A COMPARISON OF TWO "PROTO-SAMARITAN" TEXTS FROM QUMRAN: 4QPALEOEXODM AND 4QNUMB

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Among the most significant of the biblical Dead Sea Scrolls are two relatively extensive manuscripts preserving expansionistic texts corresponding to the Samaritan Pentateuch. Judith Sanderson published her dissertation on the Exodus scroll under the guidance of Eugene Ulrich in 1986.1 Four years later I completed a dissertation on the Numbers scroll under the guidance of Frank Moore Cross.2 Both scrolls were soon thereafter published in the series Discoveries in the Judaean Desert under Ulrich’s editorship.3 The two scrolls contain fascinating collections of variant readings that provide insight into the development of the textual traditions preserved in the Septuagint, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Masoretic Text. Though the value of the two scrolls and their similarities to each other have been noted by textual critics, there has not yet been a study that has subjected the textual data from both scrolls to a unified analysis to test the precise extent of their similarities and differences in order to learn more about the early history of the textual transmission of the Bible.

A unified analysis of both scrolls can help to test the differing conclusions drawn from the scrolls by their respective editors, to see whether the differing conclusions depend on the editors or on the data from the scrolls. At issue is both the process that led to variations in biblical texts and the relationship of the texts from Qumran (Q), the

In the first stage there was still freedom to make major additions and alterations. In the second stage there was freedom for minor expansions and alterations [harmonizations or explanations]. In the third stage only what were perceived as mistakes in the Vorlage could be corrected. And finally in the fourth stage not even obvious mistakes could be corrected.4

About the relationship of the biblical texts of Exodus, Sanderson concluded:

Whether or not there was ever an Urtext of Exodus, there does at least seem to have been a time when these four texts were very close to each other. The tradition behind Q seems to have separated off first, because it still preserves some unique preferable readings.5 It quickly developed an expansionist tendency, however, so that it is now the most different of the four.

The traditions behind Q and II apparently developed for a time together, since they share some secondary readings against G. These are all longer readings, the most notable of them being a major expansion from Deuteronomy.

The tradition behind Q then separated and underwent some major expansions, perhaps at the hand of one scribe. Because these typological features shared by Q are so few, it is possible that they arose shortly before Q was copied in the first or second century.

Some time in the same general period when Q was copied or afterward, a text very much like it received one more major expansion from Deuteronomy; this one “sectarian” in the sense that it represented an attempt to legitimate worship on Gerizim, as opposed to Jerusalem, on the basis of Scripture. This was adopted as a special text of the community at Gerizim and has been preserved by them ever since. Presumably the many minor differences between Q and Q arose in the early days of their separate existence, and fairly soon that final stage of canonization took effect so that no more changes were allowed....

Meanwhile the tradition behind II was being preserved by scribes of a new and more conservative approach who eschewed deliberate expansion and alteration....6

On the other hand, the major interpolations in the last column of the Numbers scroll, where 27:2-11 probably is repeated after 36:2, and 36:1b-2a may be repeated after 36:4, show that “there was still freedom to make major additions and alterations” in the later stages of scribal activity.7 Also, an analysis of the relationships between the

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4 Sanderson, An Exodus Scroll, 304-5.
5 Sanderson, says elsewhere that the many variants shared between Q and G are not very significant because they may have developed independently, and concludes, “The admittedly random sampling involved in this study gives no reason at all to suspect a relationship between the two traditions” (An Exodus Scroll, 308, 310).
6 Sanderson, An Exodus Scroll, 311-12.
7 The same conclusion can be drawn from the sectarian Gerizim interpolation in