The Nature and Extent of Aramaisms in the Hebrew Dead Sea Scrolls

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1 Introduction

From the beginning scholars have noted the influence of Aramaic on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls. E. Y. Kutscher commented on it already in 1950 in a review of M. Burrows' edition of the Great Isaiah Scroll,1 and a year later H. Yalon pointed out several grammatical Aramaisms while reviewing the same edition.2 In 1958, towards the end of the first decade of research, M. Goshen-Gottstein presented the first linguistic overview of all published Scrolls in which he also referred repeatedly to Aramaisms.3 A comprehensive and detailed analysis of suspected Aramaisms was presented a year later in Kutscher's monumental book on the language of 1QIsa, where more than twenty pages were devoted to the subject.4 In his posthumous History of the Hebrew Language, Kutscher summarized the situation in the Hebrew Scrolls as follows: "The Aramaic influence is all pervasive. The Isaiah Scroll especially is permeated by Aramaic elements, but they are to be found in the other Scrolls as well."5 Kutscher's general assessment is accepted by all who deal with the language of the Scrolls, though scholars disagree over specific examples. For instance, E. Qimron wrestles throughout his 1986 grammar of the Hebrew Dead Sea Scrolls with the question of different Aramaisms, often agreeing with Kutscher, occasionally expressing hesitation, and at times preferring to

1 E. Y. Kutscher, "הרקע הלאוני של מגילת ישעיהו: מגילה נגודה, תוספ א," Haaretz (Tel Aviv), September 25, 1950. Kutscher noted the Aramaic background of the scribe and mentioned in particular the forms מֵעָלֶיהָ, מֵעָלֶיה ולֶיהָ גֹפֶן אִם וָאָמאָ, and מֵעָלֶיה .
4 E. Y. Kutscher, The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1959), 19–22, 141–63 [Hebrew]. Further references to this work will be given according to the English translation, The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (1Q Isaa) (STD) 6; Brill: Leiden, 1974.
see independent and parallel Hebrew developments. Recent concise statements on the subject include observations by Qimron and by M. Kister in the two-volume work of collected essays on the Dead Sea Scrolls from 2009, by J. Joosten in the *Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls* from 2010, and also in 2010 by M. Abegg, Jr. in a contribution to the *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* volume containing the Isaiah Scrolls.

Now that all of the Dead Sea Scrolls have been published and in the light of earlier and later Hebrew and Aramaic evidence from Palestine, I think it only appropriate to reevaluate the nature and extent of Aramaic penetration into the Hebrew of the Scrolls as well as the distribution of Aramaisms in the different documents. A similar reevaluation of the Hebrew influence on the Aramaic Scrolls was undertaken a few years ago by C. Stadel, who demonstrated that most Hebrew borrowings into Aramaic were religious and technical lexemes for which there were no Aramaic equivalents, and that the influence of Hebrew on syntax and morphology was negligible. Unlike in the case of Hebraisms in Aramaic, which Stadel attributed to the literary and religious prestige of Hebrew, Aramaisms in Hebrew have been assumed, on the whole, to be the result of a spoken Aramaic superstratum. For example, Kutscher wrote that Aramaic was the mother tongue of the 1QIsa scribe; however, he also displayed sensitivity to the possibility of written Aramaic influence on the scribe, who was, in his words, “undoubtedly familiar with the Aramaic literature of his day.” In the third meeting of this group in Beersheba in 1999, M. Bar-Asher conjectured that the Qumran scribes may have drawn not only on the Hebrew Bible, but also on a literary Aramaic corpus composed of Aramaic biblical Targumim or related works. Nonetheless, the question...

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