

Between Scripture and Interpretation:
Methods of Scribal Intervention and Key Variant Readings
in 4QReworked Pentateuch

By
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The diverse and at times mysterious cache of scrolls discovered in the Judean Desert in the late 1940s to early 1950s have indicated that scriptural interpretation in the Second Temple period was bound up in the transmission process of scripture itself. A corollary of this is that the modern dichotomy between scriptural lemma and subsidiary commentary is not always perceptible or applicable to some ancient texts; rather, it appears that the scribal intent was to seamlessly enmesh these two elements. Paramount among works exhibiting this interpretive scribal approach to scripture at Qumran are the five scrolls designated the *Reworked Pentateuch* (4QRP^{a-c}; 4Q158, 4Q364-367).

When compared with the biblical text, 4QRP exhibits several large-scale interpretive innovations, often in the form of content expansions of several additional lines or rearrangement of material, and 437 smaller variant readings. Of these individual variants, 166 (38%) are the result of creative scribal intervention and 271 (62%) are corroborated by various witnesses to the biblical text.

Despite the strong interpretive influence exerted on the scriptural texts comprising 4QRP, I will contend that these scrolls contain valuable text-critical data that helps clarify (i) the text of the Pentateuch as it existed in the Second Temple era, and (ii) the various methods of scribal interpretation utilized in this period. A valid distinction between scripture and interpretation in this hybrid text can only be reached by profiling the editorial and exegetical interests of the 4QRP scribal tradition, as made evident in deviations from other witnesses to the Pentateuch. In this process I will strategically navigate through the creative interpretive work pervading 4QRP, identify its editorial contours, and isolate a cross-section of significant variant readings contained in the scripturally based components of the manuscripts.