WHAT IS A SCRIPTURAL TEXT IN THE SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD?
TEXTS BETWEEN THEIR BIBLICAL PAST, THEIR INNER-BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION, THEIR RECEPTION IN SECOND TEMPLE LITERATURE, AND THEIR TEXTUAL WITNESSES

In memoriam John Strugnell, great teacher

Mark S. Smith
New York University

1. Introduction

I am grateful to join in this celebration, as my involvement with the Dead Sea Scrolls is intertwined with NYU faculty. I first met my colleague Lawrence Schiffman quite accidentally at John Strugnell’s room in the École Biblique. For several summers I had been working on four unpublished manuscripts from Cave Four with Strugnell, who passed away on November 30, 2007. The notices of his death emphasize his learning and generosity to his students and colleagues. I was a beneficiary of these remarkable qualities of Strugnell’s well before my formal work with him. In the 1980s, we spent hours discussing papers of ours, including the essay that he wrote for the New York University Symposium on the Scrolls held in 1985.¹ In these exchanges, he was the ideal colleague. Thanks to his cooperative spirit, Strugnell did more than any prior editor to bring scrolls to publication. Also notable was his hearty and sometimes wicked sense of humor, as well as his love of literature, particularly of poetry. Strugnell was also a forgiving person; he was well aware of human flaws.

For my topic, I have selected a question that at first glance appears simple: what is a scriptural text at Qumran? This matter does not primarily concern (but does presuppose) the much discussed matter of whether the Qumran biblical texts constituted for the movement

or community\textsuperscript{2} a canon or not, as opposed to being understood as an open group of scriptures or holy texts bearing religious authority. Often this issue boils down to the question of whether there was already a biblical canon at the time of Qumran or not. My interest in this study does not lie in the issue of canon,\textsuperscript{3} but in the word, text.\textsuperscript{4} Scholars are well aware of textual variants that suggest that in many cases there is no single set of words that constitutes the text of any given passage. We are also aware of diachronic dimensions of texts by comparing multiple witnesses; the well-known cases of 2 Samuel 22 = Psalm 18, Psalm 14 = Psalm 53, and Isa 2:2–4 = Mic 4:1–3 readily come to mind. Another diachronic set of cases involves texts with interpretive editorial additions, for example the Priestly-Deuteronomic interpretive addition to the temple building account in 1 Kgs 6:12–13.\textsuperscript{5} It may be less speculative to restrict my examination to a single text, Deut 32:8–9, in order to ask the question, what a scriptural or biblical text is in the Second Temple period. By implication,


\textsuperscript{3} This matter is complex and widely discussed; for references and summary, see Mark S. Smith, God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World (FAT I/57; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 198 n. 32.
