What is a biblical text in Qumran? In Miqṣat Ma’āše Ha-Torah C 10 we are informed that the Dead Sea sect believed in the sanctity of a tripartite corpus: Moses, the Prophets and David. While the first two categories seem to coincide more or less with the Hebrew Bible’s Torah and Prophets, the third category—David—is obviously defined differently from our Ketuvim. In fact we can assume that it entails first-and-foremost (and perhaps exclusively) the Psalms assigned to David. In Qumran, more scrolls of Psalms were found than of any other composition. Yet we may justifiably inquire whether the term “David” included any other composition. We know that the canonicity of the various components of the Ketuvim was debated in rabbinic literature and that, at least according to tannaitic sources, some rabbis thought Song of Songs and Qohelet should not be canonized (see m. Yad. 5:5). Similarly we know that in Qumran, fragments of all the biblical books were found except the book of Esther. Is this intentional? We do not know. We do know that other books were

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1 I use this term in the conventional sense of the word. For discussions of this term and its historical meaning, see now the first section of this volume.


3 Emanuel Tov, “The Biblical Texts from the Judaean Desert: An Overview and Analysis of the Published Texts,” in Herbert and Tov, eds., Bible as Book, 141.


5 On this issue, see e.g., Shemaryahu Talmon, “Was the Book of Esther Known at Qumran?” DSD 2 (1995): 249–67; Sidnie White Crawford, “Has Esther been found at Qumran? 4Qproto-Esther and the Esther Corpus,” RevQ 17 (1996): 307–25. For my take on this issue, and on gender as an important aspect of the absence of this book
found in Qumran, which did not become part of the Hebrew Bible, but were canonized by various Christian churches (such as Tobit, in the Catholic Apocrypha; Jubilees and Enoch, in the Ethiopian church; apocryphal psalms in the Syriac Psalter etc). Is this an indication that they were also canonized in Qumran? We do not know.

It has been suggested that the quotation of a certain book in other (especially sectarian) writings in Qumran points to the authority these books held in the eyes of Qumranites. This is an interesting tool for assessing canonicity, because it indicates, for example, that the book of Daniel (twice quoted by name in Qumran sectarian scrolls—4Q174 Florilegium and 11Q13 Melchizedek) was considered canonical by the authors of these texts, even though it is probably contemporary with some of them. Yet we can compare this again to the question of canonicity as discussed by the rabbis, and see that this tool too can be problematic. Thus, we find that, even though Ben Sira was eventually rejected in the final version of the Ketuvim, the rabbis had a soft spot for it—they quoted it as they did Scripture throughout their compositions, and it was copied and preserved by Jews in Hebrew down to the days of the Cairo Genizah. I shall return to this issue below. The cumulative force of this information indicates, I suspect, that in Qumran, aside from (a/the) Psalter, we cannot definitely identify any book as belonging to a canonical set of Ketuvim.

What does this mean about the possible canonicity/authority of a large group of non-sectarian texts, unknown from elsewhere or previously, that was found in Qumran? This is a very thorny topic, any conclusion that may be suggested about how authoritative or not they were must remain tentative, and one should not be surprised to discover that scholars may use the same evidence to argue for authority or its absence just as effectively. What I want to suggest here is a model to be applied to three compositions from the Ketuvim and Pseudepigrapha, traces of which were found in Qumran, and for which the issue of gender, and gender presentation may have played a role in the interest they held for the Qumranites and in their final canoniza-

from Qumran, see Tal Ilan, Integrating Women into Second Temple History (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 140–44.
