THE TEXT OF THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES
AT THE TIME OF HILLEL AND JESUS

Eugene Ulrich

Notre Dame

The purpose of this paper is to present the picture that I have gradually formed of the text and text history of the Scriptures as they circulated in Palestinian Judaism at the time of the birth of rabbinic Judaism and Christianity. My method will be first to present each of my conclusions in the form of a thesis or position statement, and then to follow each by the evidence and arguments which I think substantiate the thesis. These conclusions are the result of studying the text of each of the biblical scrolls from Qumran Cave 4 during the production of their critical editions.

I. The Larger Context for the Qumran Scrolls

1. Virtually all the biblical books are the result of a lengthy compositional process, much of which began as oral literature and much of which developed over centuries at the hands of multiple authors and creative scribes and editors.

It is important to consider the larger compositional context in which the scroll evidence must be placed. Let us contemplate for a moment the long editorial histories of books or sections such as:

- the Tetrateuch, whether J, E, D, P or some even more complex revision of that theory
- the Deuteronomistic History, with its numerous sources (some already the products of complex compositional histories), the major redaction of the history itself, and then a second (or more) Deuteronomistic redaction(s)
- the prophetic books, e.g., Isaiah of Jerusalem, Second and Third Isaiah, plus later major and minor additions and numerous later redactors; the Book of the Twelve; and so forth
- the Psalter, with its many subcollections both before and beyond the MT edition
Proverbs, with its subcollections of folk wisdom and then its theological introduction of chapters 1–9

All one needs to do is to think about the long and complicated editorial histories of the biblical books to recognize that the texts of our biblical books are very far from the traditionally envisioned “Moses and the Prophets and the Sages”, and to realize that the quest for “the original text” is naive in the extreme. The books grew organically and dynamically over the centuries, in what we can call new and expanded editions or revised literary editions.

Let us keep this point continually in mind while we turn to other aspects.

II. The Scriptures Found at Qumran

2. The scrolls of the Scriptures from Qumran have shown us many surprising differences from the Masoretic textus receptus.

I will present a quick review of some of the more interesting differences exhibited by the Qumran copies of the Law and the Prophets:

The Torah

Exodus. 4QpaleoExod\textsuperscript{m}, a scroll from the middle of the first century BCE, surprised scholars immediately after the discovery of Cave 4.\textsuperscript{1} It displayed programmatically the expanded text-type well known from the SP. It has, where preserved, all the major expansions beyond the MT and the LXX that are exhibited by the SP, except for one. That exception, however, is the extra commandment to build an altar at Mount Gerizim, added in the SP at Exod 20:17\textsuperscript{b} after the traditional commandments. There it agrees with the MT and the LXX against the SP. The scroll also appears to agree with the MT and the LXX against the SP in the small but repeated variant contrasting Shechem

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