

### Gideon R. Kotzé

*The Qumran Manuscripts of Lamentations: A Text-Critical Study.* (Studia Semitica Neerlandica 61). Leiden: Brill, 2013. Pp. xii, 209. Hardback. €103.00 / US\$ 133.00. ISBN 978-90-04-23684-4.

This revised version of a 2010 University of Stellenbosch doctoral dissertation looks text-critically at the text of the four preserved (fragmentary) Lamentations manuscripts from Qumran. The study describes the formal characteristics of these manuscripts, comparing their wordings to those of MT, as well as LXX, P, V, and T, and investigating how the variant readings in the Qumran manuscripts came into being. Kotzé carefully discusses all variant readings and the possible reasons for those variants, and in an exemplary way attempts to understand each representative of the text in its own right. For example the reading of 4Q111 of Lam 1:15. Its editor in DJD 16, Cross, comments briefly “4QLam appears to read אבירי; if so it is a simple lapse for אבירי.” Kotzé, however, discusses this reading extensively, whether the manuscript 4Q111 read אבירי or אבודי, and ultimately argues that even though אבירי seems to be the earlier reading, אבודי makes sense in the immediate context of v. 15.

Kotzé considers the relation of the manuscripts and their scribes to the purported Qumran community, and concludes that even though 4QLam manifests what Tov called the “Qumran scribal practice,” this does not mean that its variant readings are necessarily sectarian. In an excursus he discusses the possible connection of a scribal marking (but I doubt its existence) in the bottom margin of 5Q6 to the Qumran community.

In the conclusions, Kotzé posits that the majority of the variants can be attributed to deliberate changes brought about by scribes, in particular in the case of 4Q111: these readings “exhibit the creativity of ancient scribes who felt free to alter the details of the wordings in the manuscripts which they copied” (178), and concludes that “it is necessary that text-critics avail themselves of information regarding the scribal culture of the Second Temple period in general, as well as the contexts of the scribes’ education and training . . . where text-critics can benefit from the expertise of historians and scholars who interpret the material culture and artefacts recovered by archaeology” (181). This might be true, but the importance of Dead Sea Scrolls is that the manuscripts, as scribal artefacts, are themselves the best witness to Second Temple scribal culture, and it is studies like that of Kotzé, that taken together contribute most to our knowledge of this scribal culture.

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