

# Symposium on Qumran, the Bible, and the Most Recent Dead Sea Discoveries in Israel

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Director of the University of Hartford's Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies Professor Richard Freund and Professor Carl Savage of Drew University discussed the significance of their recent archaeological discoveries in Qumran, Israel on Wednesday, Sept. 18 at 8 p.m. in Wilde Auditorium. The symposium was free and open to the public.

For the second straight year, the University of Hartford has been at the center of discoveries made in the ancient settlement of Qumran, which is near the site of the Dead Sea Scrolls caves. This summer, Freund and Savage headed a team of scientists and students, who uncovered the skeleton of a man lying within a tomb in a building excavated at the outskirts of the Qumran cemetery. The building, tomb and skeleton are believed to date to the first century A.D. The building is the only structure in one of the largest cemeteries ever uncovered in Israel.

Publications worldwide reported the team's discovery of the skeleton, which may be the remains of the mysterious "Teacher of Righteousness," who was the leader of the Essenes sect that resided in Qumran in the first century. The excavation was filmed for a television documentary entitled "The Qumran Enigma". Some footage of the discovery was shown during the presentation. Freund's other archaeological discoveries in the Cave of Letters at Bethsaida have been the subject of four films. The results of this summer's work were revealed for the first time at this symposium.

Preceding the symposium, there was a reception at 7 p.m. in Taub Hall Gallery. Exclusive photos and illustrations by Hartford Art School faculty and students who accompanied Freund on the expedition will remain on display until Sept. 26.

Qumran is one of the most important and fascinating archaeological sites in the world due to its proximity to the caves in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. Connections exist between major New Testament figures and information in the scrolls. Members of the Essenes sect are believed to be the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and modern scholars identify the Essenes' "Teacher of Righteousness" as, variously, Onias III, Onias IV, James the Just, John the Baptist and Menachem the Zealot.

Freund said that the Essenes, who flourished in Palestine from the second century B.C. to the second century A.D., represent a link between the customs of biblical and rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity. The sect followed a mystical interpretation of the scriptures; they strictly followed Jewish rituals and compiled a library of religious manuscripts for study. The Essenes gathered on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea

because its members opposed the religious establishment in Jerusalem at that time.

This summer's Qumran expedition also uncovered three previously unknown caves in the area and developed the first systematic map of the site, including the cemetery, which holds some 1,200 graves. The venture was funded by the John and Carol Merrill Foundation, the Biblical Archaeological Society, and the Alpha-Omega Jewish Dental Fraternity of Hartford. The symposium was sponsored by the Hartford Bible Conference in honor of Lillian Harris.

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