

# THE EARLY DAYS

## The Collection of the Baron Edmond de Rothschild – from the Excavations of Raymond Weill in Gezer

In the early twentieth century, the Baron Edmond de Rothschild purchased lands south of the Temple Mount (the Ophel) and near Tel Gezer. He funded their excavation, which was conducted by the archaeologist Raymond Weill before and after World War I. The Hebrew University was the beneficiary of the Baron de Rothschild's antiquities collection.

Tel Gezer was identified by Charles Clermont-Ganneau in 1871 and was first excavated by Robert A. S. Macalister between 1902 and 1909. The site, located at the Judean foothills, overlooks the Ayalon and Soreq Valleys as well as one of the intersections connecting the road from Jerusalem to the *Via Maris*. It emerges from Weill's excavations near Gezer, published only recently, that he dug nine graves, the exact location of which is difficult to reconstruct. The finds exhibit prolonged use of the graves, from the Middle Bronze until the Iron Age. Local pottery vessels were found beside imported ones from Cyprus, Greece, and Egypt.



Photo: Gabi Laron

Miniature perfume bowl in the shape of a duck, stone. Middle to Late Bronze Ages.

## The Dead Sea Scrolls

Toward the end of 1947, Eleazar Lipa Sukenik purchased three parchment scrolls for the Hebrew University: the Isaiah B scroll, the scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness, and the Thanksgiving scroll. These acquisitions were among Sukenik's high points of research activity and became the highlight of the museum's collections. The three scrolls were part of a group of seven discovered by Bedouin shepherds in a cave near Khirbet Qumran at the northern end of the Dead Sea. The remaining four scrolls were sold to the head of the Assyrian Church of Jerusalem, who took them out of the country. In 1954, Yigael Yadin, Sukenik's son and Head of the Institute of Archaeology in later years, purchased them for the State of Israel. The scrolls comprise three main groups: scrolls containing most of the books of the Bible according to the Masoretic text, scrolls dealing with matters concerning the life of the Dead Sea sect, and scrolls containing parts of the Apocrypha.

The discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls created a new research discipline that has implications regarding many areas, such as the study of the Bible, the development of the Hebrew language, Jewish religion in the Second Temple period, the history of the Jews at the end of the Hellenistic period and beginning of the Roman period, and early Christianity. Following the discovery of the scrolls, surveys and excavations conducted in the region yielded thousands more written scrolls fragments.

The University's Dead Sea scrolls are currently on exhibition in the Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem.



Professor E. L. Sukenik examines one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, 1951.