Prayer and Poetry in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature

Essays in Honor of Eileen Schuller on the Occasion of Her 65th Birthday

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THE BACKGROUND OF THE STICHOMETRIC ARRANGEMENTS OF POETRY IN THE JUDEAN DESERT SCROLLS[1]

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While most of the poetry texts in MT are written as running texts, the medieval manuscripts present the אמ״ת books (Job, Proverbs, and Psalms), some songs of the Torah, the song of Deborah, and the acrostic in Lamentations broken into poetic lines.[2]

These traditions, along with other systems of laying out poetical segments were reflected already in some texts from the Judean Desert, but other ancient texts containing poetical segments were written as running texts. The practice of a stichographic[3] representation was developed for the books written in a system of strict *parallelismus membrorum*, which therefore could easily be represented stichographically. This practice was also used for most songs in the Torah. Other poetical books, such as the Major Prophets, likewise reflect such *parallelismus*, but not in all chapters, and possibly for this reason no stichographic writing tradition was developed for them. As a result, most poetical books are not represented in stichographic writing.

The stichographic arrangements of poetical texts reflect their scribes' understanding of the poetical structure, although it is unclear to what extent these layouts reflect the original intention of the poets behind the texts.

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[1] This paper is dedicated to Eileen Schuller, a much appreciated colleague and a dear friend, with whom it has been a pleasure to work over the course of the last three decades.

[2] The layouts of the poems in the medieval manuscripts and printed editions, as well as their relationship to statements in rabbinic literature, were analyzed in detail by M. Breuer, *The Aleppo Codex and the Accepted Text of the Bible* (Hebrew with English summary; Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1976), 149–189.

[3] The term is used in the discussion by J. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 119–127.

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The external facts regarding the layouts of the Judean Desert texts have been described in the past, especially in my own writing.[4] It is the purpose of the present short study to clarify their background and to link the differences between these arrangements with the contents of the scrolls. In other words, we wish to clarify why certain poetical texts were written in a special layout while others were not. For this purpose, we must first describe the basic facts.

In the Judean Desert texts, a special arrangement of poetical units is known almost exclusively for biblical texts[5] (including Ben Sira [2QSir and MasSir]).[6] So far, the only known exception is the nonbiblical 4QMessianic Apocalypse (4Q521) 2 ii written in the most simple stichographic layout (system *1b* below).[7]

Within Hebrew Scripture, this stichographic layout is evidenced for the Judean Desert texts of two poems in the Torah (Exodus 15; Deuteronomy 32), and of Psalms (especially Psalm 119), Proverbs, Lamentations, and Job. All biblical units for which special stichographic arrangements are preserved among the Qumran texts have also been preserved in Qumran copies that do not display any special arrangement.

Although two scrolls of Exodus, one of Deuteronomy, many Psalms scrolls, and copies of Lamentations and Job are written *without* any special arrangement (Table 2), thirty Judean Desert texts containing poetical units are written completely or partially in one of the forms of stichographic writing. In three units (Deuteronomy 32, Psalms, and Proverbs) they have different layouts (Table 1). These layouts are based on aesthetic or exegetical traditions that sometimes differ from those of the Masoretes and the early versions.

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[4] *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (STDJ 54; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 166–178.

[5] This layout is not employed for any of the nonbiblical poetical compositions from the Judean Desert, such as 4QNon-Canonical Psalms A, B (4Q380, 4Q381), the *Hodayot* from caves 1 (1QH^{a,b}) and 4 (4QH$^{a–f}$), 4QBarkhi Nafshi$^{a–e}$, and 4QShirShabb$^{a–f}$.

[6] This arrangement probably implies that Ben Sira was considered to be biblical, not necessarily by the Qumran community, but by the scribes of 2QSir and MasSir. The fact that the song in Exodus 15 in 4QRP^{c} (4Q365) 6a ii and 6c is written in a special layout may imply that its scribe considered this composition a biblical text.

[7] Likewise, the poetical segments in the following early *Greek* biblical texts were written stichographically: P. Fouad 266b (848) of Deuteronomy 32 (middle of 1st century BCE); P. Antinoopolis 8 of Proverbs 5–20 (3rd century CE); P. Chester Beatty XI of Sirach (3rd century CE). E. J. C. Tigchelaar, "Lady Folly and her House in Three Qumran Manuscripts: On the Relation between *4Q525* 15, *5Q16*, and *4Q184* 1," *RevQ* 23 (2008): 271–281 (273) recognizes such a system also in the fragmentary text of 5Q16 1–2, 5.

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Tables 1 and 2 include the dates assigned to the scrolls as a possible clue for understanding the differentiation between scrolls written in a special layout and those not written in such a layout (see the discussion below).[8] We suggest that the clue for understanding the two types of layout is the textual character of the texts, and therefore references to textual characterizations,[9] subjective as they may be, have been added to the list, and also the specific stichographic system employed, as specified below.[10]

Table 1. *Manuscripts of Poetical Units Displaying a Stichographic Layout*

Manuscript	Content	Date	Alignment	System
4QRP[c] (4Q365) 6b 1–4	Exodus 15, including the verse after the Song, Exod 15:19, and also a poetical unit not contained in the biblical text, probably representing the Song of Miriam	40–10 BCE	ind.	3
1QDeut[b]	Deuteronomy 32; the other chapters are in prose	no date	MT/SP	2b
4QDeut[b]	Deuteronomy 32; the other chapters were in prose	150–100 BCE	ind.	1b
4QDeut[c]	reconstructed layout; only in Deuteronomy 32	150–100 BCE	ind.	1a
4QDeut[q]	Deuteronomy 32; this scroll probably contained only that poem	50 BCE–10 CE	LXX	1a
4QpaleoDeut[r]	Deuteronomy 32; the other chapters are in prose	100–25 BCE	MT/SP	2a
1QPs[a]	only Psalm 119, the other Psalms are in prose	not dated	unclear	2a
4QPs[b]	Psalms 91–118	30–68 CE	ind.	1a and 1b
4QPs[c]	Psalms 16–53	50–68 CE	MT	2a

[8] The data are culled from the summary list by B. Webster, "Chronological Index of the Texts from the Judaean Desert," in *The Texts from the Judaean Desert: Indices and an Introduction to the* Discoveries in the Judaean Desert *Series* (ed. E. Tov; DJD 39; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 351–446.

[9] MT, SP, LXX, ind(ependent), QSP = Qumran Scribal Practice (as summarized in Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 261–273). The nature of the independent (non-aligned) texts is explained in my *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3rd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 109–110.

[10] These characterizations are culled from Appendix 8 in Tov, *Scribal Practices*.

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Table 1 (*cont.*)

Manuscript	Content	Date	Alignment	System
4QPs[d] from 3:13 onwards	Psalm 104; the earlier columns are in prose	100–30 BCE	ind.	1a
4QPs[g]	Psalm 119; no other Psalms preserved	*c.* 50 CE	MT	1b
4QPs[h]	Psalm 119; no other Psalms preserved	30 BCE–70 CE	unclear	1b
4QPs[l]	only Psalm 104; no other Psalms preserved	50–1 BCE	ind.?	1a
4QPs[w]	Psalm 112; no other Psalms preserved	125–75 BCE	unclear	2b
5QPs	Psalm 119; no other Psalms preserved	1–100 CE	unclear	2a
8QPs	Psalms 17–18; no other Psalms preserved	1–100 CE	unclear	2a
11QPs[a]	Psalm 119; the other Psalms are in prose	1–50 CE	ind. and QSP	1b
11QPs[b]	Psalm 119; the other Psalms are in prose	30–1 BCE	ind. and QSP	2a
5/6HevPs	Psalms 7–16, 18, 22–25, 29–31	50–68 CE	MT	2a
MasPs[a]	Psalms 81–85	30–1 BCE	MT	2a
MasPs[b]	Psalm 147	50–25 BCE	MT	3
4QJob[a]	chapters 31–37	100–50 BCE	MT?	1b
4QpaleoJob[c]	probably; chapters 13, 14	225–150 BCE	MT?	1b
4QProv[a]	chapters 1–2	50 BCE–30 CE	MT	2a
4QProv[b]	chapters 9, 13–15	30 BCE–50 CE	MT	3
3QLam	ch. 3	30 BCE–68 CE	unclear	2a
5QLam[b]	ch. 4	50 CE	unclear	1b or 2a
2QSir	ch. 6	50–1 BCE		1b
MasSir	chapters 39–44	10 BCE–50 CE		2a
4QMessianic Apocalypse (4Q521) 2 ii		125–75 BCE		1b

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Not all the Qumran biblical scrolls were written in stichographic writing in units that were arranged in a special (poetical) layout in other Qumran scrolls. An almost equal amount of scrolls does not display any such arrangement. Table 2 lists twenty-six such texts (nineteen Psalms scrolls and seven other texts) written without any stichographic layout as running texts, while four other texts (1QPs[a], 4QPs[d], 11QPs[a], 11QPs[b]) contain both prose and stichographic sections. Eleven Psalms scrolls listed in Table 1 present a full stichographic arrangement.

As in Table 1, the following table includes references to the textual character of the scrolls.

Table 2. *Manuscripts of Poetical Units Not Displaying a Stichographic Layout*

Manuscript	Notes	Date	Alignment
4QExod[c]	Exodus 15	50–25 BCE	MT
4QExod[d]	Exodus 15	225–175 BCE	ind.
4QDeut[j] col. 12	Deuteronomy 32; see J. A. Duncan, DJD 14, 90	50 CE	ind. and QSP
1QPs[a]	all Psalms excluding Psalm 119 which is written in a special layout	no date	unclear
1QPs[b]		no date	unclear
1QPs[c]		no date	unclear
3QPs	only Psalm 2 is preserved	1–100 CE	unclear
4QPs[a]		150 BCE	ind.
4QPs[d]	until 3:5; the remainder is written in a special layout	100–30 BCE	ind.
4QPs[e]		30–68 CE	ind.
4QPs[f]		50–68 CE	ind.
4QPs[j]		50 CE	unclear
4QPs[k]		100–30 BCE	ind.
4QPs[m]		30–1 BCE	MT?
4QPs[n]		30–1 BCE	ind.
4QPs[o]		30–1 BCE	QSP?

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Table 2 (*cont.*)

Manuscript	Notes	Date	Alignment
4QPs[p]	probably	30 BCE–68 CE	unclear
4QPs[q]		30 BCE–30 CE	ind.
4QPs[r]		30 BCE–68 CE	ind.
4QPs[s]		50–68 CE	unclear
4QPs[u]	probably	50 CE	unclear
6QpapPs?	probably	50 CE	unclear
11QPs[a]	all Psalms excluding Psalm 119 which is written in a special layout	1–50 CE	ind. and QSP
11QPs[b]	all Psalms excluding Psalm 119 which is written in a special layout	30–1 BCE	ind. and QSP
11QPs[c]		1–50 CE	ind. and QSP?
11QPs[d]		30–68 CE	ind. and QSP?
2QJob		30 BCE–68 CE	unclear
4QJob[b]		50–1 BCE	unclear
4QLam		30–1 BCE	ind. and QSP
5QLam[a]		50 CE	unclear

In the texts that are arranged in a special layout, *three main systems* are recognizable in the same biblical texts.[11]

[11] For example, Deuteronomy 32 was written once in running form (4QDeut[j]) as well as in four or five different stichographic systems: one hemistich per line (most of 4QDeut[q] and probably also 4QDeut[c]), two hemistichs per line without spaces in the middle (4QDeut[b]), two stichs per line separated by spaces between the stichs and hemistichs (1QDeut[b]), and two hemistichs per line separated by spaces (4Qpaleo-Deut[r]). 4QDeut[q] actually presents a fifth system combining lines of single and two hemistichs.

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(1) One or Two Hemistichs (without Spaces between Them) Per Line

This pattern is used especially in Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 119. The spaces at the ends of the lines indicate the ends of the poetical units.

(1a) *One hemistich per line*

- 4QDeut[c] (containing several segments of Deuteronomy), probably, in Deuteronomy 32 (reconstructed layout).
- 4QDeut[q] (Deuteronomy 32 only). This text contains an unusual combination of lines with single hemistichs (1:1–4, 9–10 and all of col. 2) and of two hemistichs per line (1:5–8, 11); in the latter case, it is unclear whether these hemistichs are separated by spaces. The writing of this text should be considered a variation of system *1a.*
- 4QPs[b] (cols. 1–33); in cols. 34–35, system *1b* is used.
- 4QPs[d] (from 3:5 onwards: other sections are in prose; parts of Psalm 104; other parts of that Psalm and of Psalms.
- 106 [?] and 147 are in prose).
- 4QPs[l] (Psalm 104; no other Psalms preserved).

(1b) *Two hemistichs per line not separated by spaces*

- 4QDeut[b] (Deuteronomy 32; the remainder is in prose).
- 4QPs[b] cols. 34–35 (in the preceding cols. system *1a* is used).
- 4QPs[g] (Psalm 119; no other Psalms preserved).
- 4QPs[h] (Psalm 119; no other Psalms preserved).
- 11QPs[a] (Psalm 119; in a few instances a space separates the two hemistichs [7:4; 8:6; 11:7; 12:12]; the other Psalms are in prose).
- 4QJob[a] (chapters 31–37).
- 4QpaleoJob[c] (probably; chapters 13, 14).
- 5QLam[b] (or system *1b*; ch. 4; only the beginnings of the lines have been preserved).

This group contains three copies of the acrostic Psalm 119 in which each line starts with the determining letter of the alphabet.

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(2) Two Hemistichs or Stichs Per Line Separated by Spacing

The separation of stichs or hemistichs by spacing creates a layout which resembles the Masoretic system named a "half-brick (אריח) on top of a half-brick (אריח)," and may well have been the basis for that layout. The graphic arrangement more or less reflects the arrangement of parallel hemistichs and stichs; even when the poetical unit consists of three segments, the same graphic arrangement is presented.

(2a) *Two hemistichs per line separated by a space*

The width of the space ranges usually from 0.5 to 1.0 cm, but with very long cola the space is minute; in MasPs[a] it varies from 0.5 to 2.2 cm.

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- 4QpaleoDeut[r] (Deuteronomy 32; the other chapters are in prose).
- 1QPs[a] (Psalm 119; the other Psalms are in prose).
- 4QPs[c] (Psalms 16–53; however, when the lines in the column are too short for the two hemistichs, the second hemistich continues on the next line [col. I 26–29; III 24–25, 26–27]).
- 5QPs (Psalm 119; no other Psalms preserved).
- 8QPs (Psalms 17–18; no other Psalms preserved).
- 11QPs[b] (Psalm 119; the other Psalms are in prose).
- 5/6HevPs (Psalms 7–16, 18, 22–25, 29–31).
- MasPs[a] (Psalms 81–85).
- 4QProv[a] (chapters 1–2).
- 3QLam (ch. 3; three poetical units per line?).
- 5QLam[b] (only the beginnings of the lines have been preserved; or system *1b*).
- 2QSir (ch. 6; thus the reconstruction in *DJD*. However, possibly this text was written in system *1b*).
- MasSir (chapters 39–44).

In this system of presentation, the first hemistichs started from a straight right margin, usually indicated with a vertical dry line, while the second stichs began at a slightly different point on each line, since the first hemistichs were of a different length.[12]

[12] This bi-columnar arrangement is also represented in the Masoretic manuscripts of Deuteronomy 32 (see below) and SP in Exodus 15, the Balaam oracles in Numbers 23 and 24, and Deuteronomy 32.

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If the preserved evidence of the scrolls from the Judean Desert does not mislead us, this system of presentation was the most frequently used when these scrolls were written. It is based on the principle of the *parallelismus membrorum*, with the two parallel stichs written next to each other, separated by a space.[13]

This group contains three copies of the acrostic Psalm 119 in which each line starts with the determining letter of the alphabet.

(2b) *Two stichs per line with spaces between the stichs and hemistichs*

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- 1QDeut^{b} (Deuteronomy 32; the other chapters are in prose)

In the following manuscript, no information regarding the spacing is available:

- 4QPs^{w} (Psalm 112; no other Psalms preserved)

(3) Hemistichs or Clusters of 2–3 Words Separated by Spaces

Unlike in the first two systems, the spaces occur at different places in the line, in two different patterns.

- 4QRP^{c} (4Q365) 6b 1–4 (Exodus 15)
- MasPs^{b} 2:16–23
- 4QProv^{b} (chapters 9, 13–15; hemistichs)
- MasPs^{b} (Psalms 147, 150; hemistichs)
- 4QRP^{c} (4Q365) 6b 1–4 (Exodus 15, including the verse after the Song, Exod 15:19 and also a poetical unit not contained in the biblical text, probably the Song of Miriam)

[13] However, also when three-stich units do not reflect a parallel structure, the three stichs are nevertheless presented in a two-stich system in one-and-a-half lines (thus Ps 81:6, 8, 11 in MasPsa). One notes that the stichographic arrangement of MasPsa 2:22–24 (Ps 83:9–11) goes against the meaning of the stichs themselves. See S. Talmon in, idem and Y. Yadin, *Masada VI, The Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963–1965, Final Reports, Hebrew Fragments from Masada* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1999), 85.

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Explanations

Previously, we stated that it is difficult to ascertain whether there is any pattern behind the different ways of presenting the text of poetical units,[14] either with or without a stichographic arrangement.[15] We now suggest the following types of explanation for the different layout systems:

Possibility 1: Chronological distinction between the different types of arrangement (see the dates provided in Tables 1 and 2).[16]

Possibility 2: The texts that do not reflect a special layout, especially the Psalms scrolls, were not considered Scripture. Rather, they served another purpose, such as that of a liturgical collection.[17]

Possibility 3: Conversely, since Psalm 119 is always arranged stichographically and is part of the later Jewish liturgy, it is possible that stichographic writing was reserved for liturgical use.[18]

Possibility 4: The choice of the presentation system was determined by the personal preference of scribes.[19]

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[14] Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 170.

[15] The problem is most acute in the Psalms scrolls since they are the largest component in the lists in Tables 1 and 2. The following solutions have been contemplated.

[16] The oldest scrolls in Table 1 are older than those in Table 2 (see, however, 4QExod). This observation could lead to the view that at the outset a stichographic arrangement was the rule, and that subsequently this layout was often abandoned.

[17] This suggestion was raised hesitantly by J. M. Oesch, "Textgliederung im Alten Testament und in den Qumranhandschriften," *Henoch* 5 (1983): 289–321 (p. 317), who suggested that the parameters of the graphic presentation of the Qumran texts were determined by the purpose for which the compositions were written. However, this claim cannot be made for all the Psalm scrolls mentioned above. If the prose arrangement of the biblical Psalms in Psalms scrolls together with liturgical additions in some collections (especially 11QPs^{a}) is an indication of their use in religious gatherings, several such collections are indeed fully or partly arranged stichographically (Table 1), but others are not (Table 2).

[18] Psalms 119 and 104, either when presented separately (4QPs^{g}, 4QPs^{h}, 4QPs^{l} [Psalm 104], 5QPs) or together with other Psalms (1QPs^{a}, 4QPs^{d}, 11QPs^{a}, 11QPs^{b}) are always written stichographically. The same argument may apply to the two poems in the Torah (Exodus 15; Deuteronomy 32) and Lamentations, but not to Proverbs, Job, and Sirach, which are also presented stichographically.

[19] Since these texts derived from different circles, possibly the various ways of presenting poetical units do not reflect differences between individual scribes, but rather between the scribal traditions within which scribes operated. In any event, at least for Psalm 119 a special layout was used consistently. That acrostic Psalm was written as poetry with two hemistichs per line separated by spaces (1QPs^{a}, 5QPs, 11QPs^{b}) or without such spaces (4QPs^{g}, 4QPs^{h}, 11QPs^{a}), and all the lines of a stanza started with the same letter. This pertains also to the acrostics in 3QLam (ch. 3) and 5QLamb (ch. 4). At the same time, the acrostic Psalm 25 in 5/6XHevPs col. 12 has two letters of the alphabet per line.

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None of these solutions was found to be satisfactory, and we therefore suggest linking the use of a system of stichography with the textual character of the texts. *In particular, scribes writing in the proto-Masoretic tradition employed the stichometric system*. More in detail:

1. Texts not displaying a stichographic layout, as presented in Table 2, clearly do not belong to the tradition of MT. Only two among the thirty biblical texts in this group do belong to the MT family: 4QExod^{c} (MT) and 4QPs^{m} (MT?). The texts included in this group are either "independent," that is, they are not exclusively close to a specific textual witness (MT, LXX, other sources), or reflect the QSP (Qumran Scribal Practice).

2. Table 1 (poetical texts displaying a stichographic layout) includes a group of texts that are closely linked to MT (twelve texts, two of which are MT/SP), as well as eight independent texts (two of which are both independent and QSP), and one that is close to the LXX. This group thus has a varied textual character, but since this is by far the main system used for MT texts, we suggest that they were transmitted only or mainly stichographically. Among the preserved texts, this system was used especially for texts other than the Psalms for the simple reason that very few MT psalters were found at Qumran. Therefore, we do not know whether the early MT psalters were also written stichographically.[20]

The MT scribes did not invent these stichographic arrangements, but employed a system that may have existed at an earlier time. A strong argument in favor of the assumption of the connection between the MT scribes and the stichographic arrangements is the fact that the medieval texts of MT further developed them. In light of this, it is important to note that the system that is most frequently used among the MT group of texts from the Judean Desert is system *2a*, which is closest to the layout prescribed in rabbinic texts and is found in most medieval Masoretic poetic texts.[21]

[20] We cannot make the opposite observation that MT psalters were written without stichographical arrangement since such a statement is not borne out by the facts.

[21] This stichographic arrangement is based on the fixed layout of inscribed and uninscribed elements. Rabbinic literature prescribed the recording in this way for the lists of the kings of Canaan (Josh 12:9–24), the sons of Haman (Esth 9:6–9) as well as three Songs in the prose books of the Bible (Exod 15:1–18, Deuteronomy 32, and Judg 5:2–30), but not the Psalms. For further details and references to rabbinic literature, see my *Scribal Practices*, 174–175.

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The connection between the stichographic practices of the ancient scrolls of the Masoretic family and the medieval manuscripts is further strengthened by negative evidence. This evidence pertains to the poetical units that are *not* written stichographically in both the ancient scrolls and the medieval manuscripts. In the following list of the poetical units from the Judean Desert that are not written stichographically, our attention is focused especially on the texts of the Masoretic family listed first:

- Genesis 49 as preserved in the fragmentary 4QGen-Exod[a] (MT) and 4QGen[e] (MT/SP).
- Deuteronomy 33 in 1QDeut[b] (MT/SP), 4QDeut[c] (ind.), 4QDeut[h] (ind.), 4QDeut[l] (textual character unclear), 4QpaleoDeut[r] (MT/SP) and MasDeut (MT). Deuteronomy 32 is arranged stichographically in 1QDeut[b], 4QDeut[c] and 4QpaleoDeut[r], but the poem in chapter 33 is not arranged stichographically in either MT or SP.
- The poetical portions of Numbers 23–24 in 4QNum[b] (SP/LXX). These sections are not arranged stichographically in MT, but they are in SP.
- The Song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2 in 4QSam[a] (LXX/ind.).
- 2 Samuel 22 in 4QSam[a] (LXX/ind.) (22:11, 13, 17–20, 24–28, 30–51 are preserved); MT does have a special arrangement (cf. *Sof.* 12.10).

The agreement between these proto-Masoretic texts and the medieval tradition in the absence of a stichographic arrangement is rather striking, especially when the special arrangement of Deuteronomy 32 is contrasted with the lack of such an arrangement in chapter 33.

The fact that this system, among other layouts, also features in SP,[22] shows that the bi-columnar arrangement of system *2a* must have been a major system used in antiquity.

It is unclear whether the details of this description suffice in order to prove the assumption that the scribes of MT formed a *scribal school*. The scribal methods of the proto-Masoretic manuscripts can be characterized by their precision, minimal scribal intervention, and occasional *de luxe* format,[23] and the proto-Masoretic scribes also developed the stichographic system known from the later MT.

[22] Lev 26:3–13, Num 23:7–10, 18–24; 24:3–10, 15–24, and Deuteronomy 32. See also Exodus 15 in a different layout. For details, see my *Scribal Practices*, 175–176.

[23] See my *Scribal Practices*, 125–129.

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