

Remembering Peter W. Flint (1951–2016)

“To live for a time close to great minds is the best kind of education.”

John Buchan, Canada's fifteenth Governor General

On November 3, 2016 the field of Dead Sea Scrolls studies said farewell to one of its own. Born on January 21, 1951 in Johannesburg, South Africa, Peter W. Flint passed away at the age of sixty-five. There is indeed much to reflect and remember from Peter's life which included three decades of research and publication on the Qumran finds.¹ At once a citizen of the ivory tower and public servant sharing the Dead Sea Scrolls with any interested in the Bible, history, and theology, Peter's work is marked by the rare quality of making the complex accessible, engaging, meaningful, and even inspiring. Peter was a prolific writer, editor, speaker, and mentor on Dead Sea Scrolls research and made a particular impact in Canada academic culture. Since 1995 Peter was the Co-Director of the Trinity Western University Dead Sea Scrolls Institute and in 2004 was appointed to the Canada Research Chair in Dead Sea Scrolls Studies (Tier 1). All of this was done while proudly wearing a tie with Dead Sea Scrolls fragments strewn across it.

The following memorial paints Peter's accolades and accomplishments in Qumran scholarship in broad strokes. A comprehensive bibliography of his research contributions will be included in what was to be a *Festschrift*, now memorial volume, forthcoming in 2017.²

Peter's foray into the world of Qumran began when he and his family moved from South Africa to the United States, so he could pursue doctoral studies under Eugene Ulrich at the University of Notre Dame. Peter's dissertation on the Qumran Psalms materials was completed in 1993, a revised version of which was published as *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Book of Psalms*, STDJ 17 (Leiden: Brill 1997). Bookending his career was another landmark publication of the biblical scrolls: the edition of the cave one Isaiah texts, edited jointly with Eugene

1 For another memorial including many details of Peter's education and surviving family, see that of my colleague Martin Abegg, "In Memoriam: Peter W. Flint (1951–2016)," *Henoch* 38 (2016): 413.

2 Andrew B. Perrin, Kyung S. Baek, and Daniel K. Falk, eds., *Reading the Bible in Ancient Traditions and Modern Editions: Studies in Textual and Reception History in Memory of Peter W. Flint*, EJL (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017). While Peter will not have the chance to see the completed collection of essays written by students and peers, near his sixty-fifth birthday the editors disclosed to him the project was in preparation.

Ulrich.³ This volume was promptly awarded the “Best Book Relating to the Hebrew Bible (2009–2010)” by the Biblical Archaeological Society. In addition to these contributions to the books of Psalms and Isaiah at Qumran, Peter invested greatly in the publication of both biblical and parabiblical texts from Qumran in the Discoveries in the Judaean Desert series.⁴ This foundation of research contributed to the best-selling English translation written in collaboration with Martin Abegg and Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1999).

Beyond this extensive work in publishing the primary texts, Peter’s bibliography includes more than eleven edited volumes, eighty-five articles and essays, and over 100 conference papers, which attest to his ongoing work in building the collection of secondary research sources on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Arguably the most celebrated of these is the introductory textbook co-authored with James VanderKam, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 2002), which was also the recipient of the “Best Book Relating to the Hebrew Bible (2002)” award by the Biblical Archaeological Society. More recently, Peter consolidated, revised, and updated his materials on the Qumran texts and archaeology in a new introduction, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013). Because of these volumes, many past and future students will find their first invitation into the world of Qumran in Peter’s writings.

Peter’s perspective on the Qumran materials was also brought to bear on the work of students and peers through his numerous graduate thesis supervisions and roles on several editorial boards. In the course of his career, Peter served on the boards of Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah, The Formation and Interpretation of the Old Testament Literature, The Eerdmans Commentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as Studies on the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature.

As Qumran texts and artefacts made their way around the globe to museums and universities, Peter also regularly served as a consultant for exhibits and contributor to events, as was the case in Fort Worth, Texas (2012–2013), Kansas City, Missouri (2007), Seattle, Washington (2006–2007), Charlotte, North Carolina (2006), and Mobile, Alabama (2006).

One of Peter’s last publications was on a new fragment of Micah 1:4–6 in the

3 Eugene Ulrich and Peter W. Flint, *Qumran Cave 1.II The Isaiah Scrolls*, 2 parts, DJD 32 (Oxford: Clarendon, 2010).

4 See: “The Psalms Manuscripts from Qumran Cave 4,” with Patrick W. Skehan and Eugene Ulrich, *Qumran Cave 4.XI: Psalms to Chronicles*, DJD 16 (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 7–160, 163–68; “Pseudo-Daniel,” with John Collins, in James VanderKam (consulting ed.), *Qumran Cave 4.XVII: Parabiblical Texts, Part 3*, DJD 22 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 95–164; and “4Q238 (Habakkuk 3 and Songs),” “5/6 Psalms,” “2XHev/Se Numbers,” and “3Hev/Se Deuteronomy,” in James VanderKam and Monica Brady (consulting eds.), *Miscellaneous Texts from the Judaean Desert*, DJD 38 (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 133–66, 173–82.

care of the Museum of the Bible in Washington D. C.⁵ While Peter had several in-progress and forthcoming projects, this final publication is a fitting capstone to a career cut short as it captures the true spirit of Peter's academic legacy: it is marked by scholarly erudition and incisive textual analysis, involved student collaboration in the research process and publication, and focused on an artefact that is an important component of a collection geared towards the public's experience with these ancient finds.

For Peter the Dead Sea Scrolls were life-giving and indeed life-changing. Every word mattered. He would regularly remind us that many texts even held significance pointing beyond themselves, giving hope in times of loss, confusion, or adversity. At such a time when family and friends are reflecting on a rich past with Peter and, with heavy hearts, are moving ahead now with only memories of him, it seems fitting to close with a passage that was forever changed by the Qumran discoveries, and was a regular item of Peter's repertoire of examples of how the words of the scrolls changed the world. Isaiah 53:11 in the "Great Isaiah Scroll" reads as follows:

Out of the suffering of his soul *he will see light* (יראה אור) and find satisfaction. And through his knowledge his servant, the righteous one, will make many righteous, and he will bear their iniquities.⁶

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5 Peter W. Flint and David R. Herbison, "Micah 1:4–6 (Inv. MOTB.SCR.003183)," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fragments in the Museum Collection*, ed. Emanuel Tov, Kipp Davis and Robert Duke, PMOB 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 177–89.

6 Hebrew text from Ulrich and Flint, DJD 32, 88, with accompanying English translation from, Abegg, Flint, Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*, 360.