Elisha Qimron


This volume is the first of three volumes edited by Elisha Qimron presenting the text of nonbiblical Hebrew compositions found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The first volume appeared in 2010, the second in 2013, and the third in January 2015. There are plenty of editions available that contain text and translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls, such as the official editions of Judean Desert manuscripts, most of which were published in the *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* (*DJD*) series; the *Dead Sea Scrolls Reader*, edited by E. Tov and D. Parry, mainly a reprint of the official *DJD* editions, of which a second revised two-volume edition was recently published; the two-volume *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* by F. García Martínez and E. Tigchelaar, of which a revision soon should appear; the multi-volume edition of the Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea Scrolls Project, headed by J. Charlesworth; the French multi-volume and multi-editor project *La Bibliothèque de Qumran* headed by K. Berthelot and T. Legrand, of which the first three volumes have appeared; the two German volumes *Die Texte aus Qumran*, by E. Lohse and A. Steudel. What then is the contribution of Qimron’s edition?

To begin with, unlike the above-mentioned editions, this is not a bilingual tradition. The first volume contains introductions in both English (translated from the Hebrew, but often lacking the precision of the Hebrew, e.g. in the different translations of עדת היחד) and Hebrew, but the texts are presented only in Hebrew, without any translation, and the textual notes on readings are in Modern Hebrew. The second volume is entirely in Hebrew. These editions are intended for a non-specialist, educated Hebrew-reading audience, as is clear from the first volume’s general introduction to the scrolls and introductions to the individual texts. Whereas the above mentioned editions, as well as many translations into European (and some Asian) languages were available for many people outside Israel, this is the first comprehensive scrolls collection since the 1959 Haberman edition for an Israeli or Hebrew-reading audience. Unlike the above mentioned editions, but like some modern translations (e.g. the ones by G. Vermes and by M. Wise, M. Abegg, and E. Cook), Qimron does not present the texts according to their individual documents or manuscripts, but as a constructed work or composition, just as he did with the official edition of 4QMMT in *DJD* 10. This is the best way to present the texts to a non-specialist audience, but also for specialists this is extremely helpful, since this is the very first edition that presents, for example, all the textual material (excluding tiny
fragments) pertaining to the *Damascus Document* in a constructed coherent sequence that approximates what the text would have looked like.

Whereas some of the editions mentioned above are heavily dependent on, or mere reprints of the official editions, Qimron’s editions are based on a renewed examination of the photographs and fragments. Because Qimron is one of the world’s most experienced and sharp-eyed decipherers of the scrolls, he offers multiple new readings which in many cases are clearly superior to those of earlier editions. Any scholar who is working closely on the text of the scrolls should therefore consult Qimron’s editions and very seriously consider his readings. Oftentimes, improvements on earlier readings are briefly discussed in the footnotes. One needs to go systematically through all the editions and compare them to earlier ones, in order to appreciate the vast amount of independent work that has been spent on these editions. Often such improvements could not have been made on the basis of the Plates in the *DJD* editions, but the availability of many old and new photographs on the Leon Levy website of the IAA (deadseascrolls.org.il) enables one now to look much closer. Thus, e.g., Qimron astutely corrects mistakes and improves inferior readings in the edition of the Cave 4 Damascus Document manuscripts. E.g., in 4Q270 6 iii 17 he rightly corrects the reading of לַטְהֹרָה to לַטְנַהְרָה, and often he realizes that the remaining traces do not support the proposed readings, so that he proposes new ones, such as בִּלּות rather than בְּאַל in 4Q266 6 ii 4. New readings do not only arise from a careful reexamination of the fragments, but sometimes by joining new fragments, and questioning (as very little scholars in the field do) identifications of fragments or joins that were made by earlier scholars like J. Milik and J. Strugnell (e.g., he correctly ignores two of the small fragments included in 4Q266 6 iii). At the same time, it is clear that no single scholar can produce a faultless edition, or solve all the problems. There are some clear typos, where letters and even words on the manuscripts have accidentally been lost in the process of making the edition. For example, S. Tzoref alerted me that in the transcription of 1QS 7:6 not only the waw of the first word בְּרֵעַה got lost, but also the entire word בְּרֵעַה בְּיַחַד later in the same line. Other errors are more complex. For example, both in 1QM 8 and in 1QM 9 he reads as the last word of line 17 מַעֲרֵה. The fragment which on the photograph is placed at the end of col. 8, actually derives from col. 9. When the *DJD* series was completed many scholars thought that the editing of the scrolls had been completed. Yet, in many cases the *DJD* editions only were the first major attempt to make sense of multiple badly preserved fragments. Ever since, and in the years to come, continuous steps will be taken to solve problems and to improve our reading and arrangement of fragments. A small example is 4Q266 6 iii, where the *DJD* editor (p. 58) did not recognize that בָּא in line 3 actually belonged to the previous column,