

ABSTRACT

This study examines the Hebrew variants in the manuscripts of the book of Deuteronomy found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. While the Dead Sea Scrolls have provided an abundance of data, this data has created a fierce debate over the textual transmission history of the Hebrew Bible. The divergent views over the transmission history are built largely upon broad treatments of the biblical Dead Sea Scroll texts. Little work has been done analyzing variants found in individual scrolls and assessing what these individual variants tell us about the textual history of that scroll as well as the broader text history.

One must examine variants to understand best the textual affinities of the biblical scrolls. In order to do this, each scroll's secondary variants are identified and then classified. These classifications help us posit both why and where many of these variants came from. For several scrolls we are able to suggest that the scribe of that manuscript created some of these variants. In this manner we learn not only about scribal habits in the Second Temple Period, but gain a context and method for assessing other manuscripts.

Our research leads us to believe the text of Deuteronomy was not a fluid text, rather, was standardized prior to the Qumran community. This standardization is clearly seen by the overwhelming majority of secondary variants meant to improve the text, while never altering the message of the text.