

## Qumran Corner

### *A 'Reconstructionist' Approach to the Dead Sea Scrolls: E. Puech's edition of Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XXV*<sup>1</sup>

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The tremendous enterprise of publishing the Dead Sea Scrolls is now nearing completion with the appearance of the final volumes of the series *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* (DJD). For almost fifty years, this prestigious series has been the main address for Scrolls scholars, and its fluctuations have been closely connected to those in Scrolls scholarship. In recent years, the series has generally maintained the highest of standards, a tribute to the wise guidance of its editor-in-chief Emanuel Tov.

The volume under review here contains twelve Hebrew works from Qumran Cave 4, many of which have only survived in a very poor state. 4Q521, here entitled 'Un Apocalypse Messianique',<sup>2</sup> consists of 25 fragments, of which only two contain continuous text. 4Q522 deals with Joshua, and contains lists of place names that are likely to be of interest to scholars of the historical geography of the Land of Israel in the Second Temple period. 4Q523 includes only three, very badly damaged fragments, which in my opinion reveal nothing about their contents (see below). In Professor Emile Puech's opinion, 4Q524 represents fragments of the Temple Scroll. 4Q525, a wisdom text, has survived in some fifty fragments, some lengthy and some containing only parts of letters. 4Q526 is a single fragment with only parts of letters, and so neither its contents nor genre may be determined. The same is true of 4Q527, which in its present state comprises only two lines of broken letters. In the third line only the tops of letters have been preserved. Puech believes he can read them; I can't.

4Q528, described as a prayer or a wisdom text, also cannot be identified with any certainty. By contrast, Puech appears to have successfully identified an additional copy of Genesis, published here under the siglum 4Q576. The identification was apparently possible on the basis of the rare word [חנטי] that survived in fragment 2. 4Q577 is also very damaged, and only the words מבורל, אשר מלטם, and השחיתון provide any clue to the subject discussed. Finally, 4Q578, a single fragment, mentions somebody named פתלמיס, who is presumably one of the Ptolemaic kings.

It is only natural that in a series that appeared over such a lengthy period

<sup>1</sup> Review of E. Puech, *Qumrân Grotte 4, XVIII: Textes Hébreux (4Q521–4Q528, 4Q576–4Q579)*, *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*, XXV (Oxford, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> On this and similar titles, and their relationship to the works themselves, see further below.

of time, and in which dozens of scholars of different backgrounds and inclinations participated, not all volumes are of a similar quality. Within the general guidelines of the series, the editors have always enjoyed a great degree of freedom, which they have exercised to their benefit or detriment.

It is with this background in mind that we come to assess the present volume. Professor Puech, Director of Research at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and teacher at the École biblique et archéologique française in Jerusalem, needs little introduction. All scholars of Ancient Hebrew and its sister languages (particularly the Canaanite dialects and Aramaic) are aware of his broad-ranging work reflected in a vast repertoire of studies. His mastery of the history of the alphabet and his keen eyes have served him well in his numerous publications.

Some of Puech's articles on the reconstruction and interpretation of the Qumran scrolls, such as his work on the Hodayot published in this journal, have become classics of scholarship and provided the basis of all further work on these texts.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, he has provided insightful assistance in both reading and reconstruction to many scholars who have enjoyed his company at the École biblique in Jerusalem. Through his often incisive comments about the work of writers less talented in the field of epigraphy, Puech has corrected countless errors that have crept into the scholarly literature, and no one doubts his outstanding abilities in reading and reconstructing the Dead Sea Scrolls.

This is no mean task: preparing ancient manuscripts for publication demands of the scholar an intimate knowledge of the script, mastery of the language and expertise in the literary genre, and at the same time a good measure of discernment coupled with a degree of humility. These latter qualities are no less important than the former, particularly when dealing with fragmentary manuscripts such as the Dead Sea Scrolls. No scholar can be expert in all fields, and anyone who undertakes the study of ancient texts is likely to err in reading or interpretation.

As mentioned above, *DJD* reflects different scholarly approaches. This volume represents the school of maximal readings and wide-ranging reconstructions. Puech's work is characterised by decisiveness, and his certainty regarding his interpretations is reflected in many aspects of this volume. Puech makes only scant use of the 'reading marks' (superlinear dot or circlet) to indicate broken readings. A brief glance at the photographs at the end of the volume is sufficient to make the reader suspect that the texts' state of preservation is worse than would have been understood from Puech's transcriptions. Moreover, whereas the *DJD* style dictates that citations from the texts in the commentary must also include the reading dots, these have been entirely omitted in Puech's commentary. Puech seems to believe that every trace of ink on the manuscript can offer a reading, whether marked as 'certain' or 'uncertain'. Regarding the 'certain' readings, the reader must be aware that many are based upon the partial remains of letters, and that Puech's decision not to

<sup>3</sup> E. Puech, 'Quelques aspects de la restauration du Rouleau des Hymnes (1QH)', *JJS* 39 (1988), pp. 38–55.

mark them with a dot strays from the norm in the *DJD* series. On the basis of these doubtful readings, Puech builds bold reconstructions. For example, on pp. 14–15 we find a 14-line discussion of a verb from which only the first letter survives, and even this is the verbal prefix *yod*.

This is not a sole instance. Throughout the book we find reconstructions based upon the scantiest remains, such as the following typical examples. On the basis of the letters ת-נ גשר Puech launches into a study of Zoroastrian influences on the Essenes. The entire discussion about the 'valley of death' and 'the bridge of choice' is based upon the single word גשר, which appears alone without any context. Moreover, his reference to the adaptation of Iranian religious concepts to 'un milieu et anthropologie sémitique' is puzzling. 'Semitic' is still employed in scholarly circles as a handy term relating to a group of languages that share an historical relationship, but to the best of my knowledge, Semitic Anthropology (based on racial types and ideas of *Volksgeist*) died out some years ago. The text itself contains absolutely no reference to resurrection, as Puech suggests. At the end of page 20, we likewise find a lengthy discussion based upon a single letter.

On pages 75–76, Puech provides us with an interesting story about the theft of the temple vessels and an impious priest on the basis of a partial reading יהונתן and the word מזלגות. There is no evidence that the name refers to a Hasmonean king as Puech claims, and it seems that any attempt to suggest an interpretation of this text is doomed to failure since it does not even contain two consecutive, certain words. It seems to me that in such cases it is preferable that the scholar acknowledge the limitations of the text rather than suggest forced interpretations that have no basis in the manuscript itself.

Puech has a tendency to provide the works with titles that do not suit their content. For example, he names 4Q521 *Apocalypse messianique*. However, unlike Puech, I cannot find apocalyptic or prophetic language in this work, and it certainly does not belong to the genre of the apocalypse. 4Q523 is entitled *Jonathan*, but as mentioned above, there is no certainty that the figure bearing this name was important in the narrative. Similarly, 4Q525, a classic wisdom text, appears here under the title 4QBeatitudes, a name that implies that it is somehow connected to the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. True, Puech tries to justify his use of this name by claiming that he inherited it from the originally appointed editor, Jean Starcky, and did not wish to change it. But it is difficult to accept this explanation, since Puech altered the titles of other texts, and also chose just the אשרי section of the work for pre-publication, while comparing it to the New Testament and to Ben Sira.

The linguistic notes are particularly problematic. Puech does not explain his original system for presenting the short and long vowels. For example, in his discussion of the orthography in 4Q521 (page 6), he describes the /o/ vowel in the words יעבור, יסוג, and תעזוב as resulting from a shift  $\bar{u} > \bar{o}$ . I am not acquainted with this use of the macron. Puech also places in the same category the /o/ vowels in the words קדשו, לעלם, and יפיע; but the /o/ in קדשו is derived from a historically short /u/, that in לעלם from a historically long /a:/, and that in יפיע from the diphthong /aw/. These examples are drawn from a single page of the book under review, but similar such examples may be found

throughout the volume when either orthography or language is mentioned. The long and short vowel system of Hebrew is complicated in the extreme, and it would be unfair to expect every scholar of ancient literature to have a strong linguistic background. However, in such cases it would be better for the scholar to seek the assistance of an expert or to omit the linguistic analysis altogether, rather than present an inaccurate description.

Most of the scrolls' editors have adopted the helpful practice of publishing their texts in preliminary editions. Such editions have provided an opening for other scholars to express their views on the work prior to the 'official' publication in the *DJD* series. In this way, many of the scrolls have benefited from a wide-ranging discussion before their appearance in this series, and the editors have usually taken advantage of the opportunity to refine their views in light of their colleagues' suggestions, even when they have not accepted them. Accordingly, it has been customary that the official *DJD* edition of each manuscript opens with a comprehensive bibliography detailing those studies written about the text being published. Although his preliminary publications provoked some reactions, Puech never mentions his colleagues' contributions in the bibliography section at the head of the official publications.

Take for instance Puech's edition of 4Q522. The preliminary edition of this work was published under the title 'La Pierre de Sion et l'autel des holocausts d'après un manuscrit hébreu de la grotte 4 (4Q522)', *RB* 99 (1992), pp. 676–96. In a politely worded note in the Hebrew journal *Tarbiz*, E. Qimron offered an alternative interpretation of this text, suggesting that it deals with the question of why Joshua did not build the temple in Jerusalem upon his entry to the Land of Israel. Qimron further demonstrated that the expression סֶלֶע צִיּוֹן, appearing in 4Q522 9 ii 4, is to be interpreted as 'the Fortress of Zion', and refers to Mt Zion rather than to the stone upon which the altar was built.<sup>4</sup>

Puech appears to have tacitly adopted the essence of Qimron's interpretation of the text, but this does not stop him from repeatedly attacking Qimron's readings in his footnotes. Incidentally, we may note that Puech accuses Qimron of publishing 'une édition pirate partielle' of 4Q524 (see p. xiv), a phraseology reminiscent of the pre-1991 state of affairs in the Qumran editorial process.

Puech's philological notes also require further consideration. The following may be taken as a representative selection of comments.

P. 6: The 'Qumranic' linguistic forms are not unique to biblical texts.

P. 6: The correction from חֲסִדִּיךָ to חֲסִדִּיךָ may not be a *change* from singular to plural, but from a defective to plene orthography of the form חֲסִדִּיךָ. For the use of the *yod* as a mater lectionis in such cases, compare E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1986), p. 19.

P. 7, note 10: It is unlikely that a sign appearing in the margins of 1QSerek HaYahad reflects an ancient *waw* found in the Aramaic inscription from Tell Fakhariyeh. The similarity is probably coincidental.

<sup>4</sup> E. Qimron, 'Concerning the "Joshua Cycles" from Qumran', *Tarbiz* 63 (1994), pp. 503–508 (in Hebrew).

P. 8: Puech reconstructs the reading of the Hebrew word **פעלת** as *pe'ūlat*, but in the Tiberian version it is vocalised **פִּעֲלֶת**. In his discussion of this word, Puech should have mentioned Qimron's article in the Jonas Greenfield Festschrift that deals with the variant forms of this word in detail.<sup>5</sup> **פעולה** can mean both 'deed' and 'reward', but only the first meaning has been taken into consideration by Puech. The reference to **פעלת אלהין** in the Deir 'Alla inscription is unnecessary: this word is well attested in the Bible, and the comparison adds nothing to our understanding of the Qumran text. We ought not assume that an ancient inscription from Transjordan influenced the scroll's author. If Puech wished to demonstrate that **פעלה** may be used to indicate God's deeds, he could have referred to Ps. 28:5.

P. 9: Puech discusses at great length the word **קימים**. It is obvious that in this context, we are not dealing with Aramaic **קיימא** (covenant), a possibility that Puech mentions only to reject. Puech claims that the meaning of the line **להפר להימי עולם ולנהקנים נהיות עולם** is uncertain, but the (correct) interpretation he suggests was already mentioned by J. Licht in his commentary published in 1957,<sup>6</sup> and is commonplace in the English editions and translations.

P. 11: Puech translates the word **הלוא** as though it is an interrogative, overlooking the strong evidence for its being a presentative particle.<sup>7</sup>

P. 12: Puech interprets the expression **בזאת תדעו** as referring to the preceding lines, but the expression usually refers to the text that follows. Compare, for example, Gen. 34:15, Num. 16:28, Isa. 27:9.

P. 21, n. 50: Puech still cites Diez-Macho's article from 1960, in which he made exaggerated claims for the antiquity of Targum Neofiti. Diez-Macho's views have not gained wide currency amongst scholars, particularly those with a strong linguistic training, and the article should not be cited as authoritative.<sup>8</sup>

P. 27: On the basis of the letters **וּבְנֵי וְיִתְה וּפְתָה** Puech presents a detailed discussion of resurrection. To justify this, he attempts to demonstrate that the expression **פתה קברות** is common in Hebrew and Aramaic. However, most of his examples are interdependent. The citation he brings at length from an Aggadic expansion in Targum Neofiti (Gen. 30:22) is actually a translation of Ezek. 37:12. Puech also cites the verse from Ezekiel and its Targum (Jonathan) as if they represent two further examples of the expression.

P. 72: The Arabic name for the Dome of the Rock is *qubbet essehra*, not *el-qubbet essahra* as Puech claims.

P. 73, n. 79: Puech transcribes the name **המוראה** in the Samaritan Penta-

<sup>5</sup> E. Qimron, 'A Work on Divine Providence: 4Q413', in Z. Zevit, S. Gitin and M. Sokoloff (eds), *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblica, Epigraphic and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 1995), pp. 191–202, especially pp. 198–202.

<sup>6</sup> J. Licht, *The Thanksgiving Scroll* (Jerusalem, 1957), p. 182 (in Hebrew).

<sup>7</sup> See for example D. Sivan and W. Schniederwind, 'Letting your "Yes" be "No" in Ancient Israel: A Study of the Asserverative **לֹא** and **הֲלֹא**', *JSS* 38 (1993), pp. 209–26, with earlier literature.

<sup>8</sup> Compare, for example, the balanced approach of A. D. York, 'The Dating of Targumic Literature', *JSJ* 5 (1974), pp. 49–62, and the strong words of S. A. Kaufman, 'On Methodology in the Study of the Targums and their Chronology', *JSNT* 23 (1985), pp. 117–24.

teuch (Gen. 22:2) as *moreh*. The traditional Samaritan reading is *emmūriyya*.<sup>9</sup> The Samaritan Targum reads at this point חזיביה, not חזיתה as Puech reports.<sup>10</sup>

P. 100: Based upon the parallel from 11QT LXIV 6, Puech correctly reconstructs 4Q524 14 1 according to the pericope in Deut. 21:18–21 that deals with the rebellious son. Unfortunately, he also reconstructs lines 5–6 according to the same pericope. It is very unlikely that the same biblical laws were repeated within the space of a few lines in this scroll; it is more likely that lines 5–6 paraphrase the pericope of the claim against virginity (Deut. 22:13ff).<sup>11</sup>

P. 123: התאפק ביסוריה does not mean ‘qui s’attache à ses leçons’. התאפק means ‘to show restraint’, and ייסורים means chastisements. The word is rare in Biblical Hebrew, but quite common in Mishnaic Hebrew and Aramaic. The correct interpretation is thus ‘who holds firm at its chastisements’. The whole context is as follows: אשרי אדם השיג חכמה ויתהלך בתורת עליון ויכן לדרכיה לבו ויתאפק ביסוריה ובנועיה ירצה תמניד ולוא יטושנה בעוני מצרנף ובעת צוקה ולא יעזובנה, ‘Fortunate is the man who has attained wisdom, and has followed the law of the Exalted One, and has set his mind to its ways; who has held firm at its chastisements and always been desirous of its afflictions. He does not abandon it at testing times, nor depart from it at the moment of troubles.’ The idea that the measure of the truly righteous person is known by his ability to remain faithful to God’s law at times of distress is also found in IQS i 17.

P. 124: The form דורשיה does not have to be interpreted as a pausal form of participle דורש with a feminine singular pronominal suffix, nor should we be surprised by the fact that a plural form would appear in parallel with a singular. This phenomenon is common in the Bible.<sup>12</sup>

P. 134: The form יסיבלו cannot be interpreted as ‘au *pi’el* orthographié avec le *yod* comme il arrive en mishnique’. The form יסיבלו (one may also read יסובלו) appears in parallel with the expression יכרו דרכיה ‘dig her paths’, and this term may also be a technical term connected with building, though the broken context prevents a certain interpretation. Compare in Biblical Aramaic ואשוהי מסובלין.

P. 151: The vocalisation of the word תפלה in the Massoretic version of Jeremiah 23:13, Job 1:22, 24:12, etc. is not ‘fautive’ as Puech would have it. The difference between the Tiberian vocalisation and the spelling תופלה found in the scroll reflects the common phenomenon of a noun declined according to two different patterns (note the labial as second radical). A lengthy discussion of the alternation of the vowels /i/ and /u/ in such forms is already to be found in Kutscher’s work on the Isaiah scroll, first published in Hebrew in 1959 and available in an English translation.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See Z. Ben-Hayyim, *The Literary and Oral Tradition of Hebrew and Aramaic Amongst the Samaritans*, vol iv: *The Words of the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem, 1977), p. 370 (in Hebrew).

<sup>10</sup> See A. Tal, *The Samaritan Targum of the Pentateuch: A Critical Edition*, part 1: *Genesis, Exodus* (Tel Aviv, 1980), p. 74 (in Hebrew). The work Tibbet Marqa contains a variant reading מחזיה. See Tal’s notes ad. loc.

<sup>11</sup> I owe this observation to Dr Shani Berrin.

<sup>12</sup> Compare A. Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington, 1985), pp. 44–50, for numerous examples.

<sup>13</sup> See the Hebrew version, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll* (Jerusalem, 1959), pp. 356–91; English version (Leiden, 1971), pp. 452–96.

P. 158: Puech finds the expression מגוללים בסאון difficult, and mentions a suggestion to correct 1QS<sup>a</sup>: בַּסֹּאֵן רָשָׁע מִחֲרָשְׁתּוֹ וּגְאוּלִּים בְּשׁוּבָתוֹ to read בַּסֹּאֵן. However, both Serekh HaYahad and Puech's text may be explained according to H. Yalon's suggestion that the word סֹאֵן is to be connected to Aramaic סִין, 'filth, mire'.<sup>14</sup>

Professor Puech's problematic maximalist approach in editing the Scrolls needs to be taken with a healthy degree of skepticism. I have only cited typical examples of his philological notes, but they suffice to indicate that many of his suggestions would profit from a thorough re-examination. Only in the light of such a fresh study will it be possible to fully appreciate the contribution of this volume to the history of Hebrew language and literature in the Second Temple period.

<sup>14</sup> H. Yalon, *Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Philological Essays 1949–1952* (Jerusalem, 1967), p. 106 (in Hebrew). The comparison is cited in brief in the book's English abstract, p. xi.