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THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS
FIFTY YEARS AFTER THEIR DISCOVERY

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EDITORS' PREFACE

The fiftieth anniversary of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is more than just a chronological designation. The field of study of the Qumran scrolls and related literature has been transformed radically in these fifty years. Once concentrated on the scrolls from the caves adjacent to Khirbet Qumran, now research encompasses all the texts from the Judean Desert from sites as far north as Wadi Daliyeh and as far south as Masada. The scholarly tasks to which the community of Dead Sea Scrolls scholars has devoted itself have shifted from acquiring, cleaning, piecing together and photographing the jigsaw puzzle of fragments to publication, analysis and interpretation of texts, and the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) is involved in a major project of conservation. The publication team, once working from East Jerusalem and made up of a handful of scholars, has now been widened to include experts from all around the world, and is on the verge of successfully completing its task in forty volumes in the Discoveries in the Judean Desert (DJD) series. A variety of new technologies, such as computer enhancement of images, computer encoding and searching of texts, carbon-14 dating and DNA analysis have recently been added to the conventional arsenal of the scholar. New theories and interpretations abound, but most of the conclusions of the previous generation of scholars proposed as the scrolls were being unearthed have withstood the test of time. The early finds, centered on the community that inhabited Qumran in the century and a half before the turn of the era and until the Roman destruction in 68 CE have been joined by documentary texts from the first century CE, letters from the Bar Kokhba Revolt of 132-5, Byzantine Christian and even Islamic manuscripts from various sites in the Judean Desert. The fiftieth anniversary was therefore the proper time to look back and evaluate the progress that has taken place in the study of the Qumran scrolls and the other documents from the Judean Desert. This was a time for celebration. The choice of Jerusalem as the venue for our conference, not far from the Judean Desert, was especially appropriate since this eternal city was the focal point of much of the ferment that produced or led to the deposit of the ancient writings we were studying. The choice of the Israel Museum, where some of the most beautiful scrolls are exhibited to the public, made the event even more spectacular. The conference was organized in order to guarantee the highest level of international and interconfessional participation. The subjects covered were many and varied as is attested to in these conference volumes. The various genres of the literature reflected in the scrolls, the languages, the parallels in previously known compositions, the concepts, doctrines, and be-