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The Serekh Texts

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Sarianna Metso's *The Serekh Texts* is an important contribution to scholarship on this group of Dead Sea Scrolls manuscripts. The volume is published as an entry in two T&T Clark series, the Library of Second Temple Studies and the Companion to the Qumran Scrolls series. It is a comprehensive introduction to particular Qumran texts and relevant scholarship, as characterizes the latter.

Metso, associate professor in the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations and the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Toronto, is the author of a highly regarded monograph on the compositional and redactional history of the *Serekh* texts titled *The Textual Development of the Qumran Community Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 1997) and numerous subsequent articles on these texts. As such, she is ideally suited as author of the present volume, which addresses a number of manuscripts from the Qumran corpus, whether various copies of *Serekh ha-yahad* (Rule of the Community, formerly called the Manual of Discipline) or different but related texts, including 1QSa and 1QSB (see further below). Naturally, Metso puts primary emphasis on 1QS, the best-preserved and most extensive manuscript of the *Serekh*. She skillfully addresses the inconsistencies found within that composite manuscript and also explains its relationship at various points with the Cave 4 copies of the *Serekh*, particularly 4QS^{b, d} and 4QS^e. In *Textual*

Development, Metso argued that the latter were representatives of two parallel developments from an earlier rule text, with elements of both tracks present in the subsequently expanded version of the *Serekh* evidenced in 1QS. That approach has been received positively in Qumran scholarship and is continued here. Metso also addresses some of the vexing issues of the relationship between the *Serekh* and the Damascus Document (CD) texts, the other major rule tradition found among the scrolls. The CD texts were treated by Charlotte Hempel in an earlier contribution to the CQS series (*Damascus Texts*, 2000) and as such are not a primary emphasis here.

Metso's volume opens with a bibliography of photographic, critical, and study editions of the *Serekh* texts. This is followed by seven chapters, each with relevant bibliography, and finally a list of works cited and indices of references to ancient texts and modern authors. Though relatively short in terms of page length, the book includes a significant amount of content, thanks both to Metso's concise style and the publisher's rather small font. Given the fact that twelve completely blank pages are appended at the end of the book, a more generous font size would have been much appreciated by this reviewer.

Metso devotes the first chapter to brief discussions of the discovery, publication, and physical characteristics of the several *Serekh* copies. In addition to 1QS, fragments of ten *Serekh* manuscripts also were found in Cave 4 (4Q255–264), of which three are most important (4QS^b = 4Q256; 4QS^d = 4Q258; and 4QS^e = 4Q259). Two other manuscripts are also surveyed, 5Q11 and 11Q29 (the latter of whose identification with the *Serekh* tradition is debated).

Metso next addresses the genre and contents of the *Serekh* in chapter 2. She bases this discussion on 1QS but cautions the reader that “methodologically ... this is by no means unproblematic” (7). She successfully addressed the redactional features of 1QS and its composite nature, and she highlights significant differences between 1QS and extant parallels in the Cave 4 witnesses. For example, when discussing the oath of the members in 1QS V, 7b–20a, Metso discusses the disjointed nature of lines 13b–15a and its distinctive vocabulary relative to its context; these features had led earlier scholars to propose that this material was an interpolation, and publication of 4QS^{b,d} later confirmed that hypothesis (10).

In the third chapter, titled “Phases of Textual Growth,” Metso summarizes in just over four pages the history of scholarship on the compositional and redactional history of the *Serekh*. The composite nature of 1QS has been acknowledged since 1959, and the first few decades of scholarship assumed a core “manifesto” that was supplemented in response to the changing historical circumstances of the Qumran community. (This manifesto typically was said to include 1QS IX, 11, the line that mentions an eschatological prophet

and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel; this passage today is normally understood as part of a later addition.) Later scholarship challenged the thesis that the additions to the text could be explained on such historical grounds, and the publication of the Cave 4 manuscripts raised further questions about the history of the text. Metso's argument that 1QS is a late version of the *Serekh* was mentioned above; the most significant alternative today is Philip Alexander's thesis that the age of the physical manuscripts must be given major consideration when determining the redactional history of the *Serekh*; thus in his view the Cave 4 copies present abridged versions of the older manuscript 1QS. Metso counters Alexander's argument about the age of the manuscripts by proposing that varying versions of the *Serekh* continued to be copied (as did varying editions of biblical books such as Exodus and Jeremiah), and she adroitly appeals to evaluations of the competing theses by other scholars to settle the debate in her favor (18–19).

The fourth chapter is titled "Commentary on Key Passages," but that is somewhat misleading, as the chapter treats major thematic issues (community life, covenant ceremony, admission of new members, etc.) instead of dealing with portions of the text line by line. Metso provides much valuable information here, and her discussions of the origins of the *Serekh*'s dualistic "two ways" thought and the judicial session are highlights. Some will criticize another aspect of the chapter, however, as she frequently appeals to Josephus's description of the Essenes (along with descriptions provided by Philo and Pliny) to substantiate the dominant scholarly hypothesis that Qumran was home to an Essene community. This reviewer is sympathetic to Metso's assumptions and recognizes that this volume is intended to address specific issues concerning the *Serekh* texts, not provide a history of scholarship on Qumran in general. Metso does indicate on occasion that information from Josephus can be difficult to reconcile with the Qumran texts (as on admission of new members [28–29]) and quotes another scholar who says the numerous correspondences between the Qumran texts and the three other writers place the "burden of proof" on those who would deny the sect's Essene identity (21), yet she does not state explicitly that these are issues of significant scholarly debate. In fairness to Metso, though, this oversight certainly does not negate the many positives of the book.

In chapter 5 Metso considers relationships between the *Serekh* and the Bible. She notes that biblical language permeates the *Serekh*, but explicit quotations of Hebrew biblical texts are rare, cited as prooftexts in 1QS but absent from the earlier Cave 4 versions. Concerning the New Testament, Metso surveys several similarities between Qumran and early Christian use of biblical motifs (such as preparing the way of the Lord) or practices (comparing Qumran washings and meals with Christian baptism and the Eucharist). Naturally, messianism is also a major issue in this regard, but it becomes difficult to compare the messianism of the *Serekh* (actually, 1QS) in particular to that of early Christianity in general. As such, Metso's discussion of this topic appears oversimplified.

As above on the Essene identity of the sect and use of Josephus for collaboration, her comments are mainstream and certainly not egregious; rather, after acknowledging multiple messianic expectations at Qumran, she nevertheless implies in her conclusion that the dual expectations of royal and priestly figures (as in 1QS IX, 11 but absent from 4QS^c) were the community's *standard* approach. Again, however, this does not detract from the overall value of the book.

The sixth chapter is devoted to brief introductions and summaries of contents for several other rule texts, along with consideration of their possible relationships to the *Serekh*. Texts discussed here include the Rule of the Congregation (1QSa and copies from Cave 4); Rule of the Blessings (1QSB); Miscellaneous Rules (4Q265); Rebukes Reported by the Overseer (4Q477); Communal Ceremony (4Q275); Four Lots (4Q279); and the generically named Rule (5Q13).

The final chapter is reserved for Metso's discussion of the "function of rule texts in the Essene community," and here she ties together a number of arguments she has introduced earlier in the book while also addressing the nature of the rule texts. Metso notes that the *Serekh* texts themselves describe two types of communal gatherings, those for study (for which books or Scripture naturally are mentioned) and those for decision making (which lack mention of books). She proposes that in the latter appeal is made to oral, priestly traditions rather than to biblical legal codes, although no doubt those oral traditions were shaped by Scripture in communal study. Metso earlier had noted that explicit quotations of Scripture in 1QS were rare prooftexts and absent from Cave 4 manuscripts; now she argues that this illustrates a pattern at Qumran of Scripture being used after the fact to substantiate the judicial decisions of the community, as opposed to the community basing its decisions explicitly on biblical texts at the outset. Thus the community valued its legal decisions on a par with Scripture. Then, using an analogy from rabbinic literature, Metso argues that oral law could exist in a Jewish context alongside written law, with the oral law being that used in judicial contexts. This brings Metso to her conclusion about the nature of the *Serekh* and other rules at Qumran: they were records of Qumran's decision-making sessions and reports of oral traditions, that is, archives for education of members and initiates rather than prescriptive codes to be cited in actual cases. As such they complicate attempts to reconstruct the history of the Qumran community based on redactional levels in the rules, because they were cumulative texts that were not exclusive of earlier versions. This for Metso explains why divergent, shorter *Serekh* texts like those of Cave 4 could influence the more expansive 1QS, yet they could also continue to be copied after the latter had been compiled. The Cave 1 version did not supplant the earlier versions but instead was a community record alongside them.

The few criticisms cited above aside, this is a very valuable introduction to the *Serekh* texts that goes far beyond the basics. Metso, clearly in strong command of the primary and secondary sources, has succeeded admirably in her treatment of the texts and her proposal to explain their function in the life of the Qumran community. As such, the final chapter provides a substantive and compelling conclusion to the book as a whole. This volume should be required reading for anyone undertaking serious work on this corpus and on the Dead Sea Scrolls in general.