CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE WRITING OF EARLY SCROLLS:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LITERARY ANALYSIS OF HEBREW
SCRIPTURE

Dating from the mid-third century BCE until the mid-second century CE, the biblical scrolls from the Judean Desert are very early in comparison with the medieval codices of MT. However, compared with the earliest copies of Hebrew Scripture, they are actually late. Whatever view one holds on the dates of the composition and final redaction of the books of Hebrew Scripture, it remains true to say that these activities preceded the copying of the Qumran scrolls by several centuries. Likewise, the composition and redaction of the biblical books preceded the OG translation by the same time span, as the LXX translation was produced between the beginning of the third century BCE and the end of the second century BCE.

The realia of writing and rewriting ancient scrolls forms the topic of this chapter, treated here in conjunction with a seemingly remote issue, namely the *literary* analysis of the Hebrew Bible.

The shape of the earliest copies of Scripture. To the best of our knowledge, the early biblical books or parts thereof must have been written on *scrolls* of either papyrus or leather. There probably was no alternative to the writing of texts in portable scrolls.[1] These ancient scrolls were ruled with the letters suspended below the lines, and inscribed in writing blocks or columns. There is no direct evidence regarding the main writing material for *long* texts used in ancient Israel[2] before the period attested by the

---

[1] Indeed, according to Jeremiah 36, Baruch recorded the dictations of Jeremiah on a scroll. As a result, the insistence in Jewish and Samaritan tradition on the scroll as the earliest form of the *Torah* is probably realistic. Thus, *Sifre* Deuteronomy § 160 (ed. Finkelstein [New York/Jerusalem: Bet Ha-midrash Le-rabbanim be-Amerikah, 1993] 211) explains every ספר in Scripture as a מגילה of leather, such as in Deut 17:18, where it is used in reference to the "book of the king."

[2] Thus R. Lansing Hicks, "*Delet* and *Mᵉgillah:* A Fresh Approach to Jeremiah XXXVI," *VT* 33 (1983) 46–66. One of the arguments used by Lansing Hicks (p. 61) is that a knife was used by Jehoiakim to cut the columns of Baruch's scroll exactly at the sutures since the text

Judean Desert scrolls. Both leather and papyrus were in use in Egypt at a very early period, but it is not impossible that leather was preferred in ancient Israel because it was more readily available than papyrus that had to be imported from faraway Egypt. On the other hand, according to Haran, papyrus served as the main writing material during the First Temple period.[3]

From the various topics relating to the physical shape of ancient scrolls, we focus on two, namely correction procedures and the physical limitations of writing in a scroll.[4] The implications of this analysis will be treated thereafter.

1. *Correction Procedures*

Upon completing the copying, and often while still in the process, scribes frequently intervened in completed writing blocks; by the same token, later correctors and users often inserted their corrections in the text. Careful attention to the intricacies of the correction process known from the Qumran scrolls helps us to better understand not only scribal transmission, but also the growth of ancient literature. This intervention is known from the Qumran scrolls in four different forms, or combinations thereof.

• Removal of a written element by erasing or blotting out, crossing out, marking with cancellation dots or a box-like shape around letters or words.

• Addition of a letter, word or words in the interlinear space or, rarely, in the intercolumnar margin.

• Remodeling (reshaping) of an existing letter to another one.

---

mentions that after every three or four columns, Yehudi cut the scroll (Jer 36:23). The use of a knife may indicate the cutting of a leather scroll, as a tool of this type would not have been needed for papyrus.

[3] M. Haran, "Book-Scrolls at the Beginning of the Second Temple Period. The Transition from Papyrus to Skins," *HUCA* 54 (1983) 111–22. In support of this assumption, Haran mentions the Egyptian influence on Canaan in this period that would have included the use of papyrus, the low price of papyrus in contrast to leather, and the biblical use of the root מח״ה, a verb signifying erasure of a written text with a liquid which is possible only in papyrus. Haran also refers to Jer 51:63 which mentions the binding of a stone to a scroll so that it would sink in the Euphrates River. According to Haran, this scroll was made of papyrus, since a leather scroll would have sunk without a stone. According to this scholar, at the beginning of the Second Temple period scribes started to use leather for long texts. However, it should be countered that already in ancient Egypt papyrus was used for very long texts. See further the discussion by A. Lemaire, "Writing and Writing Materials," *ABD* (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6.999–1008.

[4] For a full discussion, see *Scribal Practices*, 222–9.

• Altering the spacing between words.[5]

Not all these systems were employed in early scrolls, since some practices used in the Qumran scrolls had been imported at a later stage from other cultures.[6]

2. *Technical Limitations of Writing in a Scroll*

That the content of the Qumran scrolls (and the LXX) is relevant for the *literary* analysis of Hebrew Scripture has long been recognized, as they preserve a few vestiges of alternative formulations of the biblical books, such as in the case of Samuel, Jeremiah and Psalms, and possibly also Joshua and Judges. But we turn now to a related issue, viz. the possible relevance to literary criticism of correcting procedures used in the Qumran scrolls.

The discussion turns first to (a) technical difficulties in inserting substantial changes and additions, and in deleting elements in the inscribed text after the completion of the writing, then to (b) the relevant Qumran evidence. Subsequently (3) we turn to some implications of this analysis for the literary criticism of Hebrew Scripture.

One of the issues at stake is whether, from a technical point of view, scribes could insert significant changes in a scroll after the completion of the writing. We suggest that, as a rule, this was impossible.

a. *Technical difficulties in inserting changes in the inscribed text*
The first issue to which our attention is directed is that of the writing on leather and papyrus in columns and the difficulties encountered if a scribe wanted to insert corrections in more or less fixed writing blocks surrounded by relatively small margins. Because of these inflexible parameters, and also because of the limited possibilities inherent in the writing material, substantial correction of finished columns was technically almost impossible. Thus, after the completion of the writing, there simply was no space in the columns, margins, or anywhere else for any *addition* longer than one or two lines. Such additions could have been placed in three different positions, but in fact none was used for this purpose:

---

[5] Such changes were achieved either by indicating with scribal signs that the last letter of a word belonged to the following word or by indicating that there should be a space between two words which had been written as one continuous unit.

[6] Thus several correction procedures in the Judean Desert scrolls resemble notations used in Greek sources: crossing out of letters or words with a horizontal line, *antisigma* and *sigma* (parenthesis signs) and cancellation dots/strokes. Cf. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts*, 16. The latter two systems are not known from earlier Semitic sources, and may have been transferred from Greek scribal practices.

Margins.[7] In most Qumran scrolls, the sizes of the margins are relatively fixed and of limited scope and therefore could not be used for inserting substantial text. In these scrolls, the top margins are usually 1.0–2.0 cm, and the bottom margins are slightly larger (1.5–2.5 cm). Larger margins, between 3.0 and 7.0 cm, are rare in the Qumran texts, occurring mainly in the "late" texts from Naḥal Ḥever, Masada, and Naḥal Ṣeʾelim dating to the first and second centuries CE. Such large margins occur almost exclusively within the tradition of authoritative Scripture scrolls containing MT, and are commonly a sign of a *de luxe* format as in similar Alexandrian Greek scrolls.[8] Since the size of margins has grown over the course of the centuries, early scrolls would not have contained large margins. Intercolumnar margins (1.0–1.5 cm) left little room for additions and, with a few exceptions, they were not inscribed in any of the known scrolls, and likewise top and bottom margins are inscribed only very rarely.

Handle sheets. Many scrolls included handle sheets, that is, protective sheets at the beginning or end of the scroll, or at both extremities. However, the known specimens of such handle sheets were uninscribed. Actually, from a technical point of view it would have been difficult to indicate where in the scroll a section written on an empty handle sheet belongs.

Repair sheets. Sheets were stitched together after the writing had been completed. Technically it would be possible to disconnect any two sheets and to insert between them a new one containing additional text, or to replace a sheet with a new one. In three cases, such sheets have possibly been preserved,[9] but the evidence is unconvincing. Further, in the case of an additional sheet it would actually be difficult to indicate with arrows or otherwise how the text in the repair sheet relates to the existing columns.

In sum, after the text was inscribed, it was almost impossible to add anything substantial to the written text, in the column itself, in one of the margins, or on a blank sheet at the beginning, end, or middle of the scroll.

---

[7] Most columns are surrounded by uninscribed top and bottom margins, as well as by intercolumnar margins. The rationale of these margins is to enable the orderly arrangement of writing blocks in rectangular shapes, even when the edges of the leather were not straight. The margins also enabled the handling of the scroll without touching the inscribed area. For this purpose, the bottom margins were usually larger than the top ones.

[8] On scrolls of a *de luxe* format, see chapter 10*, § 3 and *Scribal Practices,* 125–9.

[9] The first sheets of 4QDeut[n], 4QJub[a] (4Q216), and 11QT[a] (11Q19).

Similar problems obtained with regard to the *deletion* of substantial segments in leather scrolls. Physical erasure in such scrolls would be almost impossible and very inelegant. In principle, any large segment could have been deleted with one of the deletion signs,[10] but these were not yet used in early sources and, besides, they too, would have been inelegant.

The same problems existed with regard to the insertion of *changes* within the writing block, that is, erasure followed by addition of amended text. Erasure in leather scrolls was almost impossible, let alone inscribing a substantial new text on an erased area. Therefore, if we were to visualize a scribe physically erasing all occurrences of the Tetragrammaton in the second and third book of the Psalter (Psalms 42–83 [but not 84–89]), and replacing them with *'elohim*, we would have to think in terms of a rather unreadable scroll.[11] By the same token, if the manifold theological corrections in the MT of Samuel, such as in theophoric names,[12] were created in this way, the scroll would have been rather unreadable.

The difficulties described above pertained to both leather (skin) and papyrus, but in one situation papyrus was more user-friendly than leather, as the written surface could be washed off and replaced with alternative content (if the two texts were of the same length). However, in the other types of correction, papyrus was as difficult for scribes as leather: In deletions on papyrus, an inelegant blank area had to be left in the middle of the inscribed text and likewise there was no space for substantial additions in the middle of the text in papyri.

b. *The Qumran evidence*

Having reviewed the technical difficulties regarding the insertion of corrections in leather and papyrus scrolls, we now turn to the Qumran evidence relating to textual intervention in biblical and nonbiblical scrolls. Although that evidence is relatively late in comparison with the earliest copies of the biblical books, it is still relevant as a source of information about correction procedures in earlier periods. Additionally, the Qumran corpus has the added value of providing direct information concerning the process of rewriting sectarian compositions, such as the Community Rule and the Damascus Covenant, written in the last centuries BCE. In the many copies of these compositions, the rewriting

---

[10] For details, see *Scribal Practices,* 222–9.

[11] Most scholars assume that such replacement took place, but they do not express a view on the procedure used.

[12] See *TCHB,* 267–9.

procedures can be examined closely by comparing their content differences.

The most salient observation relating to the biblical and nonbiblical Qumran scrolls is the absence of *visible* techniques for presumed procedures of correcting and rewriting. However, when assessing the absence of these techniques we have to ask ourselves whether the evidence of the biblical Qumran scrolls may be too late for understanding earlier processes of rewriting, whether such a process of rewriting took place at all, or whether the supposed rewriting procedure left no visible vestiges, such as large additions written in the margins.

If there are no physical remains of large content rewriting in Qumran scrolls, there is some evidence for content changes on a *small* scale in a few nonbiblical scrolls. For example, in 1QS VII 8, the length of the punishment for nursing a grudge against one's fellow-man (six months, also found in 4QS[e] (4Q259) 1 i שים[ששה חוד]) was removed through the use of parenthesis signs and replaced by a more stringent punishment of "one year" written above the line. By the same token, several types of small content corrections in 1QH[a] may have been based on other copies of Hodayot, such as 4QH[c] (4Q429) and 4QpapH[f] (4Q432).[13]

In the biblical scrolls, on the other hand, there is no visible evidence at all for small[14] or large content changes. This statement may come as a surprise, as the Qumran scrolls contain manifold interlinear corrections. However, most of these corrections pertain to scribal errors, corrected by the original scribe, a later scribe or a reader.[15] The corrections themselves were based on the corrector's internal logic, his *Vorlage,* or another manuscript.[16]

If there is no visible evidence in the Qumran scrolls, biblical and nonbiblical, for procedures of content correction and rewriting, should we adhere to the assumption that such procedures nevertheless took

---

[13] See *Scribal Practices,* 28.

[14] We disregard here a small number of linguistic corrections and word substitutions, such as found occasionally in 1QIsa[a].

[15] 1QIsa[a] provides several examples of large-scale corrections: The original scribe of that scroll sometimes left out one or two verses, which were subsequently written in small letters between the lines: Cols. XXVIII 18 (Isa 34:17b–35:2); XXX 11–12 (Isa 37:4b-7); XXXII 14 (Isa 38:21); XXXIII 7 (Isa 40:7), 15–16 (Isa 40:14a-16). Interestingly enough, in some cases, the original scribe left room for these additions (XXVIII 18, XXX 11–12, XXXIII 15–16), and we are left wondering why the scribe did not fill in the text himself. In 4QJer[a] col. III, the scribe left out a major section by way of *parablepsis* (7:30–8:3), which was subsequently added between the lines, in the intercolumnar margin, and under the column, written upside down.

[16] See *Scribal Practices,* 222–9.

place? In the case of a positive reply, how should we picture these procedures? Some scholars reject the assumption of content rewriting in biblical books, rendering it necessary to clarify now that we *do* accept the assumption of critical scholarship that most biblical books went through stages of revision after their initial writing. But having said this, we do not take a position as to how the rewriting took place. Analyzing the difficulties of the correction procedures and the evidence of the Qumran scrolls, we assume that generations of editors or scribes—the term does not matter[17]—*did not insert their content changes into existing copies.* No rewriting, adding, or deleting could be executed in the form of corrections of existing scrolls because of the aforementioned technical limitations of writing in scrolls. Instead, editors and scribes must have created fresh copies for expressing their novel thoughts. In other words, rewriting took place mainly in the *minds* of scribes/editors,[18] and therefore did not leave visible vestiges on leather or papyrus. As far as I know, this assumption is valid also for Greek papyri.

One might oppose this description by claiming that the Qumran scrolls (from the third pre-Christian century to the first century CE) are too late in the development of the transmission of Scripture for basing a view on developments in yet earlier centuries, when different writing techniques were possibly in vogue. True, we have little knowledge about these earlier periods, but probably at that time the technical problems inherent with writing and correcting would have been even greater than at the time of the writing of the Qumran scrolls.

Our suggestion regarding the assumed process of rewriting of the biblical scrolls is supported by the Qumran evidence relating to parallel copies of *sectarian* compositions: the Community Rule (12 copies), War Scroll (7), Instruction (8), Hodayot (9), Damascus Document (10), etc. In these copies, very few physical vestiges of content rewriting are visible and, when nevertheless extant, they pertain to a few small details, as

---

[17] It is hard to define these terms, as editors were also scribes, and even some authors must have been scribes (when reading and misreading his source scrolls, the Chronist acted as a scribe). The distinction between these two terms must have been chronological: in later periods scribes were merely copyists like medieval scribes, while in earlier periods each person writing a scroll considered himself a minor collaborator in the process of the creation of the biblical books. Such a person allowed himself small content changes. In yet earlier periods, the persons who were involved in major aspects of the creation of these books may be referred to as editors/scribes, as they wrote the biblical books in scrolls, while allowing themselves major content changes, such as the insertion of what is now a complete chapter.

[18] This description does not rule out the possibility that scribes used other scrolls, drafts, or private notes.

mentioned above. At the same time, in spite of the almost total lack of
physical remains of content alterations recognized through the
comparison of parallel copies, these differences are manifest also without
external indications. The nature of these content differences indicates
developed editorial activity. For example, in the Community Rule,
Alexander and Vermes distinguish between four different editorial
stages (recensions), which they named A, B, C, and D.[19] This also
pertains to the various recensions of the War Scroll,[20] differing in the

---

[19] *DJD* XXVI, 9–12 distinguishes between "at least four recensions of S": 1QS, 4QS[b]
(4Q256) and 4QS[d] (4Q258), 4QS[e] (4Q259), 4QS[g] (4Q261). As a rule, 4QS[b] (4Q256) and 4QS[d]
(4Q258) present shorter versions of the Community Rule than 1QS. In this case,
abbreviating took place in individual words, short phrases, and sentences, as indicated in
the notes in the edition of J. H. Charlesworth (ed., with F. M. Cross et al.), *The Dead Sea
Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations, I, Rule of the Community
and Related Documents* (Tübingen/Louisville: Mohr [Siebeck]/Westminster John Knox
Press, 1994). Thus also P. S. Alexander, "The Redaction History of Serekh-Ha-Yahad: A
Proposal," *RevQ* 17 (1996) 437–56. While the shorter texts of S from cave 4, 4QS[b] (4Q256)
and 4QS[d] (4Q258), probably abbreviated a text such as 1QS, it is very difficult to decide in
which details these texts represent shorter formulations or, alternatively, textual mishaps.
The fact that the phrase "sons of Zadok the priests who keep the covenant" is found in 1QS
V 2, 9, but is lacking in both 4QS[b] and 4QS[d], seems to indicate that the omission or addition
is intentional. The same problems obtain with regard to 1QS V 9 ולרוב אנשי בריתם which lacks
יחד when compared with עצת אנשי היחד of 4QS[b] (4Q256) IX 8 and 4QS[d] (4Q258) I 7. On the
other hand, in the same col. V of 1QS there are seven occurrences of יחד, the community's
self-appellation, which are lacking in the parallel sections in 4QS[b] (4Q256) and 4QS[d]
(4Q258). In the case of 4QS[e] (4Q259), S. Metso, *The Textual Development of the Qumran
Community Rule* (STDJ 21; Leiden/New York/Cologne: E. J. Brill, 1997) 69–74 believes that
the shorter text of that manuscript formed the basis for the longer text of 1QS. In
contradistinction to all these scholars, G. Doudna, *4Q Pesher Nahum, A Critical Edition*
(JSPSup 35; Copenhagen International Series 8; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 2001)
707–10 believes that the differences between the various copies of S reflect "free variants—
expansions, paraphrases, glosses added for clarity" (p. 707).

[20] J. Duhaime pointed out that 4QM[a] (4Q491) and 1QM do not relate to one another as a
source and its revision, but that both reworked an earlier source, now lost: "Dualistic
Reworking in the Scrolls from Qumran," *CBQ* 49 (1987) 32–56; idem, "Étude comparative
de *4QM[a]* Fgg. *1–3* et *1QM*," *RevQ* 14 (1990) 459–72. For the sources, see the editions of 1QM
(Y. Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light* [Heb.; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1955])
and 4QM (M. Baillet, *DJD* VII; *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with
English Translations, 2, Damascus Document, War Scroll, and Related Documents* [ed. J. H.
Charlesworth; Tübingen/Louisville: Mohr [Siebeck]/Westminster John Knox Press, 1995]).
For a more elaborate reconstruction of the composition process, see P. Alexander, "The Evil
Empire: The Qumran Eschatological War Cycle and the Origins of Jewish Opposition to
Rome," in Paul, *Emanuel,* 17–31, esp. 22. Thus, 1QM displays a greater emphasis on purity
than 4QM[a] (4Q491), and the former often has a longer text than the latter. At the same time,
several scholars suggested that 1QM presents a later revision of the cave 4 copies of the
War Scroll: F. García Martínez, "Estudios Qumranicos 1975–1985: Panorama crítico," *EstBib*
46 (1988) 351–4; B. Nitzan, "Processes of Growth of Sectarian Texts in Qumran," *Beth Miqra*
40 (1995) 232–48 (Heb.); E. and H. Eshel, "Recensions of the War Scroll," in Schiffman, *Dead
Sea Scrolls,* 351–63.

inclusion or exclusion of major segments.[21] Phrased differently, each copy of the Community Rule and the War Scroll should be considered a separate unit, since all of them contain idiosyncratic material. Since no physical evidence for the insertion of these content changes has been found in any of the extant manuscripts, it stands to reason that the differences between these copies were created not by inserting corrections in existing scrolls, but when writing a new scroll on the basis of an earlier one.

The differences among these copies of the sectarian compositions are greater than among the known Scripture manuscripts, but no greater than the assumed differences between early biblical scrolls, when large sections were still added, deleted, and rewritten. The Qumran non-biblical scrolls thus present us with a valuable parallel for an early stage in the development of the biblical books.[22]

3. *Some implications for the literary criticism of Hebrew Scripture*

From the beginning of the critical scholarship of the Hebrew Bible, and especially within the historico-critical approach, scholars have assumed that many biblical books were composed of different layers superimposed upon earlier texts.[23] Such a new layer would have involved the addition or deletion of stories, lists, chronologies, psalms, etc. I am *not* speaking about a new creation that as a whole is based on earlier texts, such as the Chronicler who created a new composition using different sources for each historical period. Nor am I speaking about early editors who created new compositions by combining different written sources, such as the integration of the poetry of Jeremiah (source A) and his biography (B) into one coherent whole. We

---

[21] For example, 1QS cols. I–IV are lacking in the parallel position in 4QS[d]. 4QS[e] did not contain the so-called Hymn of the Maskil (1QS VIII 15–IX 11). 4QS[g] may not have contained "The Rule for the Session of the Many" (1QS VI 8–23). At the same time, 4QS[b] contains material not found in 1QS. 4QpapS[a], written in a crude cursive on the back of another text, and palaeographically probably the earliest exemplar of S, likewise contains some different material. Alexander and Vermes surmise that this copy may contain an early draft of the *Community Rule*, possibly even its first draft.

[22] In his analysis of the types of differences among the parallel nonbiblical texts from Qumran, Vermes remarked that they resemble those among different manuscripts of the biblical text: G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Forty Years On: The Fourteenth Sacks Lecture Delivered on 20th May 1987* (Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, 1987) 10–15.

[23] Indeed, one of the models which has been developed alongside the Documentary Hypothesis is the Supplementary Hypothesis (*Ergänzungshypothese*) of stories, laws, etc. added to an existing kernel. See, e.g., O. Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (3d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1964) 239–40.

refer only to a scenario of an editor-scribe who rewrote an existing written text.

The assumption of rewriting previous formulations has become one of the axioms of historico-critical analysis, but as far as I know, little thought has been given to the realia of this rewriting. Introductions, commentaries, and monographs often speak about multi-layered compositions, long interpolations, and omissions of sections in the middle of the text (that is, in the middle of a column), but the technical aspects of such activities have not been discussed.[24] This lack of attention is understandable, since before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the realia of the writing procedure were far beyond the scholarly horizon. Accordingly, an assumption of multi-layered texts was usually judged on internal literary grounds only and not on their likelihood with regard to the realia of scribal activity. This pertains to all assumed layers in texts that had been superimposed on earlier texts, for example, a Supplementary Hypothesis in the Torah and elsewhere, the multi-layered composition of Deuteronomy, the assumed intervention of the

---

[24] An exception is the analysis of Lohfink, to be quoted below. For the New Testament, see M. Frenschkowski, "Der Text der Apostelgeschichte und die Realien antiker Buchproduktion," in *The Book of Acts as Church History. Apostelgeschichte als Kirchengeschichte* (ed. T. Nicklas and M. Tilly; BZNW 120: Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003) 87–107. In yet another instance, Schmidt and Seybold based their literary judgment on the realia of writing in scrolls, although in this particular instance the description of the scribal aspects is very questionable. H. Schmidt was quite advanced for his time when suggesting in 1948, when the scrolls were hardly known, that segments which he considered to be out of place in Habakkuk (Hab 1:2-4, 12-13; 3:18-19) were once written in the free spaces at the beginning and end of the scroll: "Ein Psalm im Buche Habakuk," *ZAW* 62 (1950) 52–63 (completed in 1948 and published in 1950). According to Schmidt, in a similar way the alphabetical psalm at the beginning of Nahum as well as Isaiah 12 were inserted into the text from the margin. The suggestion for Habakkuk was accepted with changes by K. Seybold, *Nahum Habakuk Zephanja* (Zürcher Bibelkommentare 24,2; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1991) 47. However, as a rule there would not have been room for these verses at the beginning and end of the scroll. More importantly, if the sections are considered out of place in the book (thus Schmidt), why would someone have written them in the margins in the first place, and then subsequently moved them into the running text? These problems were discussed at length by B. Huwyler, "Habakuk und seine Psalmen," in *Prophetie und Psalmen, Festschrift für Klaus Seybold zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. B. Huwyler et al.; AOAT 280; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2001) 231–59. Among other things, Huwyler highlighted the methodological problem of identifying different non-consecutive sections as organic parts of a Psalm, then assuming that they were written in segments in the margin and inserted as a non-consecutive text in the running text. It would have been more logical to assume that these segments had constituted one coherent psalm all along.

I cannot claim to have seen all the relevant studies; my judgment is based on a selection of commentaries, Introductions, and monographs, in addition to such summaries as R. N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch. A Methodological Study* (JSOTSup 53; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987).

Deuteronomist in the historical books and Jeremiah, etc. The assumption pertains also to the addition in the middle of the text (that is, column) of chronologies, genealogies, and hymns, such as those of Hannah and Jonah, to be discussed below.

To be true, unconsciously the scholarly perception is probably influenced more by modern writing habits than the realia of ancient scrolls. One thinks probably less in terms of the complications of writing in ancient scrolls than modern Bible editions, at one time those of van der Hooght, Letteris, and others, and now the *Biblia Hebraica* series. The modern mind, especially in the computer age, has become used to the ease with which one inserts changes into the text in split seconds. In earlier centuries, it was equally convenient to use cut-and-paste techniques with paper. Therefore, even the modern scholar, who knows that in the ancient world everything was different, sometimes does not realize that it was simply impossible to add or delete a section in the middle of a column. Continuing this line of thought *ad absurdum*, we should not imagine that an ancient scroll of the Torah or Joshua looked anything like P. Haupt's multi-colored edition named the *Polychrome Bible*[25] or *Regenbogenbibel*.[26]

I have little doubt that in all mentioned instances (among them, paragraphs a–f below) an earlier text was indeed changed or expanded towards the present form of MT. However, I submit that we should now take an additional step in trying to understand how these changes were inserted while using recently gained knowledge about the copying of manuscripts. An analysis of this type is meant to enrich literary research.

I submit that the shape of the earliest biblical scrolls did not differ much from that of the Qumran scrolls (with the possible exception of their length) and that therefore most rewriting was not superimposed on existing scrolls. From a technical point of view, it would have been very hard, if not impossible, to insert, for example, the story of Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) into a pre-existing scroll of Genesis or of the Joseph cycle, or to add Hannah's or Jonah's hymn to existing scrolls of Samuel and Jonah (or the Minor Prophets). More in detail:

---

[25] P. Haupt (ed.), *The Sacred Books of the Old Testament* (Leipzig/Baltimore/London: Hinrichs/Johns Hopkins/Nutt, 1894–1904).

[26] This edition shows the editor's understanding of the complex nature of the biblical books that could never have existed in antiquity in any visible way. In the Torah, for example, different colors designate the sources J^1 (early, dark red) and J^2 (later, light red), E^1(early, dark blue), E^2 (later, light blue), JE combined (purple), P-late (brown), P-early (regular black), H (yellow), and D (green). In addition, overstrike signifies redactional additions.

a. Most scholars believe that the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 was originally not an integral part of the Joseph cycle. Scholars also agree that Hannah's hymn was attributed to her in the form of a prayer (at least in MT) by someone who thought that this pre-existing Psalm of thanksgiving was appropriate to the context. By the same token, a pre-existing thanksgiving hymn of the individual has been made into a prayer in the mouth of Jonah in chapter 2. In my view, these three chapters could not have been inserted into existing scrolls, but were rather added when new scrolls were created on the basis of earlier ones.

b. We refer not only to separate units as the ones mentioned above, but also to non-consecutive layers in biblical books. For example, following the Deuteronomy commentary of Steuernagel from 1900,[27] modern scholars distinguish between several compositional layers in that book. Steuernagel himself distinguished between a stratum in which the speaker turns to an addressee in the singular and one turning to addressees in the plural. In addition, he identified a layer of *to'ebah* laws (18:10-12; 22:5; 23:19; 25:13-16a) and one of laws of the elders (17:2-7, 8-13; 19:3-7, 11-12; 21:1-8, 13-22; etc.). Furthermore, according to Steuernagel, sundry layers of additions are visible in this book: among them various legal additions, such as those stressing the importance of priests (18:1, 5; 21:5; 26:3-4) and paraenetic additions (several sections in chapters 28, 29, and 30). One further recognizes a late layer requiring changes in the law due to the expanded borders of Israel in the centralization of the cult (12:20-24) and the law of asylum (19:8-10).[28] Finally, the kernel of the book was expanded with various pericopes, such as the poems in chapters 32 and 33.

c. The multi-layered story of Exodus 24 contains three fragments of accounts of Moses' ascent to Mt. Sinai. The three versions reflect different descriptions of the ascent of Moses, once alone (vv 2-8), once together with Aaron, Nadav and Avihu and seventy of the elders of Israel (vv 9-11), and once with Joshua (vv 12-15). If the story was composed layer upon layer, the base story was twice rewritten by two different editors/scribes.[29]

---

[27] C. Steuernagel, *Deuteronomium und Josua* (HAT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1900) iii ff.

[28] Not every layer uncovered in Deuteronomy necessarily requires the assumption of a separate scroll, since an early editor may have inserted corrections of different types in a single scroll.

[29] Alternatively, according to the documentary hypothesis in its classical formulation, someone combined parts from three different sources: vv 2-8 (J ?), vv 9-11 (E ?), vv 12-15 (P?).

d. The book of Jeremiah underwent a complicated process of rewriting, probably being expanded in one of its last stages from a shorter text (reflected in 4QJer[b] and 4QJer[d] as well as in the LXX) to a longer one (MT).[30] Alternatively, the long edition was abbreviated to the short one. This process of expansion or abbreviation apparently took place in the mind of an editor, and not in the form of corrections to an existing scroll.

e. The "Elohistic" copyist/editor of the second and third books of Psalms (Psalms 42–83, but not 84–89) corrected at least the divine names,[31] if not more, while replacing each יהוה with אלהים. The changes were probably made during the writing of a new scroll, not through the crossing out of words in an existing scroll, and the writing of the new ones above the deletion.

f. The book(s) of Joshua-Judges, which underwent a very complicated editorial process, contain(s) long Deuteronomistic sections which should be considered additions when compared with the presumed original book. For example, the introductory chapters and framework of the individual stories in Judges as well as a layer of rewriting in Joshua including several speeches and the pericope Josh 8:30-35 (the erection of an altar on Mt. Ebal) were added only at a later stage. Presumably, the Deuteronomist must have had at his disposal an older version of Joshua-Judges. He created his new version in a new scroll, as it would have been impossible to insert these changes in an existing scroll.

We now turn to the *implications* of the analysis so far. If the preceding description holds true, in early times the content of the biblical books could have changed with the writing of each new scroll. Continuing this line of thought, if so many scrolls were circulating, what was the typological relation between them? Was the transmission complex, that is, scribes could rewrite just any copy on which they laid their hands (model 1)? In this case, one could speak of parallel transmission or parallel copies. Or was the transmission relatively simple with each new scroll based directly on the preceding one, in linear transmission (model 2)? One need not necessarily decide between the two models, since there is also room for their co-existence.[32] When the merits of the two models

---

[30] See *TCHB*, 313–49.

[31] Cf. e.g. changes made in Psalm 53 as compared with Psalm 14 (14:2 = 53:3; 14:4 = 53:5; 14:6 = 53:6; 14:7 = 53:7).

[32] In that case, one should imagine the creation of both parallel copies and copies displaying a linear transmission.

are compared, the authoritative status of scrolls created using one of the two procedures needs to be assessed as well.

According to model 1, an early book was rewritten independently by any number of scribes whose versions should be considered parallel to one another and possibly even equally authoritative.[33] In this scenario, an early copy of a biblical book was completed by editor 1, and was rewritten independently, possibly in different localities, by both editor/scribe 2 and editor/scribe 3, etc. In this model, there could be any number of related, *parallel* books in the same or different localities. In the reality of this first model, the term "parallel" designates that every scribe/editor could have rewritten almost any scroll, without taking into consideration the content of other scrolls. As a result, at any given time scrolls of different content were circulating (this description pertains to relatively large differences in content, not to differences created during the course of scribal transmission).

The point of departure of model 2 is a "production line" of a biblical book, created in a linear way, stage after stage. In this model, the creation of editor/scribe 1 formed the basis for the edition of editor/scribe 2, which, in its turn was the basis for a creation by editor/scribe 3. In this model, there is no room for parallel versions.

Both abstract models have their internal logic, and therefore the only way to decide between these options is to see whether one of them is supported by textual evidence.[34] The main question for discussion is whether we can detect among the early textual witnesses any proof of the existence of two or more parallel versions of a biblical book, differing in matters of content. All textual witnesses differ in details created during the course of the textual transmission, but are there differences that require the assumption of *independent* writing or rewriting of a text unit? In other words, is there a chapter or part of a chapter of a biblical

---

[33] Possibly, within this large group of scrolls, one scroll or production line was more authoritative than the others.

[34] However, as a rule, scholars formulated their views on the development of the biblical books without connection to textual finds. Criticism against this practice was voiced by R. Lohfink, "Deuteronomium und Pentateuch, Zur Stand der Forschung," in idem, *Studien zum Deuteronomium und zur deuteronomistischen Literatur III* (SBAB 20; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1955) 13–38 (21). According to this scholar, Wellhausen and Steuernagel described the early copies of Deuteronomy as parallel editions subsequently combined into one *opus*, Noth described the development of Deuteronomy as fragments combined into a single edition, while others assume that a single kernel was expanded with various additions. The definition of these three models has been transferred from the study of the Torah (the documentary hypothesis, the fragments theory, and the supplementary hypothesis).

book known in alternative formulations? It seems to me that such evidence cannot be found, and therefore all differences between the textual witnesses must have resulted from a linear development, mainly the creation of a long text from a short one or vice versa. Focusing on the largest differences among textual witnesses, it seems that the long and short texts of MT (= 4QJer[a,c]) and the LXX (= 4QJer[b,d]) in Jeremiah, as well as in Ezekiel, Joshua, and the story of David and Goliath indicate a linear development from short to long or long to short versions.[35] Further, there is no clear evidence in favor of parallel versions in any one book. Due to the absence of convincing evidence in favor of the first model, I opt for the second one, assuming linear development in the writing and rewriting of biblical books. This linear development took place as long as the editors/scribes were involved in creating the last stages of the biblical books, and not merely in their textual multiplication. However, not all compositions developed in the same way, and in the case of the Qumran sectarian writings, the situation is less clear, as several of the copies of the sectarian compositions may indeed reflect parallel formulations (model 1).

We now continue our analysis of the early development of the biblical books. The assumption of linear development may provide the best explanation for the textual evidence, but it also creates new problems, and needs to be thought through from all directions. We need to give attention to the conditions under which an editor/scribe could have rewritten an earlier scroll, to be revised in a later generation. How did this person gain access to the earlier scroll? Our description almost necessitates the further assumption that all rewriting took place in one location, possibly a central one, where books were written, deposited, and rewritten. Otherwise it cannot be explained how any editor-scribe could continue the writing of his predecessor. The only such place I can think of would be the temple. This center presumably had sufficient authority to prevent the writing of rival versions elsewhere.

If books were constantly rewritten, we should also ask ourselves what happened to the earlier copies, that is, the ones preceding the rewritten version. It was the intention of the person creating that rewritten composition that it was to replace the earlier one(s), which, as far as the author of the rewritten composition was concerned, had become superfluous. He created what he intended to be the final version, but likewise when the earlier versions were put into writing, they, too, were meant to be final. It is thus necessary to assume that upon its completion,

---

[35] See the detailed analysis in *TCHB,* 313–49.

each formulation in the chain of such formulations was considered final and was possibly distributed and became authoritative. But when a new formulation was created and circulated, the previous one(s) could no longer be taken out of circulation. In any given period, therefore, several different copies of certain biblical books must have been circulating.[36] Therefore, even at a late period such as the time of the LXX translation or that of the Qumran corpus, different literary formulations were circulating. As a result, the Qumran corpus included both 4QJer[a,c] (= MT), which probably had the *imprimatur* of the Jerusalem spiritual center in the last centuries before the Common Era, and 4QJer[b,d] (= LXX) which must have been authoritative at an earlier period.

We surmised that the literary activities described above could have taken place only in a central place, where these books were deposited.[37] Our suggestion that Scripture books were deposited in the temple no longer needs to remain abstract, as it is supported by evidence in Scripture and elsewhere. E.g., Samuel deposited a binding document in the temple: "Samuel expounded to the people the rules of the monarchy (משפט המלוכה), and recorded them in a document that he deposited before the Lord" (1 Sam 10:25). The clearest proof for the depositing of books in the temple is probably the story of Josiah's discovery of a copy of the Torah in the temple, which formed the basis of his reform (2 Kgs 22:8;

---

[36] This description is based on the evidence of the last pre-Christian centuries, but in earlier times the situation may have been different. Possibly in those earlier centuries, scrolls were rarely distributed, while the evidence shows that in later periods this was the case. See further the next footnote.

[37] Thus already N. Lohfink in an impressive study of the "deuteronomistic movement": N. Lohfink, "Gab es eine deuteronomistische Bewegung," in *Jeremia und die "deuteronomistische Bewegung"* (ed. W. Gross; BBB 98; Weinheim, 1995) 313–82, esp. 335–47 = idem, *Studien* [see n. 34 above], 65–142 (91–104). This scholar suggests that writing and book culture were not very advanced in the pre-exilic period, and that at that time possibly only a single copy of each Scripture book was available (thus already C. Steuernagel, *Lehrbuch der Einleitung in das Alte Testament* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1912] 101). This single copy was written and deposited in the temple, and possibly further rewritten there: "Es ist leicht vorstellbar, das sie <die Texte> bisweilen ergänzt und überarbeitet wurden, vor allem, wenn man sie etwa in der Tempelschule im Unterricht brauchte" (p. 338). Lohfink's point of departure is the deuteronomistic composition Deuteronomy–2 Kings, but he speaks also about the Prophets, which in his view also existed only in single copies, preserved by the students of the prophets (p. 340). In any event, at that early period, books were not distributed. The argument of non-distribution of Scripture books among the people had been suggested previously by Haran, who believed that distribution started only with the official acceptance of these books as authoritative. In the words of Haran, "Book-Scrolls," 113 (see n. 3 above), in the pre-exilic period "... the people at large had no direct access to this literature, which was entrusted to special circles of initiates—priests, scribal schools, prophets, poets trained in the composition of psalmodic poetry and the like."

23:2, 24; 2 Chr 34:15, 30).[38] In later times, rabbinic literature often mentions "the copy of the Torah (once: three copies) in the temple court."[39] Beyond Israel, the depositing of scrolls in the temple, which runs parallel to the modern concept of publishing, is evidenced for Egypt as early as the third millennium BCE as well as in ancient Greece and Rome. At a later period, rabbinic literature uses the term "written and deposited (כתוב ומונח)" in the temple.[40]

In sum, assuming that the external shape of the earliest scrolls of Hebrew Scripture was no different from that of the Qumran scrolls, we set out to analyze the procedures for writing and rewriting ancient scrolls. We noted that the inscribed area in scrolls was not a flexible entity. In fact, after the scroll was inscribed, there simply was no technical possibility for a scribe to insert any substantial addition into the text or to delete or rewrite segments larger than a few words or a line. We therefore suggested that editors or scribes did not use earlier copies as the basis for their content changes, but instead, constantly created fresh scrolls for expressing their new thoughts. That scribes did not insert their changes in earlier copies is also evident from a comparison of the parallel copies of Qumran sectarian compositions. This understanding should now be taken into consideration in the historico-critical analysis of Hebrew Scripture, since in the past the realia of rewriting were beyond the scholarly horizon. Each layer of rewriting probably involved the penning of a new copy. This hypothesis involves the further assumption of the linear development of Scripture books and probably also the depositing, writing, and rewriting of Scripture scrolls in a central place, viz., the temple.

---

[38] Whether or not all Scripture books were deposited in the temple is a matter of speculation. In later times, probably all authoritative Scripture books were deposited there, but previously possibly only the legal and historical books Genesis–Kings were placed in the temple.

[39] For a detailed analysis of the evidence, see chapter 12*.

[40] For the evidence see chapter 12*.