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QUMRAN BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

An International Conference Organized
on the Occasion of the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Dead Sea Scrolls Discovery
Lublin, October 25-27, 2007

In 2007 there occurs a sixtieth anniversary of the first manuscript finds in the Judean Desert. In the spring of 1947 two Beduins from the Ta'âmireh tribe were tending their sheep in the neighborhood of the ancient ruins called by the Arabs Ĥirbet Qumrân located on the north-western shores of the Dead Sea. In an accidentally discovered cave they found several ancient scrolls hidden in clay jars and brought them to an antiquity dealer in Bethlehem, Ĥalîla Iskandar Šahîna. Eventually the manuscripts found their way to a monophysite Syrian monastery of st. Mark in Jerusalem, while the Beduins began their search for more findings in the Judean desert. In the autumn of 1947 the Beduins together with local antiquity dealers began contacting different biblical schools in Jerusalem intending to sell their treasures for a reasonable price. Prof. E. L. Sukenik from the Hebrew University was the first to acknowledge the antiquity of the manuscripts and their possible Essene origin. In December 1947 The Hebrew University bought the first three scrolls. When the 1948 independence war was over, there began a systematic archaeological exploration of Qumran, adjacent caves, and Judean desert. New discoveries of the OT manuscripts containing fragments of almost all biblical books opened a new chapter in modern understanding of the history of the biblical text transmission. Aside from the biblical text, Essene documents and pseudepigraphic compositions, many of which unknown up to the time of their discovery, cast a new light on almost every aspect of biblical, historical and philological studies of the Second Temple period in ancient Israel. All the manuscripts have been published by Oxford University Press in the official publishing series, *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*.

Eventually the École Biblique et Archéologique Française in Jerusalem took over Qumran excavations together with the analysis of most of the manuscripts from the Judean desert. In 1952 Józef Tadeusz Milik joined the team of international scholars who were engaged in studying and publishing the scrolls at the École. His great philological talent and unparalleled palaeographic skills together with enormous laboriosity and genial intuition left an indelible trait on the understanding and study of the Qumran scrolls. Prof. Milik died in Paris January 6, 2006.

The scientific conference on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of Qumran discoveries organized by the Institute of Biblical Studies CUL is dedicated to the memory of this eminent Polish scholar who in 1948 began his biblical and philological studies precisely at the Theological Faculty of the Catholic University of Lublin. In the conference will take part rev. prof. Émile Puech, a leading Qumran scholar and specialist in North-West Semitic epigraphy. Prof. Puech teaches at the École Biblique et Archéologique Française, and at the same time is a Directeur de recherche at the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique in Paris; he authored three volumes in the *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* series. There also will take part prof. Florentino García Martínez from Leuven University. He is one of the finest experts of Qumran scrolls and heads the scientific journals *Revue de Qumran* and *Journal for the Study of Judaism*.

The Institute of Biblical Studies at the Catholic University of Lublin invites all interested scholars who would like to make a contribution to Qumran studies in their relation to the Bible, Semitic philology, Second Temple history and related matters. The Dead Sea scrolls come from the period that borders the Old and New Testament times, hence the title of the conference and its main thematic thrust. We kindly invite international scholars to participate in the conference and to enjoy the beauty of the Polish medieval town in which the history of Poland intertwines with a long presence of Jewish people and Jewish culture.

Scholars willing to hold a conference during the meeting are kindly requested to contact Henryk Drawnel (email: hdrawnel@kul.lublin.pl; hdrawnel@yahoo.com.; tel +48-81-74-94-103), providing the title of the conference, and a summary no longer than 300 words.

Henryk Drawnel SDB