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the israel museum, jerusalem  
متحف إسرائيل، أورشليم القدس



## press release

# Dead Sea Scrolls Go Digital on New Interactive Website Created by the Israel Museum and Google

*Ultra Hi-Res Imagery and Google Technology Enable Users Worldwide to  
Explore Oldest Known Biblical Manuscript as Never Before*

**September 26, 2011, Jerusalem, Israel** – The Israel Museum launches today its Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Project, allowing users to examine and explore these ancient manuscripts from Second Temple times at a level of detail never before possible. Developed in partnership with Google, the new website gives users access to searchable, fast-loading, high-resolution images of the scrolls, as well as short explanatory videos and background information on the texts and their history. The Dead Sea Scrolls, which include the oldest known biblical manuscripts in existence, offer critical insight into Jewish society in the Land of Israel during the Second Temple Period, the time of the birth of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism. Five complete scrolls from the Israel Museum have been digitized for the project at this stage and are accessible online at [dss.collections.imj.org.il](http://dss.collections.imj.org.il).

“We are privileged to house in the Israel Museum's Shrine of the Book the best preserved and most complete Dead Sea Scrolls ever discovered,” said James S. Snyder, Anne and Jerome Fisher Director of the Israel Museum. “They are of paramount importance among the touchstones of monotheistic world heritage, and they represent unique highlights of our Museum's encyclopedic holdings. Now, through our partnership with Google, we are able to bring these treasures to the broadest possible public.”

The five Dead Sea Scrolls that have been digitized thus far include the Great Isaiah Scroll, the Community Rule Scroll, the Commentary on Habakkuk Scroll, the Temple Scroll, and the War Scroll, with search queries on Google.com sending users directly to the online scrolls. All five scrolls can be magnified so that users may examine texts in exacting detail. Details invisible to the naked eye are made visible through ultra-high resolution digital photography by photographer Ardon Bar-Hama— at up to 1,200 mega pixels each, these images are almost two hundred times higher in resolution than those produced by a standard camera. Each picture utilized UV-protected flash tubes with an exposure of 1/4000th of a second to minimize damage to the fragile manuscripts. In addition, the Great Isaiah Scroll may be searched by column, chapter, and verse, and is accompanied by an English translation tool and by an option for users to submit translations of verses in their own languages.

“The Dead Sea Scrolls Project with the Israel Museum enriches and preserves an important part of world heritage by making it accessible to all on the internet,” said Professor Yossi Matias, Managing Director of Google's R&D Center in Israel. “Having been involved in similar projects in the past, including the Google Art Project, Yad Vashem Holocaust Collection, and the Prado Museum in Madrid, we have seen how people around the world can enhance their knowledge and understanding of key historical events by accessing documents and collections online. We hope to make all existing knowledge in historical

archives and collections available to all, including helping to put additional Dead Sea Scroll documents online.”

The Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Project is funded by George Blumenthal and the Center for Online Judaic Studies, which first envisioned the project in order to make these manuscripts widely accessible and to create an innovative resource for scholars and the public alike. Dr. Adolfo D. Roitman, Lizbeth and George Krupp Curator of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Head of the Shrine of the Book, and Dr. Susan Hazan, Curator of New Media and Head of the Museum's Internet Office, directed the project for the Israel Museum, working in collaboration with Eyal Fink, Technical Lead, and Eyal Miller, New Business Development Manager, at Google's R&D Center in Israel.

### **About the Dead Sea Scrolls**

Dating from the third century BCE to the first century CE, the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered between 1947 and 1956 in eleven caves on the northwestern shores of the Dead Sea. The manuscripts are generally attributed to an isolated Jewish sect, referred to in the scrolls as “the Community,” who settled in Qumran in the Judean desert.

The Israel Museum has been home to the Dead Sea Scrolls since its opening in 1965. The light-sensitive scrolls are housed and exhibited in the Shrine of the Book, designed by Armand Bartos and Frederic Kiesler, whose signature dome evokes the lids of the jars in which the scrolls were found. The scrolls that are now digitized and accessible through the Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Project include:

- **The Great Isaiah Scroll**, inscribed with the Book of Isaiah and dating from ca. 125 BCE, is the only complete ancient copy of any biblical book in existence.
- **The War Scroll** dates to the late first century BCE or early first century CE and describes a confrontation between the “Sons of Light” and the “Sons of Darkness”, which would last forty-nine years, ending with the victory of the “Sons of Light” and the restoration of Temple practice according to their beliefs.
- **The Temple Scroll**, from the early first century CE, claims to provide the details of God’s instructions for the construction and operation of the Temple in Jerusalem. Written on animal skin only one-tenth of a millimeter thick, the Temple Scroll is the thinnest parchment scroll ever found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.
- **The Community Rule** sheds light on the Community’s way of life, dealing with subjects such as the admission of new members, conduct at communal meals, prayer, cleansing rituals, and theological doctrines.
- **The Commentary on Habakkuk** interprets the first two chapters of the biblical book of the prophet Habakkuk in a unique style that makes it a key source of knowledge of the spiritual life of the secluded Qumran community, shedding light on the community's perception of itself.

### **The Israel Museum, Jerusalem**

The Israel Museum is the largest cultural institution in the State of Israel and is ranked among the leading art and archaeology museums in the world. Founded in 1965, the Museum houses encyclopedic collections ranging from prehistory through contemporary art and includes the most extensive holdings of Biblical and Holy Land archaeology in the world, among them the Dead Sea Scrolls. In just 45 years, the Museum has built a far-ranging collection of nearly 500,000 objects through an unparalleled legacy of gifts and support from its circle of patrons worldwide. In 2010, the Museum completed a comprehensive

renewal of its campus led by James Carpenter Design Associates, New York, and Efrat-Kowalsky Architects, Tel Aviv, including the creation of new galleries, orientation facilities, and public spaces, and the complete reinstallation of its encyclopedic collections. The Museum also organizes and presents programming at its off-site locations in Jerusalem at the Rockefeller Archaeological Museum, where it presents archaeological artifacts from the Land of Israel, and at its historic Ticho House in downtown Jerusalem, a venue for exhibitions of contemporary Israeli art.

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