"Between Scripture and Interpretation: Methods of Scribal Intervention and Key Variant Readings in 4QReworked Pentateuch" - Andrew B. Perrin (2009)

**Abstract**

The diverse and at times mysterious cache of scrolls discovered in the Judaean 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 as the *Reworked Pentateuch* (4QRPe-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.
The work of the Judean Scribes, published in 1950 and 1940, included the transcription and analysis of the secret manuscripts discovered in the desert. This was a significant event in the history of the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The early discoveries showed that the interpretation of the religious texts during the Second Temple period was closely tied to the process of religious interpretation itself.

A central issue is the dichotomy between the literal and the interpretative, which is not always evident in the ancient texts. It seems, however, that the writers intended to enmesh these two elements.

Among the experts who adopt this view, the scribes at Qumran are considered to be the most important, as they have written out the Torah (9 QRPa, 4Q158, 364-367).

When compared with the written text, the literary variations in the interpretation are often presented in a large number of cases, usually in the form of the expansion of additional lines or a new arrangement of the material, and are often a result of the creative intervention of the scribes. These variations are supported by witnesses on the written text.

Notwithstanding the strong influence it has on the written text, I believe that these manuscripts contain critical textual data that can help clarify (ii) the different methods of scribes' interpretation. To distinguish between texts and interpretation, it is necessary to profile the system and the specific interests of the interpretative tradition, based on a study of the books.

In conclusion, the manuscript of the scribes further the study of the text, and the influence of the written text on the scribes' work is significant. The work at Qumran, therefore, provides a significant contribution to the study of the written text.