The most popular hypothesis to account for the presence of over 800 scrolls in the caves surrounding the site of Qumran beside the Dead Sea is the “quick hiding scenario,” whereby a library at the site was hidden away ahead of the Roman invasion (in 68 C.E.). This theory was first suggested by one Ibrahim Sowny, the brother of Father Butros Sowny of St. Mark’s Monastery in Jerusalem, to John Trever, when the Isaiah scroll was taken to the American Schools of Oriental Research in 1948, 1 and has been commonly held ever since.

However, the first scholar to consider the matter, Eleazer Sukenik, who had engaged with scroll dealers soon after the discoveries in Cave 1Q, had a different idea about why the scrolls were in caves. He wrote in his diary on November 25th, 1947: “A Hebrew book has been discovered in a jar. He [antiquities dealer Kando] showed me a fragment written on parchment. Genizah!” 2

The Genizah Theory

A genizah is, strictly speaking, a temporary store for certain old, damaged or otherwise unusable (sometimes heterodox) Jewish manuscripts, the most famous “genizah” discovery being the collection partly discovered in a hidden upper room in the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Fustat,

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Cairo. However, this name, applied to what has been found in Cairo, is slightly misleading, because a large part of the Cairo genizah has actually come from the cemetery. The final resting place for manuscripts in a genizah is indeed the cemetery, at which point they are not actually part of a genizah but rather buried. The Cairo genizah—most of which was taken by Solomon Schechter to Cambridge—had yielded sensational manuscript finds, including parts of the Hebrew book of Ben Sira—a work previously only known in Greek—as well as two versions of the mysterious Zadokite work that we now know as the Damascus Document. Sukenik was clearly thinking of this.

As more manuscripts came to light Sukenik held strongly to his initial belief that what was found in the caves by the Dead Sea was a vast genizah, “instituted by the sect of the Essenes” which was associated with the western Dead Sea region based on ancient sources such as Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* 5: 15. Unfortunately, Sukenik published only preliminary work on the scrolls. He died in 1953 and his voice was lost from subsequent debate. The genizah theory has had some supporters over the decades, for example Henri del Medico, though del Medico argued for no connection between the scrolls in the caves and the site of Qumran, and G.R. Driver, who came to believe that the scrolls were hidden after the First Revolt, when heterodox literature was put away. This linking of the genizah proposition with those who disassociate Qumran and the Essenes from the scrolls has not helped Sukenik’s

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3 Solomon Schechter and Elkan N. Adler, “Genizah,” in *Jewish Encyclopaedia* (ed. Isidore Singer; New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1901–6), vol. 4, 612–13. Adler was told in 1888 that most of the manuscripts—called shemot because of the name of God—were buried in the Jewish cemetery of Basatin and “not the least important part of the Taylor-Schechter collection has come from the graveyard.”

4 Sukenik, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 29. See also Synesius, *Dion* 3.2 and Solinus, *Collectanea* 35: 1–12.

6 Godfrey R. Driver, *The Judaean Scrolls: The Problem and a Solution* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 386–91; id. “Myths of Qumran,” *The Annual of Leeds University Oriental Society* 6 (1966–68), 23–48 at 28. He modified his opinion from initial rejection of the genizah hypothesis, viz. “it was not attached to any synagogue and manuscripts stored in it would have been at the mercy of every curious searcher who could find a way into it, e.g. wandering shepherds or fugitives from justice, and the manuscripts found in it, though not new, are obviously in a state not of advanced decay but of very fair preservation,” *The Hebrew Scrolls from the Neighbourhood of Jericho and the Dead Sea* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 49–50. At this point he believed in the quick hiding scenario.