

Exodus 17:4–7 (Inv. MOTB.SCR.000120)

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A fragment containing five lines from the book of Exodus with the inventory number MOTB.SCR.000120 is now part of the Museum of the Bible Collection. This fragment (Exod 17:4–7) has been assigned the designation DSS F.192 (DSS F.Exod6) by Eibert Tigchelaar. While the association of this fragment with Exod 17:4–7 is based only on a few partial words and letters, this is the only passage in the biblical text or non-biblical texts from the Judaean Desert that provides a possible match. This identification receives some confirmation from a reconstruction of the lines posited by the position of the visible letters and traces relative to the biblical text.

This passage in Exodus recounts the crisis at Rephidim on the journey to Horeb when the Israelites found no water in the wilderness. The people grumbled against Moses and berated him for bringing them into the wilderness to die of thirst. The threat to Moses did not abate even after he pointed out that their complaint was actually a challenge against the Lord. As a result, Moses cried out to the Lord and asked what he should do in the face of these threats (Exod 17:1–4). This fragment contains remnants of the text that concludes that narrative (Exod 17:4–7). The Lord instructs Moses to strike the rock in order to bring forth water for the people. Because of the people's complaints against the Lord this place was given the name Massah and Meribah.

The text of this fragment is attested in all the primary textual witnesses (MT LXX SP S T V) and in four Qumran scrolls—4QpaleoGen-Exod¹ (4Q11), 4QExod^c (4Q14), 4QpaleoExod^m (4Q22), and 4QRP^c (4Q365).¹ Three of these

¹ See Patrick Skehan et al., eds., *Qumran Cave 4, IV: Palaeo-Hebrew and Greek Biblical Manuscripts* (DJD IX; Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 39; 92–94; Harold Attridge et al., eds., *Qumran Cave 4, VIII: Parabiblical Texts, Part 1* (DJD XIII; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 272–273; Eugene Ulrich et al., eds., *Qumran Cave 4, VII: Genesis to Numbers* (DJD XII; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 120–123.

texts align closely with MT in this passage.² The fourth, 4QRP^c, offers two readings that are not found in any of the other witnesses. A reconstruction of DSS F.Exod6 demonstrates that this fragment contained at least one reading that corresponds to the *Vorlage* of the LXX, but this textual plus could have arisen independently. There are five different readings between MT and the LXX of Exod 17:4–7. Attempts to reconstruct DSS F.Exod6 show that a correspondence to either LXX or MT, with the single addition mentioned above, is equally plausible. For this reason, a definitive identification of this fragment's textual affiliation cannot be offered. On the one hand, this fragment could reflect a proto-Masoretic text with a single variant also found in the LXX. On the other hand, it could potentially be a mixed text or even an LXX text type containing all five LXX readings.³

Physical Description

The fragment measures 3.27 by 3.05 cm and preserves parts of five lines of text that are somewhat legible to the naked eye (see color photograph MOTB.SCR.000120_obverse_rs).⁴ The fragment is golden brown in color with small dark patches and five wormholes situated along line 2. The variation in color is caused by the places where the surface of the fragment has been worn to reveal the lighter-colored underlayer. The substrate is worn and uneven, especially on the top and bottom portions of the fragment. Further, a golden band that under specular enhancement has a smoother surface than the rest of the fragment spans the width of the fragment. This smooth band of leather appears to be associated with the distorted line spacing between lines 2–3. An unusually large word space and letter space on either side of the *alef* in line 2 were perhaps originally due to irregularities in the leather. However, considerable wear in these locations obscures any evidence that would account for these adjustments in spacing.

Letters appear on average to be close to 2.5 mm in height and range between 1.0–2.7 mm in width. Characters of medium width such as *alef*, *bet*, *he*, *resh*, and *tav* have an average width of 2.23 mm while narrower characters such as *kaf* and

2 4QpaleoExod^l and 4QpaleoExod^m are identical to MT. 4QExod^c matches MT apart from a missing prepositional phrase and an additional conjunction.

3 See *Figure 7.2* and *Figure 7.3* which present both reconstructions.

4 Photograph by Marilyn J. Lundberg, Bruce Zuckerman, and Kenneth Zuckerman, West Semitic Research.