THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

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1. Introduction

This essay surveys and discusses the Leviticus scrolls found at Qumran and other sites in the Judean Desert. In terms of manuscripts discovered, Leviticus was the sixth most popular, both overall and at Qumran. The significance of this book for the Qumran community is also indicated by the many times it is referenced in their writings, a topic which is explored elsewhere in the present volume.

Following a survey of the seventeen Leviticus manuscripts, we shall offer several observations arising from this ancient material, assess the text of Leviticus in the Dead Sea Scrolls, present a selection of significant readings, and close with a bibliography and three Appendices: (1) a table with data on the Leviticus Scrolls; (2) an index of contents by manuscript; and (3) an index of contents by chapter and verse.

2. The Leviticus Scrolls from Qumran and Other Sites

2.1 Comment

A grand total of seventeen copies of the Book of Leviticus were discovered in the Judean Desert (including the Targum of Leviticus and two Greek copies found in Cave 4). Fifteen manuscripts were unearthed in the vicinity of Wadi Qumran: one each from Caves 1, 2, and 6, ten from Cave 4, and two from Cave 11. Two more scrolls were

2 R. Kugler, “Rethinking the Notion of ‘Scripture’ in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Leviticus as a Test Case” in this volume.
3 1QpaleoLev, 2QpaleoLev, and 6QpaleoLev.
4 4QExod-Lev, 4QLev-Num, 4QLev, 4QLev, 4QLev, 4QLev, 4QLev, 4QLev, 4QLev, 4QLev, 4QLev, pap4QILXXLev, pap4QILXXLev, and pap4QigLev.
5 11QpaleoLev and 11QLev.
discovered in the ruins atop Masada further down the western coast of the Dead Sea.\(^6\)

Between them, these manuscripts have several rich and interesting features; for example, two Hebrew scripts (palaeo and square), three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek), and the rare phenomenon of two books on the same manuscript (see section 2.2. below).

The profile of each Leviticus scroll includes, where possible, a textual classification in one of the following categories: (1) *proto-Masoretic* (i.e. with affinities to the Masoretic Text); (2) *pre-Samaritan*; (3) *pre-Septuagint* (i.e. with affinities to the Vorlage or Hebrew source of the Septuagint); (4) *mixed* (i.e. with affinities to two or more of the Masoretic Text, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Septuagint); and (5) *non-aligned* (i.e. with affinities to two or more of the other witnesses, but also with independent readings not known from these later texts texts).

### 2.2 The Seventeen Leviticus Scrolls

(a) *The Five Scrolls from Caves 1, 2, 6, and 11 at Qumran*

*1Q\paleolev* (*1Q3*) preserves material from chapters 11–23 of Leviticus, as well as portions of Numbers (see Appendix 2). Written in the palaeo-Hebrew script, this scroll preserves a text identical to that of the Masoretic Text (*MT*), except for some variations in orthography or spelling, which is sparing (or defective). *1Q\paleolev* could be classed as a *proto-Masoretic* (or *proto-Rabbinic*) text.\(^7\) In fact, however, the textual form in this scroll is equally close to the Masoretic Text (*MT*) and to the Samaritan Pentateuch (*SP*),\(^8\) and so it is better listed as *mixed*.

*2Q\paleolev* (*2Q5*) was also copied in palaeo-Hebrew, somewhere in the first century BCE. Although very little text remains (only part of Lev 11:22–29), differences against the Masoretic Text (*MT*) are evident. In two cases *2Q\paleolev* is in agreement with the Samaritan

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\(^6\) MasLev\(^a\) and MasLev\(^b\).


\(^8\) Tov, “The Biblical Texts from the Judean Desert,” 155.