A QUMRAN CAVE 2 FRAGMENT PRESERVING PART OF NUMBERS 23:5–7[8] (2Q29 1)

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In this volume dedicated to the reception of Balaam and Numbers 22–24 it is fitting to publish a hitherto unidentified small Dead Sea Scrolls fragment preserving part of Num 23:5–7[8]. In 1962 Maurice Baillet published the fragments from Qumran Cave 2, including unidentified fragments which he grouped together on the basis of similarity of skin or script.1 Thus, 2Q29 consists of four small fragments, presently referred to as “Unclassified frags.” Baillet transcribed frag. 1 as follows: 1 . bdt . ; 2 . bnw μ ; 3 . , and gave the following translation “1 . . . tu parleras . . . 2 . . . et nous . . .”2 However, in many hands of this type (generally called “Herodian”) the letters waw and yod are barely distinguishable, and if one reads in l. 2 μ , “he led/leads me,” for μ , “and we,” then one may transcribe and reconstruct the first lines as corresponding to Num 23:5–7.5

1. and this is what you must say .[ 2. (From) Aram Balak has brought me [ 3. .[  

The last trace of line 1 presents a problem. The trace seems to be the shoulder of laminal, or the upper right arm of sin or ayin, in which case the text would have had a variant that is not attested elsewhere. But perhaps most of the leather has been abraded, in which case one may reconstruct on the basis of the transmitted texts μ , “So [he returned.” The traces in line 3 may reflect or two letters, the second

2 DJD III, 92.
3 All translations follow the NRSV, though sometimes I have placed the words in a different order.
being, most likely, *ayin* or *šin*. The hand seems similar to that of 2Q7 (2QNum) which consists of one fragment preserving part of Num 33:47–53. Since 2Q7 has the plene or full spelling in the words (inhabitants) and (all), and the long form of the suffix in (their high places), I apply full spelling and long suffixes in the reconstruction of 2Q29 1:

1. [in Balaam’s mouth, and said: “Return to Balak and this is what you must say.” So [he returned to Balak, who was standing beside his burnt offerings with all the officials of ]
2. [Moab. Then Balaam uttered his oracle, saying: “From Aram Balak has brought me, [the king of Moab from the eastern mountains: ‘Come, curse Jacob for me; Come,
3. [denounce Israel!’ “How can I curse whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the Lord has not denounced?

It is not clear to which word the traces of lines 3 belong. It cannot be of either alef or mem of verse 8, since the upper arm of the lamad would have been visible on the fragment, and one must therefore assume a variant or, e.g., a blank space.¹

The length of the reconstructed line of 2Q29 1 1 (78 letter-spaces) corresponds closely to that of the reconstructed lines of 2Q7 (73–78 letter-spaces), which I suggest to reconstruct differently from Baillet, assuming that Num 33:50 began at the right margin of a new line:

¹ LXX reads τί ἀρ. δοκεῖ οὖν μὴ ἀρ. τάται κύριος ἢ τί καταράσσομαι ὅν μὴ καταράται ὁ θεός ἰδινταίνοντα τοῦ ἱεροῦ τῶν Ἰσραήλ… ἐν τοῖς ὕδασιν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τῆς τάξεις τῆς ἐν τοῖς ἵθελ.