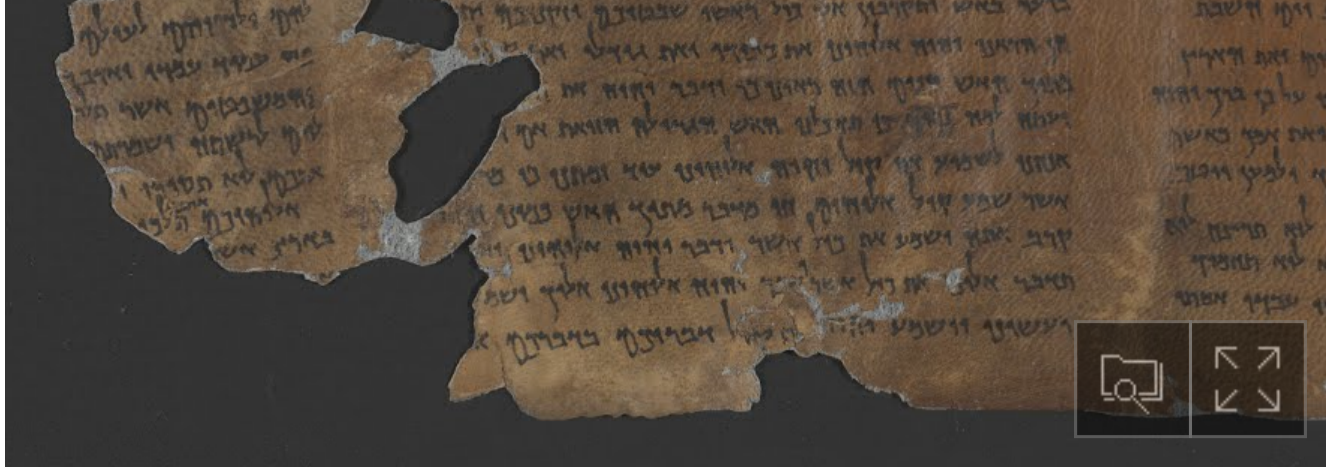
“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was formless and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep; And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

— GENESIS 1:1–2



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

[4Q Deuteronomyⁿ](#)



Date: 30–1 BCE,
Herodian Period
Language: Hebrew

This small scroll preserves one of the earliest known copies of the “Ten Commandments” (the Decalogue), a central dogma in Judaism and Christianity, and the majestic description of their divine revelation at Mount Sinai.

“I am the Lord your God who took you out of the Land of Egypt out of the house of bondage. You are to have no other gods but me.”

— DEUTERONOMY 5:6-7

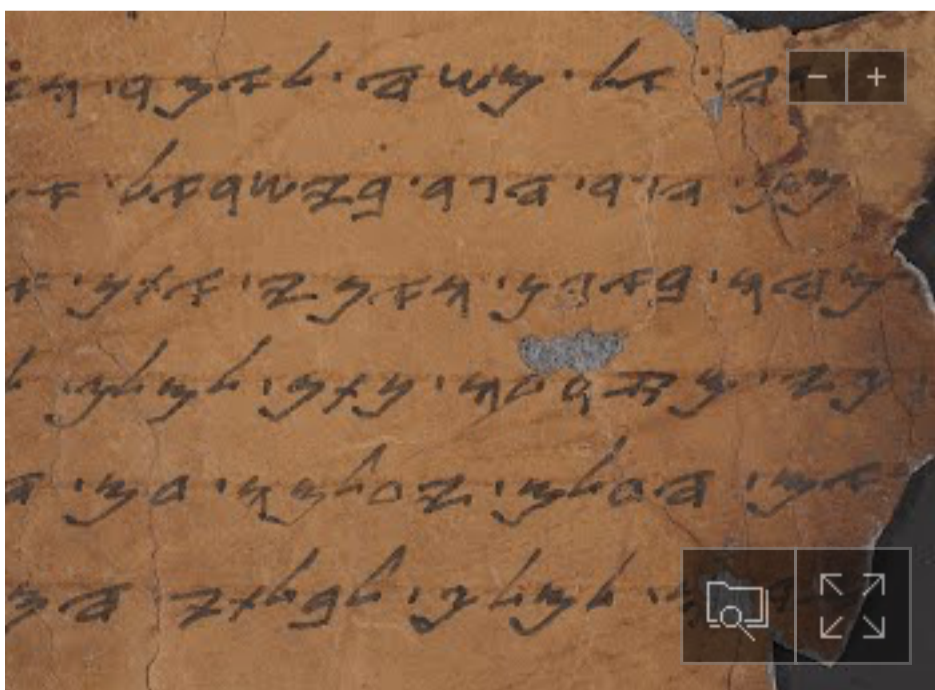
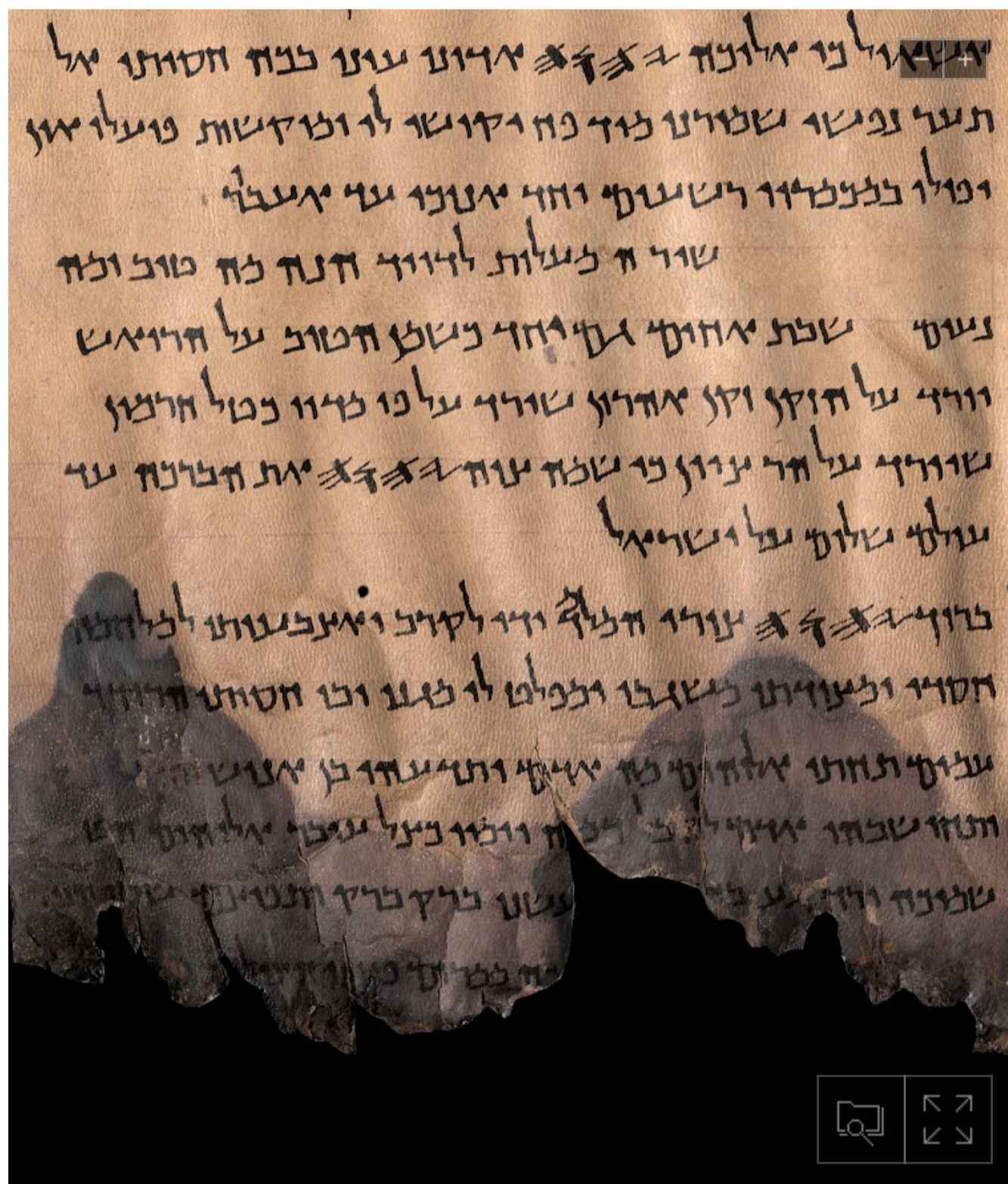
PSALMS SCROLL

11Q Psalms^a
Date: 1–68 CE,
Herodian Period
Language: Hebrew

“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity”

— PSALMS 133:1

This book of Psalms is one of the best preserved biblical scrolls, containing 48 psalms, including 7 that are not found in the standard Masoretic version of the Bible. An additional prose passage provides one of the most ancient references to King David as the composer of the book of Psalms: “and David, the son of Jesse, was wise, and a light like the light of the sun... And he wrote 3,600 psalms.” Psalm 133, shown here, praises peace and togetherness.



PALEOLEVITICUS

11Q paleoLeviticus^a
Date: 1–50 CE, Herodian Period
Language: Hebrew

This copy of the book of Leviticus is written in the ancient Hebrew script used in First Temple times. The fragment shown here deals with the prohibition against the ancient cultic practice of sacrificing children to the Semitic god Molech, and the punishments for violating this ban.

TEFILLIN

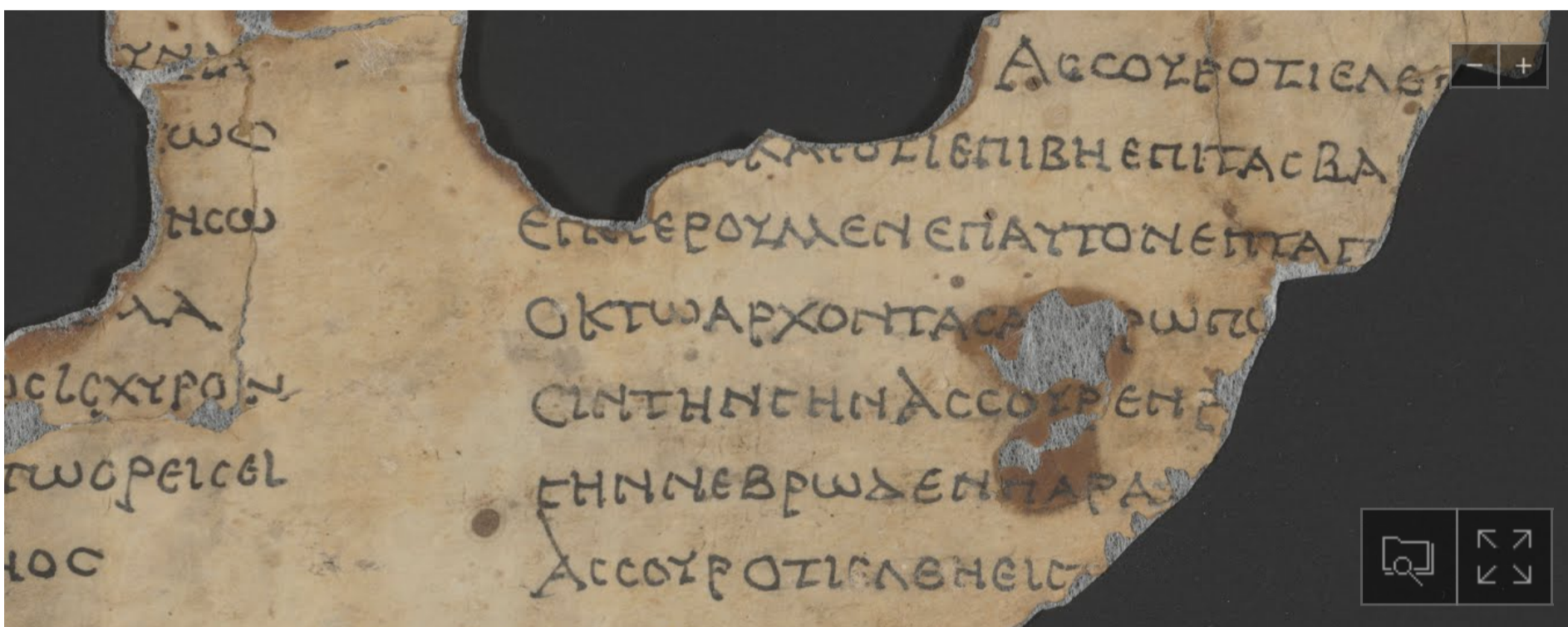
4Q Phylactery H
Date: 200 BCE – 50 CE,



Hellenistic-Roman Period
Language: Hebrew

The tefillin (“phylacteries”) found in the Qumran caves are the earliest known examples of these ritual objects—leather capsules containing scrolls with excerpts of biblical texts. Modern versions of these artifacts are still produced and used today.

Right: Tefillin capsules from Qumran Cave 4.
Dimensions: ~ 1×2 cm
Photo by: Clara Amit



MINOR PROPHETS SCROLL

8Hev Twelve Minor Prophets
Date: 50–1 BCE, Herodian Period
Language: Greek

The “Twelve Minor Prophets” scrolls from the Judean Desert offer early evidence for the compilation of these short prophetic books into a single literary work. This particular fragment, from a Greek translation of the Minor Prophets discovered in the Cave of Horror at Nahal Hever, contains a prophecy of Micah about the End of Days and the rise of a ruler out of Bethlehem.

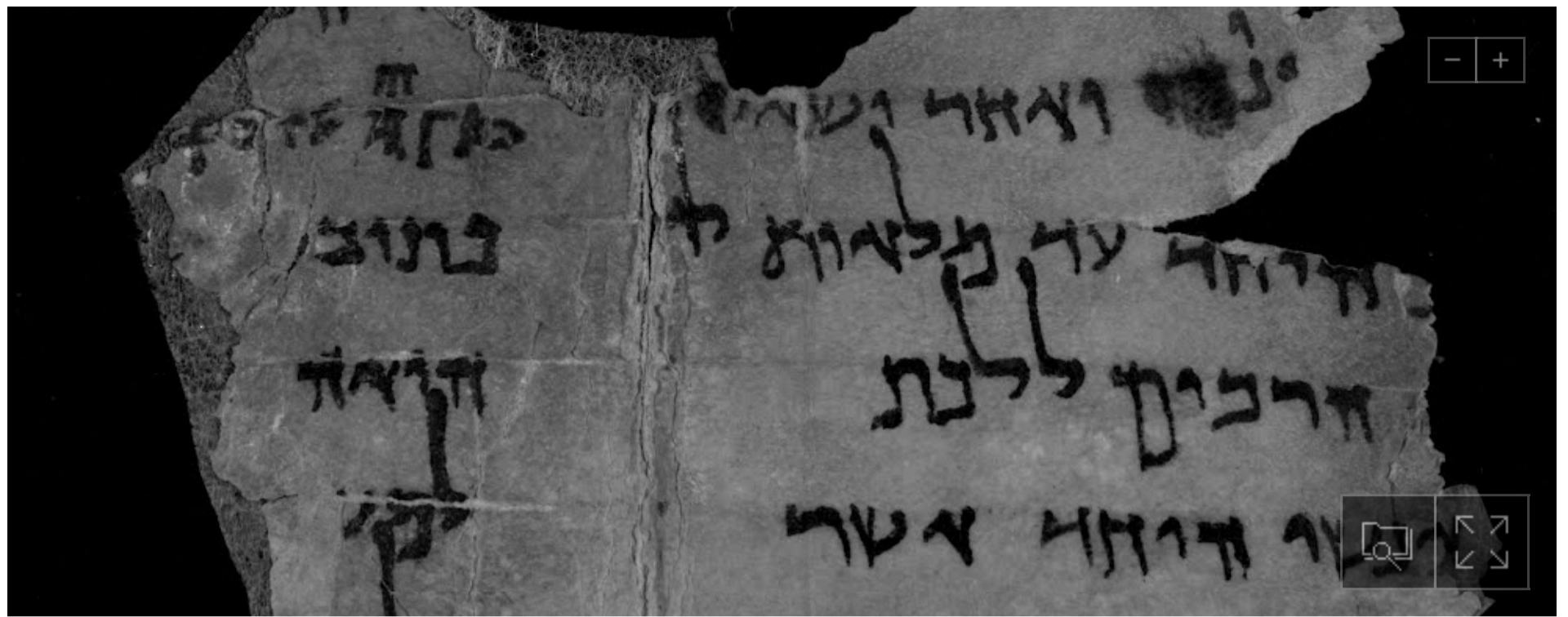
Non-Biblical Scrolls

Non-biblical texts discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls offer us a tantalizing glimpse of life during the Second Temple period and the opportunity to understand the attitudes, desires and aspirations of the people of that time. Most of the scrolls from the Qumran caves are religious writings from the Second Temple period. Some of these reflect the life and philosophy of a distinctive group that called itself the “Yahad” (“Community”). At other sites, the major finds were administrative and personal documents dating from the catastrophic Judean revolt against Rome in 132–135 CE.

COMMUNITY RULE

4Q Serekh ha-Yahad^e
Date: 50–25 BCE, Herodian Period
Language: Hebrew

The Community Rule contains laws and rules meant for members of a group termed the “Yahad”, or “Community.” The regulations offer insights into the religious and social lives of this group, which some scholars have identified with the Essenes, a Jewish sect at the time of the Second Temple. This selected text describes the structure of leadership



ENOCH

4Q Enoch^a

Date: 150–50 BCE,
Hasmonean Period
Language: Aramaic

The book of Enoch was not included in the canon of the Hebrew Bible. It tells of Enoch, the great-grandfather of Noah, who lived for 365 years and “walked with God”. The displayed fragment describes the heavenly revolt of the fallen angels, and their descent to earth to cohabit with the daughters of men and to reveal secret knowledge to mankind, a story hinted at in Gen. 6:1-4.



APOCRYPHON OF DANIEL

4Q Apocryphon of Daniel

Date: 50–1 BCE, Herodian Period
Language: Aramaic

The Dead Sea Scrolls contain extensive apocalyptic literature relating to the final messianic battle at the End of Days. The Aramaic Apocryphon of Daniel describes either a messianic figure or a boastful ruler that will arise as “Son of God” or “Son of the Most High”, like the apocalyptic redeemer in the biblical book of Daniel. The text calls to mind the New Testament proclamation of the angel Gabriel concerning the new-born Jesus: “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High...” (Luke 1:32)

THE BOOK OF WAR

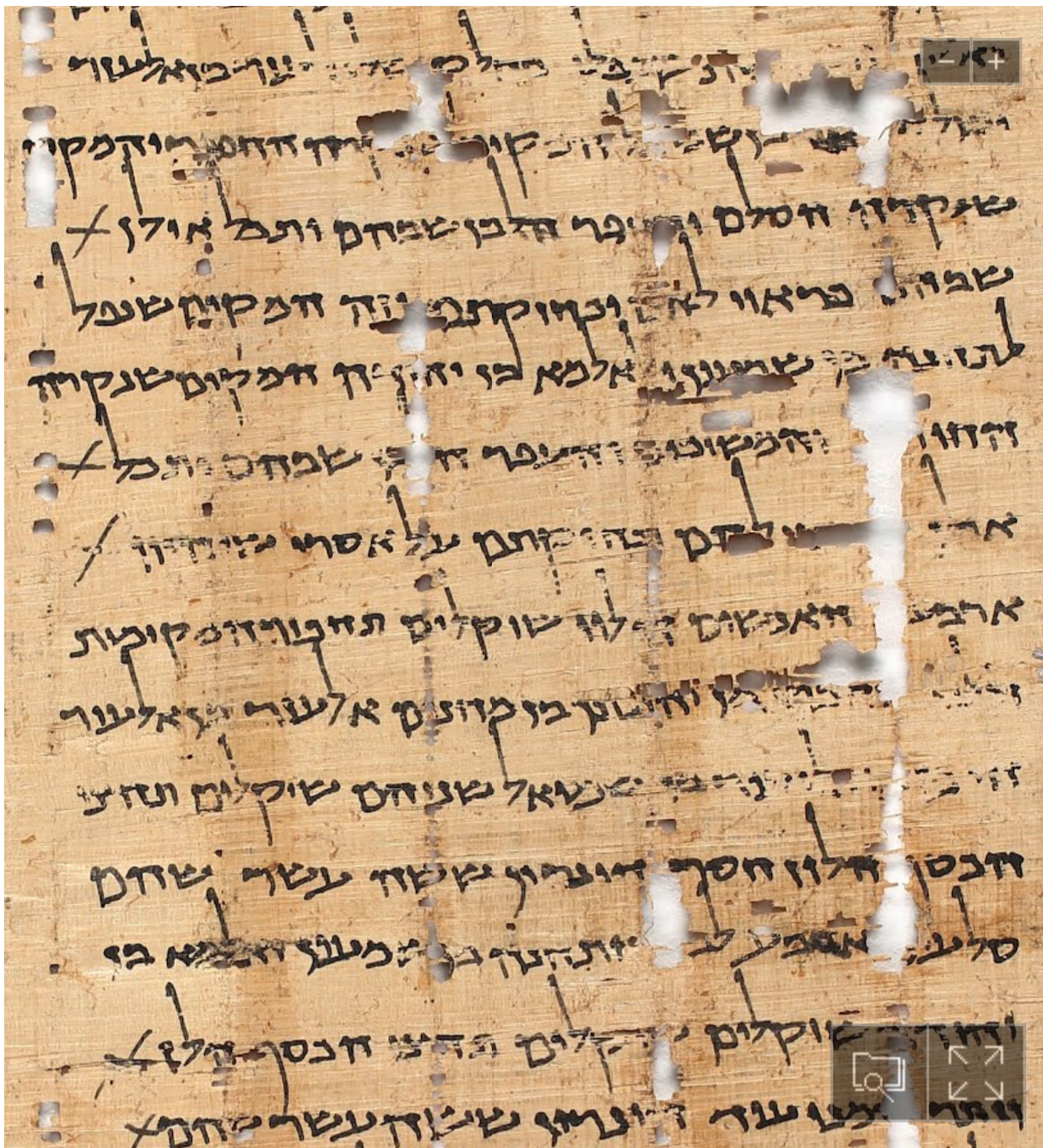
11Q Sefer ha-Milhamah

Date: 20–50 CE, Herodian Period
Language: Hebrew

The Book of War details an apocalyptic 40-year battle between the forces of good and evil. This fragment preserves a blessing to be recited by the leader of the surviving community upon their victory in the final battle, at the end of time: “God



Most High will bless you and shine his face upon you, and he will open for you his rich storehouse in the heavens." God and his holy angels will bestow abundance and fertility upon the holy congregation, and protect them from plagues and wild animals.



LEGAL PAPYRUS

P. Yadin 44

Date: Autumn 134 CE

Roman Period

Language: Hebrew

70 years after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, a charismatic leader known as Shimon Bar Kokhba arose to lead a band of rebels intent on regaining Jewish autonomy. Documents from the Bar Kokhba caves are evidence of this tumultuous revolt in 132-135 CE. They consist of administrative, legal, and personal records, such as the papyrus shown here, as well as some religious texts, that tell stories of the daily lives of soldiers and of refugees seeking haven during the turmoil.



Top: Silver tetradrachm from the Te'omim Cave, 134-135 CE
Inscription on Rev. "For the Freedom of Jerusalem".



Left: A leather sandal from the Cave of Letters, Nahal Hever, Roman period.

The Archive

As part of the conservation efforts to preserve the Scrolls for future generations, the IAA has initiated the Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls digitization project. Using the most advanced and innovative imaging technology, each Scroll fragment is imaged in various wavelengths and in the highest resolution possible then uploaded to the Digital Library. For the first time ever, the Dead Sea Scrolls archive is becoming available to the public online.

The Leon Levy
DEAD SEA SCROLLS
Digital Library

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