CHAPTER 25

The Qumran Hebrew Texts and the Septuagint: An Overview

The discovery in the Qumran Hebrew scrolls of single readings and fragments that are close to the LXX was an unexpected phenomenon that would be of major importance for several aspects of the text-critical analysis of the Hebrew and Greek Bibles. The idea that we would ever get close to the Hebrew texts from which the Greek translation was rendered had never entered anyone’s mind. Had scholars been asked where to look for such scrolls, they would have been divided between ancient Israel and Egypt.

1 Textual Outlook at the Time of the Qumran Discoveries

When the Qumran scrolls were found in 1947, scholars already had well-developed views about the transmission of the biblical texts. With the discovery of the first Qumran scrolls, these views, including the depiction of the relation between the textual witnesses, were not altered because it always takes time for the ramifications of new discoveries to be absorbed. Scholars continued to determine the place of the newly found scrolls within the framework of the tripartite division of the textual witnesses of the Torah that had been developed earlier. With regard to the Prophets and Hagiographa, some scholars thought in terms of a bipartite division, while others adhered also here to a tripartite division. Scholars also continued the approach of previous generations in characterizing many Qumran scrolls as recensions or text-types.

The assigning of individual Qumran texts to a particular text-type is reflected in the literature from the first volumes of the *DJD* series onwards, when most of the new scrolls were described as belonging to the “type” of MT, while some scrolls were assigned to the “type” of the LXX or of SP.1

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1 For example, in *DJD* 111, 61, 2QDeut was described as reflecting a textual tradition close to the LXX and the Vulgate. According to J.T. Milik, 5QDeut was systematically revised according to the Hebrew Vorlage of the LXX (*DJD* 111, 170). For both, see below. Milik similarly described 5QKings as reflecting a mediating position between the recensions of MT and the LXX (*DJD* 111, 172). While these three short texts did not display a convincing level of agreement with the LXX, other texts showed surprising proximity to the LXX. The first such scroll to be...
The Hebrew Qumran Scrolls and the Reconstructed LXX Vorlage

The Qumran LXX scrolls and the Hebrew scrolls close to the LXX introduced spectacular new data to the text-critical analysis. At the same time, the Hebrew scrolls and individual readings were quietly and almost unobtrusively influential in another area. They provided welcome support for the correctness of an approach that had been an integral part of scholarship for more than three centuries, namely, the reconstruction of details in the Vorlage of the LXX by way of retroversion. Before the Qumran discoveries, elements in the LXX that differed from MT were reconstructed with the aid of intuition and parallel biblical passages, while some harmonizing pluses in the LXX could be reconstructed with aid of parallel evidence in SP. However, little external support was available for this procedure.

The masters in this area of reconstruction, from Cappellus (1650), Houbigant (1777), on to Wellhausen (1871) and more recent scholars, operated with such tools as grammars, lexica, and concordances, but actually their intuition remained their major source of inspiration. Guided by this intuition, the above-mentioned scholars, as well as many others, suggested many a retroversion for readings in the LXX that deviated from MT.

However, it was not until the discovery of the Qumran scrolls that it was recognized that the system of retroverting had been correct all along. For example, readings that had been retroverted from LXX-Samuel without real support were now found in 4QSam\textsuperscript{a,b}, thus vindicating the procedure.\footnote{This aspect was also stressed by Cross–Parry–Saley, \textit{djd} xvi, 26.}

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\item considered close to the LXX was the rather well preserved 4QSama\textsuperscript{c}. The approach to this scroll, which was quickly accepted in scholarship, was indicated by the name of a 1953 study by F.M. Cross, "A New Qumran Fragment Related to the Original Hebrew Underlying the Septuagint," \textit{BASOR} 132 (1953): 15–26. Similar claims were later made by Cross regarding 4QSamb\textsuperscript{d} in "The Oldest Manuscripts from Qumran," \textit{JBL} 74 (1955): 147–172, and in his monograph \textit{The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies} (London: Duckworth, 1958), 133–140. Cross had remarkably good insights into the scrolls that he considered to be close to the LXX and that were eventually accepted as such. The argumentation was completed when additional ("pre-Samaritan") texts that belonged to the "type" of SP were discovered at Qumran: 4QpaleoExod\textsuperscript{m} and 4QNum\textsuperscript{b}.\footnote{Wellhausen, \textit{Bücher Samuelis}.}
\item Houbigant, \textit{Notae criticae in universos Veteris Testamenti libros} (Frankfurt: Varrentrapp Filium & Wenner, 1777).\footnote{A.F. Houbigant, \textit{Notae criticae in universos Veteris Testamenti libros} (Frankfurt: Varrentrapp Filium & Wenner, 1777).}
\item Wellhausen, \textit{Bücher Samuelis}.\footnote{Wellhausen, \textit{Bücher Samuelis}.}
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