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The Bible and  
the Dead Sea Scrolls

Volume Two

The Dead Sea Scrolls and  
the Qumran Community

EDITED BY  
JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH

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## CHAPTER ONE

## DIGITAL MIRACLES: REVEALING INVISIBLE SCRIPTS

*Keith T. Knox, Roger L. Easton, Jr., Robert H. Johnston*

## INTRODUCTION

Since their discovery in 1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls have been recorded and studied using photographic imaging techniques. Although much has been learned from the study of these photographs in the last five decades, there is a limit to what a magnifying glass can reveal. In the commercial world, great strides have been made in the last ten years in the capture, storage, and processing of digital images. These digital imaging technologies have matured to the point where they are now readily available at a reasonable cost. Scholars have only recently started applying these techniques to the task of uncovering and deciphering degraded writings. We have been fortunate to have been involved in this exciting integration of imaging science and the study of ancient documents.

In our studies, we have explored several methods for revealing characters in degraded texts. Some involve illuminating the document with light that is invisible to humans; others involve computer processing of the image to reveal or enhance text characters. The choice of method (or combination of methods) depends upon the particular artifact or document being studied. In cases where the inks have faded, images obtained under illumination from ultraviolet light may reveal characters that are either difficult to distinguish or totally unreadable when viewed by eye. If the parchment has darkened due to the effects of age or exposure, illumination with infrared light may reveal otherwise unreadable characters.

Both of these techniques require that the original scrolls be available to be imaged, and the images may be further enhanced using digital imaging techniques. Even if scrolls are not available for direct examination, photographs may be processed in a digital computer to enhance subtle color differences between ink and parchment and may reveal new characters. In the work reported here on the Dead Sea Scrolls, we have