

QUMRAN HEBREW





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Marvin A. Sweeney,
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Number 76

QUMRAN HEBREW

AN OVERVIEW OF ORTHOGRAPHY,
PHONOLOGY, AND MORPHOLOGY

Eric D. Reymond



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To Robin, Lucy, and Oliver

אשרי איש שמח באחריתו

ἐμακάριστα ... ἀνωθρωπος εὐφραινόμενος ἐπὶ τέκνοις

Happy is the person who rejoices in his children. (Sirach 25:7)



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ment and inspiration, not only in the patience they have shown at my frequent absences but also in the concerted efforts they have made to afford me more time to bring this project to its completion.



ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. <i>Hebrew Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1906.
BHS ³	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> . Edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph. 3rd ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1987.
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
BZAW	Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
DCH	<i>The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> . Edited by David J. A. Clines. 8 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 1993–2007.
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DNWSI	Hoftijzer, J., and K. Jongeling. <i>Dictionary of North-West Semitic Inscriptions</i> . 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
DSSEL	<i>Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Library</i> . Edited by E. Tov. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 2006.
DSSSE	<i>The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition</i> . Edited by Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997–1998.
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> . Edited by E. Kautzsch. Translated by A. E. Cowley. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910.

<i>GQA</i>	T. Muraoka. <i>A Grammar of Qumran Aramaic</i> . ANES Supp 38. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.
<i>HALOT</i>	Koehler, Ludwig, and Walter Baumgartner. <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Translated by M. E. J. Richardson. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000.
<i>HAR</i>	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
<i>HGhs</i>	Bauer, Hans, and Pontus Leander. <i>Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache des Alten Testamentes</i> . 2 vols. Halle: Niemeyer, 1922.
<i>HSS</i>	Harvard Semitic Studies
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IPA</i>	International Phonetic Alphabet
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JNSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
Joüon-Muraoka	Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka. <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i> . 2 vols. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1991.
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>JSPSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
<i>LBH</i>	Late Biblical Hebrew
<i>LSAWS</i>	Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic
<i>LSJ</i>	Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, and H. S. Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . Rev. ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1968.
<i>MT</i>	Masoretic Text, specifically the Leningrad Codex, as represented in <i>BHS</i> ³
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>RH</i>	Rabbinic Hebrew
<i>RH1</i>	Rabbinic Hebrew of the Mishnah, Tosefta, etc.
<i>RH2</i>	Rabbinic Hebrew of the Talmuds, etc.
<i>SBH</i>	Standard Biblical Hebrew
<i>SBL</i>	Studies in Biblical Literature
<i>Sem</i>	<i>Semitica</i>
<i>STDJ</i>	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah

TAD	Porten, Bezalel, and Ada Yardeni. <i>Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt</i> . Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1986–1999.
ThWQ	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zu den Qumrantexten</i> . Edited by H.-J. Fabry and U. Dahmen. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2011–.
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplement Series
ZAH	<i>Zeitschrift für die Althebraistik</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
3ms	third masculine singular
3fs	third feminine singular
2ms	second masculine singular
2fs	second feminine singular
1cs	first common singular
3mp	third masculine plural
3fp	third feminine plural
2mp	second masculine plural
2fp	second feminine plural
1cp	first common plural



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A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION, ETYMOLOGICAL BASES, AND MANUSCRIPT IDENTIFICATION

In the following pages I will generally transliterate the letters of the scrolls into the Hebrew/Aramaic block script (e.g., נָבִיא “prophet”). The hypothetical pronunciation of these words is rendered in Roman letters in italics, as is the pronunciation of words presumed by the Tiberian vocalization tradition. The indication of pronunciation differs in several ways from the standard transliteration of Biblical Hebrew. For example, due to the quiescence of *aleph* at syllable end, I will not represent *aleph* in a word such as נָבִיא “prophet”; this word is represented as *nābī*. Also, due to the fact that the etymological lateral fricative phoneme (often transliterated as ś and represented in the Tiberian text as שׁ) had merged with the sound of etymological *samekh*, I will render etymological /ś/ as *s*. Thus מְשֹׁא “utterance” is represented as *massā*. When referring to individual phonemes, I indicate the respective symbol between slashes (e.g., /o/ and /s/).

Etymological forms and bases are, as is customary, preceded by an asterisk and are put in italics (e.g., **qul*, **qutl*). These forms may reflect different stages in the development of a given word or form; for example, the form preceded by an asterisk may reflect a stage of the language from circa 2000 B.C.E. or 1000 B.C.E. or 600 B.C.E. The precise dating is not crucial to the arguments presented below, so the hypothetical datings for specific forms are not given. The corresponding vocalizations of these forms in the Tiberian tradition are generally clear from the context and are sometimes explained by parenthetical comments. Nevertheless, to make clearer my presentation in the pages that follow, I wish to note three of the more common references to etymological forms and their realizations in Tiberian Hebrew. More complete explanations of such bases and their realizations in Tiberian Hebrew can be found in Joüon-Muraoka and *HghS*.

III-*yodh* roots are realized in the *qal* perfect as in the examples of בָנָה “to build,” חִזָה “to see,” עֲשָׂה “to do.” The *heh* in these forms is simply a

mater for the preceding vowel; the etymological *yodh* has disappeared. In the same way, the *heh* at the end of שָׂדָה “field” is a *mater*; the root is III-*yodh*. Words from III-*waw* roots are comparatively less common; where these roots are attested and distinct morphologically from III-*yodh* roots, the *waw* consonant has often shifted to /ū/, as in בָּהּוּ “emptiness”; תָּהּוּ “formlessness.”

“Geminate” nouns or adjectives are those that etymologically had three root consonants the second and third of which were identical (**qall*, **qill*, **quill*). The paradigm words for these in many Biblical Hebrew grammars are, respectively, עַם “people,” צִחְקָה “arrow,” חֲקָקִי “statute.” These generally show the gemination of the second and third root consonants and the emergence of the etymological vowel when any suffix is added to the lexical form: עַמִּי “my people,” צִחְקֵי “my arrow,” חֲקָקִי “my statute.” Feminine geminate nouns (**qallat*, **qillat*, **qullat*) generally show the same features: אַמְפָה “cubit,” פְּנָה “corner,” חֲקָקָה “statute.” Both masculine and feminine plural forms also show gemination and the emergence of the etymological vowel (e.g., אַמְפָות, פְּנָוֹת, חֲקָקִים, צִחְקִים, עַמִּים).

“Segholate” nouns or adjectives are those that etymologically had three distinct root consonants and only one vowel in their singular form (**qaṭl*, **qiṭl*, **quṭl*). The paradigm words for these in many Biblical Hebrew grammars are, respectively, מֶלֶךְ “king,” סִפְרָי “book,” קָדְשָׁה “holiness.” Sometimes, despite their name, these nouns do not attest a *seghol*, as in בָּעֵל “master.” When suffixes are added to the lexical form, the etymological vowel (or /o/ in the case of **quṭl* nouns) reemerges: מֶלֶכִי “my king,” סִפְרִי “my book,” קָדְשִׁי “my holiness.” Feminine segholate nouns (**qaṭlat*, **qiṭlat*, **quṭlat*) generally show the etymological vowel (or /o/ in the case of **quṭlat* nouns) in their first syllable: חָרְבָּה “queen,” גָּבְעָה “hill,” מָלְכָה “desolation.” Most segholate nouns from II-*waw/yodh* roots have different vowel patterns in Tiberian Hebrew (**qaṭl*—מוֹתָה “death” and בֵּיתָה “house”), as do III-*yodh* roots (**qaṭl* or **qiṭl*—פְּתִיָּה “simple,” **quṭl*—חָלֵיָה “sickness”). Segholate nouns/adjectives usually have two vowels in their plural absolute bases, both masculine (**qaṭalim*—מֶלֶכִים and סִפְרִים—סִפְרִים—**qiṭalim*—פְּתִיִּים and חָלֵיִים—חָלֵיִים and feminine (**qaṭalōt*—מֶלֶכָות—**qiṭalōt*—חָרְבָות—**quṭalōt*—גָּבְעָות—**quṭalōt*—חָרְבָות).

Specific passages from the nonbiblical DSS are identified in the standard fashion, with the cave number (1Q, 2Q, 3Q, etc.) followed by the manuscript number (1, 2, 3, etc.), followed by fragment number and/or column number, then line number. The exceptions are texts commonly indicated with an abbreviation, such as 1QS, 1QH^a, and 1QpHab. In order

to make the references to passages less cumbersome and the pages below less cluttered, I have not used the alternative designations for manuscripts such as 4QD^a or 4QDamascus Document^a but have restricted myself to the numerical titles, 4Q266. This means that individuals unfamiliar with the numeral designations may sometimes not recognize the text that is being referred to. For the sake of clarity, I present below the most commonly cited texts that might occasion confusion. The list is not comprehensive but points to the most commonly cited texts (e.g., Jubilees is also attested in other scrolls, but 4Q216–228 are the ones most frequently cited).

Jubilees and texts related to Jubilees: 4Q216–228

Damascus Document: 4Q266–273

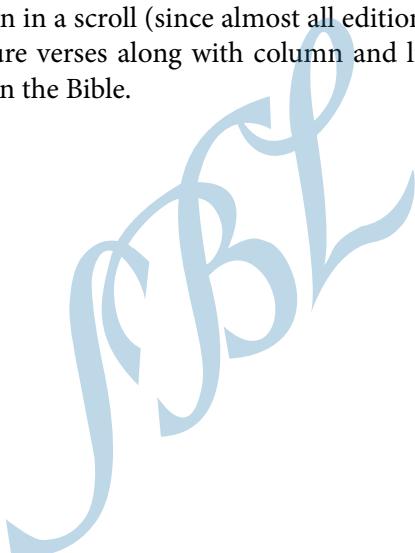
4QMMT: 4Q394–399

Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: 4Q400–407

Instruction of the Maven (4QInstruction): 4Q415–418

Temple Scroll: 11Q19–20

In order to highlight the biblical DSS and to indicate the texts to which they correspond, the simple numerical title as well as their nonnumerical title are given together (e.g., 4Q88 [4QPs^f]). Specific passages in these texts are indicated by reference to scriptural passage; this succinctly provides reference to a location in a scroll (since almost all editions of DSS biblical texts indicate scripture verses along with column and line numbers), as well as to a location in the Bible.



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INTRODUCTION

The following pages began as a handout on the grammar of the Dead Sea Scrolls (= DSS). While preparing to teach a class on Post-Biblical Hebrew, I found that the descriptions of the Hebrew of the DSS in Qimron's *Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (= HDSS) and Kutscher's *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Complete Isaiah Scroll* did not suit the needs of students.¹ Although Kutscher's treatment is thorough, careful, and nuanced, it treats a text that exhibits numerous idiosyncrasies not shared by other texts; as such it cannot easily be used to introduce students to the language of the DSS as a whole. Qimron's book, on the other hand, does assess the (non-biblical) scrolls as a whole; nevertheless, it too has some shortcomings. What I find problematic about Qimron's HDSS are the following: (1) The book presumes that many linguistic idiosyncrasies witnessed in the scrolls reflect a single vernacular dialect.² (2) The book proposes dramatic

1. Elisha Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); this work is in some ways an expansion of, while also being a summary of Qimron's dissertation: *Grammar of the Hebrew Language of the Scrolls of the Judean Desert* (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1976). E. Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Complete Isaiah Scroll* (STDJ 6; Leiden: Brill, 1974), originally published in Hebrew as *Ha-Lashon ve-ha-Reqa' ha-Leshoni shel Megillat Yesha'yahu ha-Selema mi-Megillot Yam ha-Malah* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1959).

2. Qimron refers throughout the book to the language of the DSS as though the texts (with few exceptions) reflect a common dialect. That the idiosyncrasies of the scrolls' language are, in part, attributable to a spoken idiom is suggested by Qimron in the final paragraph of his concluding chapter, where he refers to (among other things) the pronouns *הַאֲנָה* and *הַיְאָה* and *yqw!l* + suffix verb forms: "These unique features show that DSS Hebrew is not merely a mixture of BH, MH and Aramaic, but also draws on a distinct spoken dialect" (HDSS, 117–18). More recently Qimron writes: "It is my contention that the grammar of the DSS reflects the Hebrew of the period spoken in Jerusalem or its vicinity" (Elisha Qimron, "The Nature of the DSS Hebrew and Its Relation to BH and MH," in *Diggers at the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira* [ed. T.

differences between the language of the DSS and the Hebrew as evidenced in the MT, though the evidence for these differences is sometimes tenuous (based on a single example) and often ambiguous.³ (3) The book does not sufficiently discuss the ambiguities inherent in many of its examples and sometimes does not entertain other possible explanations. (4) The book is sometimes imprecise in its description; for example, it refers to the “weakening” of gutturals without a more precise description of where and when specific phonemes “weaken.” (5) The book, although it has recently been reprinted in 2008, contains no references to recently published texts or secondary literature (including Qimron’s own numerous publications).

Of course, the study of the Hebrew of the DSS is not limited to these two books. There are a plethora of studies and sketches on the languages of the scrolls. Nevertheless, these other sketches often give only an overview of the main features of the languages and do not present the background necessary for a student to understand the respective phenomena in Hebrew. For these reasons, I felt compelled to create my own descriptions and explanations, commenting especially where I disagreed with Qimron’s *HDSS*.

In reference to the above-listed criticisms, I should explain briefly my approach. (1) I have taken a broader view of the linguistic phenomena and assume that the linguistic peculiarities found in the scrolls are potentially due to a wide spectrum of causes, only one of which is the underlying spoken idiom of the sectarian writers and scribes. Moreover, I am not concerned with isolating the vernacular idiom of the writers; it

Muraoka and John F. Elwolde; STDJ 36; Leiden: Brill, 2000], 232). For criticisms of Qimron’s assumptions, see Avi Hurvitz, “Was QH a ‘Spoken’ Language? On Some Recent Views and Positions: Comments,” in *Diggers at the Well*, 110–114. See, also, Florentino García Martínez, “Review of E. Qimron, *Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*,” JSJ 19 (1988): 115–17.

3. For example, Qimron notes that the single spelling of “Sheol” with a prothetic *aleph* (אָשָׁוֹל), combined with the fact that the word is always spelled with a *waw* after the *aleph* is evidence that the word was always pronounced “eš’ol”; he also calls attention to the tendency in Samaritan Hebrew for the prothetic *aleph* to appear in the oral tradition but not in the written tradition (*HDSS*, 39). For more on this, see §5.1 below, “Prothetic Aleph.” In a similar way, he claims “For the contraction ōy → ō, I was able to find only one instance (הָוִי (= הָוִי) from 1QIsa^a at Isa 1:24 (*HDSS*, 35). He also suggests that the word מְבוֹאֵי in 4Q405 23 i, 9 is further evidence of this (or a similar) shift, though a far more pedestrian explanation is also available (see §4.10, “Diphthongs and Triphthongs”).

is more important, it seems to me, for students to understand the reading and writing register(s) of those copying the scrolls and composing their texts. (2) I attempt, wherever relevant, to point to examples of phenomena from the MT that are similar to the phenomena found in the DSS. It is assumed that the MT is made up of texts that reflect numerous dialects and registers of Hebrew; I assume a similar diversity in the DSS. Nevertheless, I also assume that the writers of the DSS were (at least at times) attempting to write in a register that approximated the writing/reading register reflected in the MT.⁴ (3) I try to explore the ambiguities inherent in the examples cited by Qimron, Kutscher, and others, in order to illustrate different possible explanations and to question some underlying assumptions. (4) I attempt to be as precise as possible in identifying the parameters of certain phonological shifts; for example, each guttural consonant is described separately and its specific “weakness” explored. (5) I provide further examples of the same phenomena described by Qimron and others from my own readings as well as from consulting Accordance software and the *Dead Sea Scrolls Concordance*; and I incorporate more recent insights from linguistics and philology of the DSS into my descriptions.⁵ Despite my best efforts at analyzing the following phenomena, I recognize that my observations do not represent the final word on these matters and in many ways remain preliminary.

It should be added that, although I disagree with Qimron's book in many ways, it is also an incredibly rich source of information. Further, I do not entirely disagree with it. Many of the observations in it seem well-founded. The general approach of assessing the vernacular dialect(s) from

4. One indication that at least some writers of the DSS were familiar with the form of the MT as we know it is suggested by the close correspondence in spelling between some biblical scrolls and the MT: e.g., וְתִהְרִינוּ (4Q70 [4QJer^a] at Jer 18:21) for MT MT יְכַבְּדֵנִי; וְתִהְרִינוּ (4Q85 [4QPs^c] at Ps 50:23) for MT יְכַבְּדֵנִי vs. יְכַבְּדֵנִי, which is what we would expect based on forms like תָּבָרְכֵנִי “you will bless me” (Gen 27:19); also the defective orthography in יְגַמְּהוּ “they will stone him” (4Q26a [4QLev^e] at Lev 20:2) for MT בְּנָוּ; יְגַמְּהוּ “his children” (4Q35 [4QDeut^h] at Deut 33:9) for MT בְּנָוּ according to his ways” (4Q70 [4QJer^a] at Jer 17:10) for MT כַּדְרָכוֹ.

⁷ Martin G. Abegg, “Qumran Text and Tagging,” in *Accordance 9.5* (Altamonte Springs, Florida: OakTree Software, 1999–2009); Martin G. Abegg et al., “Grammatical Tagging of Dead Sea Scrolls Biblical Corpus,” in *Accordance 9.5* (Altamonte Springs, Florida: OakTree Software, 2009); Martin G. Abegg et al., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Concordance* (3 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2003–).

the written sources is also profitable and well worth considering. It seems likely that many aspects of the language he outlines were, in fact, features of a dialect spoken by some writers and readers of the texts.

Two other very helpful resources that students should consult are the synopses of the Hebrew language offered by Martin Abegg in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years* and in *Qumran Cave 1, II: The Isaiah Scrolls, Part 2: Introductions, Commentary, and Textual Variants*.⁶ Although for the first synopsis he could not draw on all the texts now available, and does not draw on the biblical scrolls, his statistics are still useful in getting a general idea for the frequency of certain forms and the basic outline of the language. The second synopsis offers observations not only on the Isaiah scrolls, but on all the scrolls in general. A third synopsis, that of Antoon Schoors, catalogs many forms and vocabulary, but only treats the texts considered part of the Wisdom tradition.⁷

I have chosen to describe around twenty-five topics. These, in my estimation, are not addressed sufficiently in Abegg's synopses (or in other synopses) and have not been treated adequately in Qimron's *HDSS*. Some items that are covered sufficiently in Qimron's *Grammar* and in his *HDSS* have not been addressed again here.⁸ This means, of course, that the following pages are not intended as a comprehensive grammar of DSS Hebrew.

As might already be obvious, the orthography, phonology, and morphology of the DSS are often intimately linked. Thus, I have tried not to repeat myself by addressing the same topic from the perspective of orthography, phonology, morphology, but have, instead, addressed topics where they are most relevant in the description of the language. Discussing the same features in three different sections would be needlessly repetitive and would obscure the explanations offered.

6. Martin G. Abegg, "The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment* (ed. Peter W. Flint and James C. VanderKam; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1998–1999), 1:325–58 and idem, "Linguistic Profile of the Isaiah Scrolls," in *Qumran Cave 1, II: The Isaiah Scrolls, Part 2: Introductions, Commentary, and Textual Variants* (ed. Eugene Ulrich and Peter W. Flint; DJD 32; Oxford: Clarendon, 2010), 25–41.

7. Antoon Schoors, "The Language of the Qumran Sapiential Works," in *The Wisdom Texts from Qumran* (ed. C. Hempel et al.; BETL 159; Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 61–95.

8. For example, I have not provided a list of words found in the DSS according to their bases, as Qimron has done.