Joint Press Release
USI and Facoltà di Teologia di Lugano,
Istituto di cultura e archeologia delle terre bibliche

Excavation in Qumran Cave 11Q
ISCAB FTL – USI
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A new excavation Cave 11Q, where some well preserved Dead Sea Scroll were discovered, has now yielded fresh materials and new insights.

Inside Cave 11Q, in 1956, the Bedouin had discovered the remains of around 30 Dead Sea Scrolls, including some of the best preserved examples: the Psalm Scroll, the Temple Scroll, and the PaleoLeviticus Scroll. After the discovery, the cave was excavated by Father Roland de Vaux (École Biblique et Archéologique Française, Jerusalem EBAF), and later in 1988 and 1991, by Dr. Joseph Patrich (then University of Haifa) , but, except for the manuscripts, the archaeological materials found during these excavations are thus far not fully published.

The Istituto di Cultura e Archeologia delle Terre Bibliche of the Facoltà di Teologia di Lugano (ISCAB FTL) and the Università della Svizzera Italiana di Lugano (USI) have carried out an excavation in Qumran Cave 11Q headed by Prof. Dr. Marcello Fidanzio (Director of the „Ambiente Biblico" department of the ISCAB FTL) and Prof. Dr. Dan Bahat (ISCAB FTL). The excavation was achieved with the helpful contribution of Gil Ad Lidor (Academia di Architettura, Mendrisio, USI) and Giacomo Berchi (Facoltà di Scienze della Comunicazione, Lugano, USI).

The main goals of the 2017 campaign were to complete the archaeological investigation of the cave, to clarify some issues that resulted from the previous excavations and to prepare a scientific and comprehensive archaeological report of the cave.

The main results of the campaign can be summarized as follows:

a) **the excavation investigated** a new area, undisturbed by the previous excavations. It was possible **to reconstruct and record the stratigraphy,** according to today's archaeological standards.

b) some material was found in an area of soil dumped in earlier excavations: fragments of **linen textiles**, similar to those that we know wrapped the Dead Sea Scrolls, remains of **leather and wooden artifacts**, **palm fibres**, **medical plants** *(Balanites Aegyptiaca, Zizipus Spina Christi*) and **animal bones**.

c) passing trough a narrow hole, cave expert (speleologist) Dr. Alessandro Maifredi discovered an **upper chamber inside the cave which had been unknown until then**. The new cavity has a rectangular shape and measures approxinately 6 metres in length, 2 metres in width and from 1.2 metres (lowest point) up to 3.5 metres (highest point) in height. No traces of human activity have been found. It was understood to be too dangerous to stay in the new cavity because of the presence of large stone blocks precariously stuck in the ceiling.

d) the study of the **geology** of the cave, compared with previous documentation, has made it possible to reconstruct the **situation at the time of the discovery in the 1950s**, which was

permanently altered through previous excavations, and to propose a possible reconstruction of the **morphology of the cave at the time of the deposit of the manuscripts**.

„*It is now possible to publish the much-awaited final report on the archeology of Cave 11Q, adding the new discoveries and understanding of this campaign to the study of the previous excavations,* ” says Marcello Fidanzio, appointed by EBAF and FTL to publish the final report of the different excavations in Cave 11Q. „*The results of the 2017 campaign, alongside the studies on the previous excavations will be discussed in a workshop dedicated to Cave 11Q in Lugano. This new event will gather some of the major international experts on the Qumran caves, all now focusing on Cave 11Q and its full publication, and it will take place next April 24th and 25th. On that occasion, 40 small manuscript fragments gathered in the excavation in 1956, so far unknown, will be presented for the first time.*”

The excavation team was completed by some professionals and students: Dr. Alessandro Maifredi (geologist and speleologist, Centro Studi Sotterranei); Giorgio Skory (photographer); Dr. Marco De Pietri (Università degli Studi di Pavia, regular collaborator at ISCAB on the Qumran Caves Publication Project) and Dr. Benedetta Torrini (Università degli Studi di Pisa, Facoltà Teologica dell'Italia Centrale, FTIC), archaeologists; Valentina Anzini (FTL), Davide Bergamasco (FTL), Paul Chikaodili Igwegbe (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Jerusalem SBF), and Chiara Mariotti (FTIC), students.

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