Eibert Tigchelaar and Pierre van Hecke (eds.)


The present book, comprising eleven essays first presented in 2011, constitutes the latest installment in the series of conference proceedings that address the Hebrew language in the era of the late Second Temple period. The preceding books in the series contain many important essays on the language and texts of this era, and this volume follows suit.

Eight of the eleven essays address the language of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Steven E. Fassberg’s “The Nature and Extent of Aramaisms in the Hebrew Dead Sea Scrolls” represents the first attempt in recent memory to catalog the types of Aramaisms in the Scrolls and to evaluate them. This is an incredibly helpful work. The essay catalogs the different possible cases of Aramaic influence, addressing all major aspects of language: orthography through syntax. Most striking are the apparent morphological borrowings. Fassberg comes to the conclusion that these are not due to influence from the spoken vernacular dialect, since such borrowings are quite rare, even in linguistically similar languages. Rather, they reflect the scribes’ concern to create embellished forms (20–24). In some cases, the so-called “Aramaism” is simply an orthographic borrowing from the literary register of the language. For example, the 3ms possessive suffix on masculine plural nouns `והי likely represents an orthographic borrowing from contemporary literary Aramaic, but one that was perhaps used to simply represent a Hebrew pronoun: `-o (22).

Takamitsu Muraoka’s essay, “Aspects of the (Morpho)Syntax of the Infinitive in Qumran Hebrew,” refines previous observations on the infinitive and its uses in the Scrolls, but some details seem inaccurate. For example, he seems to imply that the construction `לא + infinitive construct occurs multiple times in the Scrolls, but not at all in the Bible (83). This is not true. According to an Accordance search, the construction `לא + infinitive occurs only once in the Scrolls (1QS 9:20) and not at all in the Bible. What Muraoka is really talking about, however, is the construction `לא + ל + infinitive, which occurs around twenty-five times in the Scrolls. But, contrary to what he seems to say, this construction also occurs in the Bible (some eleven times). Moreover, he might have mentioned other constructions found only in the Scrolls, specifically `א + ל + infinitive construct. As Jean-Sébastien Rey mentions in his contribution to the book, “‘Dislocated Negations’: Negative `א Followed by a Non-verbal Constituent in Biblical, Ben Sira and Qumran Hebrew” (169), this construction occurs twice in the Scrolls (4Q393 3 3 and 4), and once in Ben Sira (39:34 Ms B).
Rey’s essay is one of three that address single lexical items. Jacobus A. Naudé and Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé (“Syntactic Features of כל in Qumran Hebrew”) demonstrate that the construction of כל followed by “conjoined nouns to indicate ‘each and every’” is peculiar to the Second Temple era, as found specifically in the books of Esther and 2 Chronicles (110). Curiously, however, it is not widespread in the Scrolls, appearing “primarily ... in the Temple Scroll” (111). Again, one can quibble with the details and their presentation. It should be mentioned that the construction does occur outside the books of Esther and 2 Chronicles (i.e., כל דבר ור in Ps 45:18 and 145:13). Also, the exact specifics of where the construction occurs in the Scrolls would be useful, in place of the vague reference to “primarily” (111). It occurs, according to my Accordance search, six times in the Temple Scroll and three times outside of it (1QM 7:17; 4Q471 1 4; 11Q5 27:6 [“David’s Compositions”]).

Another essay on a single lexeme, Francesco Zanella’s “Some Semantic Notes on the Lexeme מדהבה in the DSS” argues that the word from Isa 14:4 was used in the Scrolls in a slightly different way to refer to an internal, psychological torment (194). As Zanella indicates in an afterword, one should also consult the analysis of this word by Noam Mizrahi (“The Linguistic History of מדהבה: From Textual Corruption to Lexical Innovation,” RevQ 26 [2013]: 91–114).

Mizrahi has also contributed to the volume under discussion; his essay (“Priests of Qoreb: Linguistic Enigma and Social Code in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice”) explores the various possible meanings of the word כוהני כורב in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice where it occurs repeatedly in the phrase כורב כוהני. He concludes that the phrase can be translated “the approaching priests” (52), though the use of the verb קרב in other Second Temple era texts suggests an underlying sense of admission and inclusion in a community (62).

Two essays address the language of pesher texts. Chanan Ariel and Alexey (Eliyahu) Yuditsky (“Remarks on the Language of the Pesher Scrolls”) offer new readings of specific passages, two from 4Q163 (an Isaiah Pesher) and one from 4Q177 (often referred to as Catena A). Here, a translation of the relevant passages into a modern language would have been helpful.

Gary A. Rendsburg (“The Nature of Qumran Hebrew as Revealed through Pesher Habakkuk”) has a broader goal, namely to demonstrate the plethora of decidedly late features of Pesher Habakkuk and refute the argument that the scroll attests “a low accumulation of Late Biblical Hebrew forms” (Ian Young, Robert Rezetko, and Martin Ehrensvärd, Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts [2 vols.; London: Equinox, 2008], 1:274). Rendsburg marshals a great deal of evidence to prove his point, especially important among which are numerous late syntactic features. For example, he notes (citing earlier studies) that in a series of coordinated words modified by a preposition, in Standard Biblical