

SAN DIEGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Dead Sea Scrolls

www.sdscrolls.org

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Dead Sea Scrolls Coming to San Diego, California

Archaeological Treasures to be Exhibited at the San Diego Natural History Museum

San Diego, CA—August 22, 2006: On June 29, 2007, the Museum will open *Dead Sea Scrolls*, the largest, most comprehensive exhibition of the Dead Sea Scrolls ever assembled. It includes authentic scrolls, illuminated biblical manuscripts, ancient artifacts, landscape and aerial photography, and interactive displays about science, discovery, and exploration. Thanks to the generosity of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), 24 Dead Sea Scrolls, 10 exhibited for the first time ever, will be on display over the course of the exhibition. Tickets for groups go on sale September 1; for Museum members October 1; for the general public November 1.

“We are especially honored to host 10 scrolls for the first time ever—the revenue generated by their being exhibited in San Diego means that they will be conserved properly for the first time. In addition, these scrolls can be exhibited around the world from hereafter,” says Dr. Risa Levitt Kohn, a biblical scholar and associate professor at San Diego State University's Religious Studies department, who will be directing the educational programming surrounding the exhibition and assisting the San Diego Natural History Museum in curating the exhibition.

“We expect that this cultural event will be a magnet for visitors from all around California and the entire Southwest,” comments Dr. Michael Hager, Executive Director of the Natural History Museum. “The opportunity for us to host a world-class exhibition is one that we take on with great pride and excitement. This will be an unforgettable event for San Diego.”

The Museum is the only California destination for the exhibition and the only venue slated for a six-month showing. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to encounter the most significant collection of ancient documents and artifacts ever assembled in San Diego. Objects of great mystery, intrigue and significance, the scrolls continue to captivate audiences around the world. The Museum anticipates attendance anywhere from 400,000+ over the six-month period.

“The magnitude of the scroll discovery is remarkable,” says Levitt Kohn. “These are the oldest discovered copies of the books of the Hebrew Bible. They shed light on life, faith and culture in ancient Israel. The six-month exhibition window, in particular, is a great coup for San Diego and California.”

The Dead Sea Scrolls, dating from 250 BCE–68 CE, are indisputably one of the greatest archaeological finds of all time. Discovered beginning in 1947 in eleven caves along the shores of the Dead Sea in Israel, the scrolls are a bridge to the period when the foundations of western civilization were being laid. These ancient manuscripts embody universal values, and bring a vanished world to life.

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Exhibition highlights include: scrolls of the biblical books of Leviticus, Isaiah, Job and others; scrolls such as the Damascus Document and the War Scroll highlighting the life and thoughts of the Qumran community; Psalms scrolls containing passages from liturgy still in use today; a section of the Copper Scroll from Jordan, the only Dead Sea Scroll inscribed on copper; the best preserved of all Deuteronomy manuscripts containing the text of the Ten Commandments; and scrolls written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.

The exhibition will also explore the science of the scrolls, investigating scroll preservation, DNA and chemical analysis, infrared technology, Carbon-14 dating, document reconstitution, and the Dead Sea and San Diego County Mediterranean climates—without which the scrolls might never have been preserved.

Together with the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Museum plans to exhibit additional artifacts including scroll jars, textiles, pottery, ancient coins, leather sandals, an inkwell, large photographs, models of the settlement of Qumran, and archeological instruments from the original excavation. “Our goal is to present these ancient scrolls within the context of their period which may be fairly described as the wellspring from which Judaism and Christianity were born,” comments Levitt Kohn.

Alongside these artifacts, visitors will see additional ancient manuscripts from the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, the Russian National Library, the British National Library, the École Biblique in Jerusalem and more. These materials will help trace the story of the transmission of the biblical Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran all the way up to our present day.

The Museum will offer a robust educational program which will include 22 lectures by world-class scholars and archaeologists, films, classes, audio tours (Spanish and English, included in the price of admission), and education travel tours to Israel. Additionally, a curriculum will be prepared for use in schools, home schools, synagogues and churches. In collaboration, the San Diego Zoo, the Birch Aquarium at Scripps, and the San Diego Museum of Man are developing complimentary exhibits and programs.

Admission to this exhibition ranges from \$10–\$28. There are discounts for members, seniors, students, military and groups. Admission includes exhibitions offered in other areas of the Museum. Visit www.sdscrolls.com for more information. Group tour operators may arrange for on-site boxed lunches.

The San Diego Natural History Museum is a member of the San Diego cultural community and as such, it has a responsibility to help bring the “best of the best” cultural opportunities to the southern California region. This exhibition will attract a diverse new audience to the Museum and Balboa Park and will expose them to the wonderful cultural and educational opportunities available. In addition, the exhibition is timed to coincide with the annual conference of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature which will be held in San Diego: it is the largest gathering of religion scholars in the world.

Celebrating its 132nd year, the San Diego Natural History Museum is the second oldest scientific institution in California; third west of the Mississippi. A binational Museum, its mission is to interpret the natural world through research, education, and exhibits; to promote understanding of the evolution and diversity of southern California and the peninsula of Baja California and to inspire in all a respect for nature and the environment. Located in Balboa Park at the intersection of Village Place and Park Blvd., it is open daily from 10 AM to 5 PM except for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Phone: 619.232.2821. Website: www.sdnhm.org.