MIRIAM MISBEHAVING?
The Figure of Miriam in 4Q377 in Light of Ancient Jewish Literature

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4QApocryphal Pentateuch B (4Q377) is one of three texts from the Qumran library that mentions the figure of Miriam.¹ According to the editors of 4Q377, James C. VanderKam and Monica Brady, the text preserves at least one line that deals with Miriam’s opposition to Moses in Num 12.² They also propose that 4Q377 2 i 10 might attest to Num 12.³ Because the suggested connection between 4Q377 2 i 9–10 and Num 12 has not yet been studied in detail, this is the task of the present article. After a critical analysis of lines 9 and 10, this study takes into consideration other re-narrations of Num 12: Demetrius (the Chronographer); Philo, Leg. 1.76; 2.66–67; 3.103; m. Sōtah 1:7, 9; and Sipre Num 99. Their style of rephrasing the Pentateuchal narration is analyzed and I ask if they can illuminate the reconstruction of 4Q377. I also consider the reception of the figure of Miriam in the re-narrations of Num 12 in general and in 4Q377 in particular.


² VanderKam and Brady in DJD XXVIII (2001): 212.

³ Ibid.
The preserved text of 4Q377 does not directly quote the Pentateuch, but reworks it by using it as related stories. 4Q377 demonstrates an interest in the wilderness period, and it contains references to Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The figure of Moses plays a prominent role throughout the narration. Prior to the DJD edition published in 2001, this text was known as “4QApocryphon of Moses C” due to the centrality of Moses.4 The previous title also indicates that 4Q377 was assigned to a collection of texts (4Q374–375) that were already thought to belong together.5

In the DJD edition, the text of 4Q377 was given a new title, “4QApocryphal Pentateuch B.” The new title does not merely highlight the key figure of the text but its wider content.6 The text is interpreted by the editors as a pentateuchal re-narration. In the same way that its first title carried generic implications, the new title indicates that it displays similarities with at least one other text: “4QApocryphal Pentateuch A” (4Q368), also published by VanderKam and Brady.7 The two texts exhibit common elements. The figure of Moses plays a prominent role in them and they both use the Pentateuch in their narrations.8 Despite these similarities it is difficult to say how the connection between 4Q368 and 4Q377 should be interpreted. The texts do not overlap. VanderKam and Brady argue that their portrayal of Moses is different.9 Given these hesitations, 4Q377 is treated as an independent text in this study.10

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5 Collections or circles of texts; see E. Tov, Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran: Collected Essays (TSAJ 121; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 432.

6 See n. 1; the DJD edition (mainly frg. 2 ii) has been revised by Puech, “Le fragment 2 de 4Q377,” 469–475; cf. Falk, “Moses, Texts of,” 1:581.


8 VanderKam and Brady in DJD XXVIII (2001): 207: “It is understandable that 4Q368 and 4Q377 have been associated with each other by being named 4QApocryphon Pentateuch A–B, even though the two do not overlap. Both clearly reflect and rework materials from various parts of the Pentateuch, especially Exod (the Sinai sections), Num and Deut.”

9 Ibid., 207–208: “4Q368 portrays Moses and God conversing whereas in 4Q377 Moses is depicted as a man.”

10 All text editions of the Dead Sea Scrolls do not assign 4Q368 and 4Q377 into the same literary groups. For instance, The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader groups 4Q368 within the category of “Re-written Bible,” whereas, 4Q377 is “an un-classified document.” This