

A Comprehensive Analysis of the Conjunction Waw in the Biblical Dead Sea Scrolls Variants and Their Implications

Jarod T. Jacobs

Abstract

Variations between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Masoretic Text have sparked interest among scholars since 1947. E. Kutscher, M. Goshen-Gottstein, T. Muraoka, and others have analyzed these variations in order to learn about the language of the scribes who produced these manuscripts. Such studies have great value for our understanding of Qumran Hebrew, but they are all limited by their lack of access to the entire corpus of DSS manuscripts. Also, since these scholars were working without the benefit of technology, their data collection was incomplete at times. Both of these shortfalls can now be overcome by the complete digitization of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This allows for linguistic studies to comprehensively cover every scroll and every variation with the aid of computers. Through this type of research the conclusions of previous scholars can be reexamined as well as new results to be revealed.

This thesis argues that an analysis of the variations between the DSS and the MT can identify unique elements of Qumran Hebrew syntax. Goshen-Gottstein argued against this conclusion, but more recently Muraoka has presented new research that supports the value of the biblical scrolls in understanding the language of the scribes. Neither of these scholars, though, analyzed every variation of any feature in all of the DSS; thus their conclusions can only be taken as preliminary. This study attempts to provide another piece of the scholarly dialogue through a comprehensive analysis of one syntactical feature found in the biblical scrolls. If a trend towards a single syntactical element can be identified then the value of the biblical scrolls for understanding Qumran Hebrew will be validated.

A number of syntactical variations could be analyzed for this study, such as the use of the direct object marker or the long imperfect form, but one stands out because of its prevalence and distribution throughout the biblical scrolls – the use of the conjunction waw. A comprehensive analysis of the 794 variations involving waw reveals significant shifts in three areas: lists, the verbal system, and the negation $\text{א}.\text{ל}$. The results of this analysis establish the validity of using the variations between the biblical DSS and the MT to identify unique syntactical features of Qumran Hebrew.