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One of the Qumran caves—known as Cave 4—must have been a particularly important hiding place for the individuals protecting “The Dead Sea Scrolls.” This image depicts a photograph, by Effi Schweizer, of Qumran’s Cave 4. Online via Wikimedia Commons. Click on the image for a larger view.

In 1947, young Bedouins looking for a lost goat found some of the ancient Hebrew scrolls in the caves of Qumran, in the Judean desert near the Dead Sea. The scrolls turned out to be the oldest-known surviving manuscripts of the Hebrew Scriptures (the “Tanach”).

One thousand years older than anything modern scholars had seen before, the Qumran scrolls and fragments were a priceless find.

One of the most exciting discoveries was the Isaiah scroll. Scholars think it was copied about 100 BC. Follow this link to one of the most famous chapters—Isaiah 53—and this link to its translation.

When scrolls were no longer usable, rabbis treated them as though they had died. Old scrolls were wrapped in cloth and buried. That’s how many of the Qumran scrolls were found: wrapped in linen cloth, fastened with tabs and thongs, and placed inside clay jars unique to the Qumran area. The Qumran “Enoch” scroll (written in Aramaic—the Hebrew dialect which Jesus spoke) was most likely buried in that fashion.

But what about still-usable scrolls? Why did they also end up in Qumran’s caves? Around 68 A.D. the Roman army was advancing toward Qumran. People who lived in the community had to flee. The scrolls were placed in the caves where they remained, undisturbed, for nearly two thousand years.

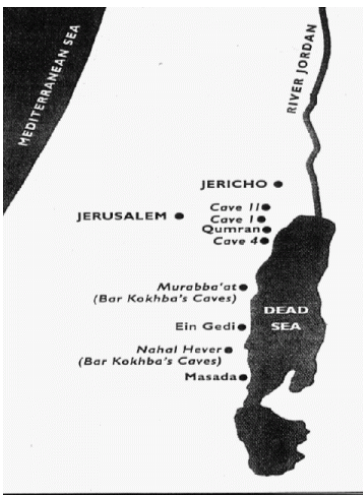
But Israel was not the only place where Jews lived, and Hebrew was not the only language which Jews spoke. After Alexander the Great’s conquests between 336-323B.C., many Jews lived in Greek-speaking places. One of those places was Alexandria, the Mediterranean port of North Africa named after the Greek conqueror and home of the famous Great Library of the ancient world.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-DEAD-SEA-SCROLLS-Protestant-Bible-A-Journey-Through-Centuries>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-DEAD-SEA-SCROLLS-Protestant-Bible-A-Journey-Through-Centuries>



Map Depicting the Caves of Qumran

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

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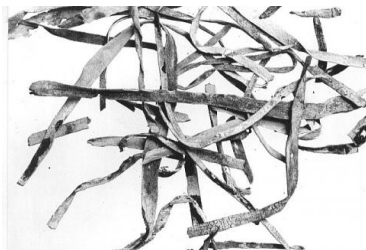
Tabs Secure Dead Sea Scrolls

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

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Thongs Secure Dead Sea Scrolls

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Clay Jars Used to Store the Dead Sea Scrolls

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

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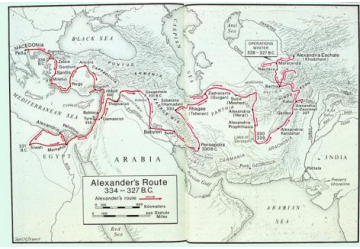
Fragments of the Enoch Scroll

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

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Map Depicting Route of Alexander's Conquests

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Alexandria, Port of North Africa

Image online, courtesy the State Information Service, Gateway to Egypt website.

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Great Library of the Ancient World

Image online, courtesy the climate4you.com website.

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