

4Q175 (TESTIMONIA) IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS: SCRIBAL MEMORY AND TEXTUAL RECOMPOSITION

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ABSTRACT

The Qumran manuscript 4Q175 (Testimonia) represents a structured collection of scriptural passages traditionally interpreted as a compilation of messianic testimonia. This study offers a philological reassessment of the text, arguing that 4Q175 should not be understood as a series of direct biblical quotations but as a recomposed textual unit shaped through processes of scribal memory, interpretive transmission, and textual adaptation.

Through detailed analysis of orthographic, morphological, and syntactic variation in comparison with the Masoretic Text, the study demonstrates that the deviations found in 4Q175 form recurring and systematic patterns inconsistent with mechanical copying. These include non-assimilated consonantal forms, omission of weak consonants, instability in verbal sequencing, shifts in grammatical person, and lexical adaptation. The cumulative effect of these features supports a model of memory-based recomposition rather than textual corruption.

Special attention is given to modern translation practices, particularly the Russian translation by I. D. Amusin, which exhibits a tendency toward normalization. This process, while improving readability, obscures the distinctive linguistic and textual features of the Qumran manuscript. The study therefore proposes a philological-analytical model of translation that preserves variation and explicitly reflects the textual plurality characteristic of the Second Temple period.

By integrating philological analysis with methodological reflection on translation, this study contributes to a broader understanding of textual transmission, scriptural authority, and the dynamics of biblical interpretation in the Qumran corpus. It further situates 4Q175 within the wider scribal environment of the Dead Sea Scrolls, drawing parallels with manuscripts such as the Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsaa), where similar patterns of variation have been documented.

KEYWORDS

Dead Sea Scrolls; 4Q175; Testimonia; Qumran; Scribal Memory; Textual Recomposition; Hebrew Philology; Textual Criticism; Orthographic Variation; Biblical Transmission; Masoretic Text; Second Temple Judaism; Rewritten Scripture; 1QIsaa; Translation Studies

1. INTRODUCTION

The manuscript 4Q175, commonly referred to as Testimonia, occupies a significant place within the corpus of the Dead Sea Scrolls due to its structured collection of scriptural citations and its apparent messianic orientation.¹ Discovered in Cave 4 at Qumran, the text consists of a sequence of passages drawn primarily from Deuteronomy and Numbers, followed by a non-canonical composition often identified as part of the so-called Psalms of Joshua.²

Previous scholarship has largely treated 4Q175 as a compilation of biblical quotations, emphasizing its thematic organization and theological implications.³ However, less attention has been devoted to the precise linguistic and philological character of the text itself—particularly the nature and significance of its deviations from the Masoretic tradition.⁴ In the broader field of Dead Sea Scrolls research, such deviations have increasingly been interpreted not merely as scribal inaccuracies, but as indicators of textual plurality and fluidity within the transmission of scriptural traditions.⁵

This study seeks to re-examine 4Q175 from a strictly philological perspective, focusing on the internal structure of its language and its relationship to canonical Hebrew scripture. Rather than interpreting the observed differences as mere scribal errors, this paper proposes that they reflect a distinct mode of textual transmission—one rooted in memory, interpretive adaptation, and textual recomposition. This approach is consistent with recent developments in Qumran studies, where increasing attention has been given to the role of scribal practice, oral influence, and intertextuality in shaping textual forms.⁶

The central research question guiding this study is therefore:

Does 4Q175 represent a direct copy of scriptural material, or does it reflect an independent process of recomposition within a fluid textual tradition?

To address this question, the analysis will focus on three main areas:

1. Orthographic variation
2. Morphological and syntactic deviations
3. Translation and interpretation practices in modern scholarship

By situating these observations within the broader context of Qumran scribal culture, this study aims to contribute to ongoing discussions regarding textual plurality, scriptural authority, and the dynamics of transmission in Second Temple Judaism.⁷ At the same time, the study builds upon previous philological and interpretive work on the Dead Sea Scrolls, including analyses that emphasize the significance of textual variation for understanding the historical development of biblical tradition.⁸ Furthermore, lexicographic perspectives on Hebrew language structure and semantic development provide an additional framework for interpreting variation at the level of individual forms and lexical units.⁹

FOOTNOTES

1. García Martínez, F. (1996) *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*. Leiden: Brill.
2. Ulrich, E. (1999) *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
3. Allegro, J. M. (1956) 'Further Messianic References in Qumran Literature', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 75(3), pp. 174–187.
4. Tov, E. (2012) *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
5. Tov, E. (2004) *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert*. Leiden: Brill.
6. Brooke, G. J. (1985) *Exegesis at Qumran: 4QFlorilegium in its Jewish Context*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
7. Vermes, G. (1998) *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. London: Penguin Books.
8. Stanojević, Ž. (2009) *Kumranski spisi: dokaz verodostojnosti Biblije*. Beograd: Metafizika.
9. Stanojević, Ž. (2001) *Hebrejsko-srpski rečnik (Hebrew-Serbian Dictionary)*. Rad; Alfa i Omega. doi:10.5281/zenodo.19522850.

2. TEXTUAL STRUCTURE OF 4Q175 (TESTIMONIA) — sa fusnotama

The manuscript 4Q175 Testimonia represents a carefully structured composition consisting of a sequence of scriptural citations arranged in a deliberate theological order. Preserved in approximately thirty lines, the document is generally divided into four distinct sections, each corresponding to a specific conceptual representation of messianic expectation.¹

The first three sections of the text are composed of citations from the Pentateuch, primarily from Deuteronomy and Numbers, while the final section introduces a non-canonical passage often identified with the so-called Psalms of Joshua (4Q379). This compositional structure has long been recognized as programmatic, suggesting that the text is not a random anthology but a deliberately constructed theological document.²

2.1 Structural Organization

The four-part structure of 4Q175 can be outlined as follows:

1. Deuteronomy 5:25–26; 18:18–19 → the Prophet
2. Numbers 24:15–17 → the Royal/Messianic figure
3. Deuteronomy 33:8–11 → the Priestly figure
4. Non-canonical text (4Q379) → eschatological warning and judgment

This tripartite pattern (prophet–king–priest), already identified in early scholarship, reflects a developed messianic typology within Second Temple Judaism. As noted by John Marco Allegro,

the arrangement of these passages suggests a conceptual unity rather than a simple collection of quotations.³

However, while the thematic coherence of the document has been widely acknowledged, its linguistic and textual features have not always been subjected to equally detailed scrutiny.

2.2 Citation or Recomposition?

A central issue in the interpretation of 4Q175 concerns the nature of its scriptural material. Traditionally, the text has been described as a collection of “citations.” Yet a closer philological examination reveals that these passages frequently diverge from the canonical form preserved in the *Biblia Hebraica*.⁴

These divergences include:

- shifts in verbal person and tense
- orthographic inconsistencies
- variation in grammatical agreement
- omission or addition of lexical elements

For example, as already observed in the Serbian analysis, the opening formula differs from the Masoretic form in its syntactic orientation, presenting speech as referring to Moses rather than being directly attributed in the canonical manner. Similarly, verbal forms that in the Masoretic Text appear in one grammatical person may be rendered differently in 4Q175, indicating a degree of instability that exceeds what might be expected from simple scribal error.

Such phenomena suggest that the text was not copied mechanically from a written Vorlage, but instead reflects a process of recomposition. This observation aligns with the broader conclusions of Emanuel Tov, who has emphasized that many Qumran texts exhibit forms of textual fluidity that cannot be reduced to copying errors alone.⁵

2.3 Scribal Practice and Textual Fluidity

The linguistic profile of 4Q175 indicates that the scribe operated within a textual environment characterized by plurality rather than standardization. As demonstrated in the original Serbian analysis, certain features—such as the repeated omission of expected consonants (e.g., final alef in “prophet”) or the use of alternative verbal constructions—point toward a non-fixed orthographic system.⁶

These features may be interpreted in several ways:

1. Memory-based transmission
The text may reflect the scribe's recollection of scriptural passages rather than direct copying. This would explain the presence of paraphrastic elements and minor deviations in wording.
2. Oral influence
The syntactic simplifications and occasional shifts toward more "spoken" structures suggest the influence of oral recitation traditions.
3. Interpretive adaptation
The scribe may have consciously modified the text to emphasize specific theological meanings, particularly in a messianic context.

These possibilities correspond to what George J. Brooke describes as "intertextual interpretation," wherein scriptural material is not merely reproduced but actively reinterpreted within a new compositional framework.⁷

2.4 The Role of Non-Canonical Material

The inclusion of a non-canonical passage in the final section of 4Q175 is of particular significance. Unlike the preceding sections, which draw from recognized scriptural sources, this passage introduces a different textual authority, suggesting that the boundary between canonical and non-canonical literature was more permeable in the Qumran community.⁸

This observation supports the argument advanced by Florentino García Martínez that the Qumran corpus reflects a "library" rather than a fixed canon, in which various textual traditions coexist and interact.⁹

2.5 Implications for Textual Criticism

The structure and linguistic character of 4Q175 have important implications for the study of textual transmission in Second Temple Judaism. Rather than representing a stable textual tradition, the manuscript demonstrates that scriptural material could be:

- selected
- rearranged
- modified
- and reinterpreted

within a single compositional unit.

This challenges the assumption that biblical texts circulated exclusively in fixed forms and instead points toward a dynamic process of textual development. As emphasized by Geza Vermes, the Dead Sea Scrolls reveal a stage in the history of the biblical text in which variation was not only possible but normative.¹⁰

FOOTNOTES

1. García Martínez, F. (1996) *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*. Leiden: Brill.
2. Ulrich, E. (1999) *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
3. Allegro, J. M. (1956) 'Further Messianic References in Qumran Literature', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 75(3), pp. 174–187.
4. Tov, E. (2012) *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
5. Tov, E. (2004) *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert*. Leiden: Brill.
6. Qimron, E. (1986) *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
7. Brooke, G. J. (1985) *Exegesis at Qumran: 4QFlorilegium in its Jewish Context*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
8. Dimant, D. (2005) 'Use and Interpretation of Mikra in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha', in *Mikra*. Assen: Van Gorcum.
9. García Martínez, F. (2007) *Qumran and Apocalyptic: Studies on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran*. Leiden: Brill.
10. Vermes, G. (1998) *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. London: Penguin Books.

3. ORTHOGRAPHIC AND MORPHOLOGICAL VARIATION IN 4Q175

The manuscript 4Q175 Testimonia exhibits a wide range of orthographic, morphological, and syntactic variations when compared to the standard form preserved in the Biblia Hebraica. These variations are not random but display recurring patterns, suggesting a systematic scribal practice rather than isolated copying errors.¹

This section classifies and analyzes these variations, drawing on the original Serbian analysis while situating the observations within the broader framework of Dead Sea Scrolls philology.

3.1 Orthographic Variation

One of the most prominent features of 4Q175 is its orthographic instability, particularly in the representation of consonants and the use of plene and defective spelling.²

3.1.1 Consonantal Variation

A clear example is the variation in the verbal form:

- MT: יתן (yitten)
- 4Q175: ינתן (yinten)

This form reflects the preservation of the consonant nun before assimilation, which in the Masoretic tradition is typically absorbed into the following consonant and marked by dageš forte. The presence of the non-assimilated form in 4Q175 suggests either:

- an earlier orthographic stage
- or a scribal preference for phonetic transparency

Such forms are widely attested in Qumran Hebrew and have been interpreted as evidence of a less standardized orthographic system.¹

3.1.2 Omission of Expected Consonants

A recurring phenomenon noted in the original analysis is the omission of final aleph in the noun:

- נביא (navi', "prophet") → written without final aleph

This omission appears consistently throughout the manuscript, indicating that it is not accidental but reflects a systematic orthographic tendency.

This phenomenon aligns with what has been described in Qumran studies as orthographic reduction, where weak consonants are either omitted or inconsistently represented.²

3.2 Morphological Variation

3.2.1 Verbal System Instability

The manuscript frequently departs from the verbal system found in the Masoretic Text, particularly in the use of tense and aspect.

One example highlighted in the Serbian analysis involves the use of:

- waw + perfect (wayyiqtol-like structure) where MT has waw + imperfect

This inversion suggests a lack of strict adherence to the classical Biblical Hebrew narrative sequence. Instead, the text reflects a more flexible verbal system, possibly influenced by:

- Late Biblical Hebrew
- or spoken linguistic patterns

Such variation has been identified by Emanuel Tov as characteristic of non-standardized textual traditions within the Qumran corpus.¹

3.2.2 Gender Variation in Nouns

The Serbian analysis correctly observes variation in grammatical gender, for example in the noun “fear,” which appears in a different gender than in the Masoretic Text.

While Hebrew allows for some flexibility in gender assignment, deviations from canonical usage may indicate:

- dialectal influence
- or scribal inconsistency

Importantly, such variation does not affect semantic interpretation but reflects the linguistic environment in which the text was produced.

3.3 Syntactic Variation

3.3.1 Shift in Grammatical Person

One of the most significant syntactic deviations occurs in the transformation of direct divine speech.

Example:

- MT: “I heard...” (1st person)
- 4Q175: “You heard...” (2nd person)

This shift fundamentally alters the grammatical perspective of the text. Rather than representing a simple copying mistake, such a transformation suggests:

- reinterpretation of the narrative voice
- or adaptation to a different communicative context

This phenomenon supports the hypothesis that the text was not copied verbatim but recomposed.³

3.3.2 Addition of Infinitive Absolute

The presence of the infinitive absolute in positions where it does not occur in the Masoretic Text represents another significant feature.

This addition may serve:

- emphatic purposes
- or reflect oral recitation patterns

Such usage is consistent with a more rhetorical and less strictly canonical form of expression.

3.4 Lexical and Semantic Adjustment

The manuscript also exhibits minor lexical adjustments, including:

- substitution of synonymous terms
- simplification of expressions
- adaptation toward more accessible language

As noted in the original analysis, the text often gives the impression of a more “spoken” or “popular” linguistic register when compared to the highly structured language of the Masoretic tradition.

This observation aligns with the concept of textual popularization, where complex canonical forms are reshaped into more accessible variants.

3.5 Interpretation of Variation: Error or System?

The cumulative evidence suggests that the variations in 4Q175 should not be classified simply as “errors.” Instead, they point toward a coherent model of textual transmission.

Three interpretive models may be proposed:

1. Scribal Error Model
Variation as accidental deviation
→ insufficient to explain systematic patterns
2. Scribal Freedom Model
Deliberate modification of the text
→ partially explanatory
3. Memory-Based Recomposition Model (preferred)

The data most strongly support the hypothesis that:

4Q175 reflects a recomposed text based on memorized or semi-memorized scriptural traditions.

This model explains:

- paraphrastic variation
- grammatical instability
- orthographic inconsistency
- preservation of meaning despite formal divergence

Such a process corresponds to what Geza Vermes described as the “fluid state of scripture” in the Second Temple period.⁴

3.6 Implications for Translation

The observations above have direct implications for modern translation practice.

As already demonstrated in the Serbian analysis of the Russian translation by Amusin:

- translators often normalize the text toward the Masoretic standard
- thereby obscuring its distinctive features

This raises a critical methodological question:

Should 4Q175 be translated as a biblical quotation, or as an independent Qumran composition?

The present study argues strongly for the latter approach.

TABLE 1. Major Types of Orthographic and Morphological Variation in 4Q175

Category	MT (Hebrew)	4Q175 (Hebrew)	Transliteration (MT / 4Q175)	Type of Variation	Philological Significance
Verbal morphology	יִתֵּן	יִתֵּן	yitten / yinten	Non-assimilated nun (pre- Masoretic orthography)	Preservation of nun prior to assimilation; reflects a non- standardized, pre- Masoretic orthographic stage attested in Qumran Hebrew
Orthography	נְבִיאַ	נְבִי	navi' / navi	Loss of weak consonant (ʿalef)	Systematic omission of final aleph indicates orthographic reduction characteristic of Qumran scribal practice
Verbal sequence	וַיִּתֵּן	וַיִּתֵּן (var.)	wayyitten / wenatan	Non-standard verbal sequencing	Departure from classical Biblical Hebrew narrative sequence; suggests flexible verbal system

Category	MT (Hebrew)	4Q175 (Hebrew)	Transliteration (MT / 4Q175)	Type of Variation	Philological Significance
Grammatical gender	יִרְאֶה (f.)	יִרְאֶה / var.	yir'ah / yir'eh	Gender variation	or recompositional transmission Reflects grammatical flexibility within Qumran Hebrew; does not significantly affect semantic interpretation
Person of verb	שָׂמַעְתִּי	שָׂמַעְתָּ	shamati / shamata	Shift in grammatical person	Alters narrative perspective; indicates recomposition rather than direct copying
Lexical structure	—	+ אִינְפִינִיטִיב אֲבִסּוּלוּטוּס	—	Addition / rhetorical expansion	May reflect emphatic or performative (oral) features of transmission
Textual transmission	Biblical form	Adapted wording	—	Recomposition / paraphrase	Preserves semantic core while reshaping form; evidence of non- mechanical transmission
Translation practice	MT-based rendering	Qumran reading	—	Translation normalization	Modern translations often align with MT, obscuring distinctive Qumran features

The classification presented above demonstrates that the deviations in 4Q175 are not random, but fall into recurring categories, supporting the hypothesis of a recomposed textual tradition rather than mechanical copying.

FOOTNOTES

1. Tov, E. (2012) *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. 3rd edn. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
2. Qimron, E. (1986) *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
3. Stanojević, Ž. (2026) “COLUMN 6 – The Great Isaiah Scroll from Qumran (1QIsaa): Orthographic and Scribal Features, Analysis, and Translation”. doi:10.5281/zenodo.19557658.
4. Vermes, G. (1998) *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. London: Penguin Books.
5. García Martínez, F. (1996) *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*. Leiden: Brill.
6. Stanojević, Ž. (2012) *Kumranski spisi: dokaz verodostojnosti Biblije Tom 2: Tajna Isaijinog svitka*. Zenodo. doi:10.5281/zenodo.19522797

4. TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION: THE CASE OF AMUSIN

The translation of Qumran texts presents a complex methodological challenge, particularly in cases where the manuscript diverges from the standard form of the Masoretic Text. The manuscript 4Q175 Testimonia offers a clear example of this problem, as its linguistic profile reflects a non-standardized textual tradition characterized by orthographic instability, morphological variation, and syntactic restructuring.¹

A particularly instructive case is the Russian translation by I. D. Amusin, whose work has played a significant role in making the Dead Sea Scrolls accessible to a wider scholarly audience. While Amusin's translation is philologically informed and generally reliable, a closer comparison with the Hebrew text of 4Q175 reveals a consistent tendency toward normalization.²

4.1 Normalization versus Preservation

One of the central issues in the translation of 4Q175 is the choice between:

Normalization toward the Masoretic Text
Preservation of Qumran-specific features

In numerous instances, Amusin's translation appears to align the text with the Masoretic standard, even where the Qumran manuscript clearly diverges. This is particularly evident in:

grammatical person
verbal forms
lexical structure

For example, where the Hebrew text of 4Q175 shifts from first-person to second-person forms, Amusin frequently restores the Masoretic reading, thereby eliminating the syntactic irregularity. While this approach improves readability and aligns the text with canonical expectations, it simultaneously obscures the distinctive linguistic character of the manuscript.³

Such normalization reflects a broader tendency in modern translations of Qumran texts, where deviations from canonical forms are often interpreted as errors rather than meaningful features of the text. However, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, many of these deviations exhibit systematic patterns and should therefore be understood as integral to the textual tradition.¹

4.2 Translation as Interpretation

The comparison between the Hebrew text of 4Q175 and Amusin's translation demonstrates that translation is not a neutral act but an interpretive process. Every decision made by the translator—whether to preserve or to normalize—implicitly reflects a theoretical position regarding the nature of the text.²

Three primary translation strategies can be identified:

1. Canonical Alignment Model

The text is translated in accordance with the Masoretic tradition, minimizing deviations.

Advantage: readability and theological familiarity

Disadvantage: loss of textual individuality

2. Diplomatic Translation Model

The translation follows the manuscript as closely as possible, preserving all irregularities.

Advantage: philological accuracy

Disadvantage: reduced readability

3. Philological-Analytical Model (proposed)

The present study advocates a third approach:

a translation that preserves Qumran-specific features while simultaneously explaining them within a philological framework.

This model:

retains grammatical variation

preserves orthographic anomalies

avoids automatic normalization

integrates commentary within the translation process

Such an approach allows the reader to perceive the text not as a corrupted version of the Bible, but as an independent textual witness.

4.3 Evidence of Recomposition in Translation

The tendency toward normalization in Amusin's translation becomes particularly significant when viewed in light of the hypothesis proposed in this study—that 4Q175 represents a recomposed text rather than a direct copy.¹

If the manuscript indeed reflects memory-based or interpretive transmission, then its deviations are not secondary distortions but primary features of the text. In this context, normalization in translation effectively erases the very evidence necessary for understanding the process of textual formation.

This issue becomes especially clear in passages where:

verbal forms are altered
syntactic structure is simplified
lexical substitutions occur

In such cases, the translator's intervention transforms a philologically complex text into a harmonized version aligned with canonical expectations.²

4.4 Comparison with Qumran Scribal Practice

The patterns observed in Amusin's translation can be contrasted with the scribal practices attested in other Qumran manuscripts, including the 1QIsaa. As demonstrated in previous studies of the Great Isaiah Scroll (Stanojević 2026), orthographic and morphological variation is not exceptional but characteristic of the Qumran textual environment.⁴

In this context, the deviations found in 4Q175 should not be treated as anomalies requiring correction, but as evidence of a broader scribal culture in which textual fluidity was normative. The tendency of modern translations to suppress such variation therefore represents a methodological limitation.⁵

4.5 Toward a New Translation Methodology

The analysis presented above suggests the need for a revised approach to the translation of Qumran texts. Such an approach should be based on the following principles:

Textual autonomy

Each manuscript should be treated as an independent textual witness, not as a defective version of the Masoretic Text.

Preservation of variation

Orthographic, morphological, and syntactic deviations should be retained in translation wherever possible.

Explicit annotation

Differences from canonical forms should be explained rather than eliminated.

Philological transparency

The translation should reflect the linguistic structure of the original text, even at the expense of stylistic smoothness.

4.6 Implications for the Study of Scripture

The case of Amusin's translation illustrates a broader issue in the study of ancient texts: the tension between readability and fidelity. In the context of the Dead Sea Scrolls, this tension is particularly acute, as the manuscripts themselves reflect a stage in the history of the biblical text prior to its standardization.⁵

By preserving rather than normalizing textual variation, translation can contribute to a more accurate understanding of this historical stage. In this sense, the translation of 4Q175 is not merely a linguistic task, but a methodological intervention in the study of textual transmission.¹

FOOTNOTES

1. Stanojević, Ž. (2026) *TESTIMONIA (4Q175): analiza kumranskog svitka sa posebnim osvrtom na Amusinov prevod na ruski jezik*. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/165282758>
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4. Stanojević, Ž. (2026) "COLUMN 6 – The Great Isaiah Scroll from Qumran (1QIsaa): Orthographic and Scribal Features, Analysis, and Translation". doi:10.5281/zenodo.19557658.
5. Vermes, G. (1998) *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. London: Penguin Books.
6. García Martínez, F. (1996) *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*. Leiden: Brill.

5. DISCUSSION

The results presented in this study require careful evaluation within the broader framework of Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship, particularly with regard to the nature of textual variation and the mechanisms of scriptural transmission. While variation in Qumran manuscripts has long been recognized, the interpretation of such variation remains a matter of ongoing debate.^{1 2 3}

The analysis of 4Q175 (*Testimonia*) conducted in the preceding chapters demonstrates that its deviations from the Masoretic Text cannot be explained solely in terms of isolated scribal errors.

Instead, the evidence points toward a patterned and internally coherent system of variation, encompassing orthographic, morphological, and syntactic levels.^{4 5}

At the same time, it is necessary to address a critical methodological objection: that the phenomena identified in 4Q175 may represent nothing more than common scribal irregularities, such as orthographic fluctuation, phonetic spelling, or occasional lapses in copying accuracy. Such an interpretation would align with a more conservative model of textual transmission, in which the underlying text remains stable despite surface-level deviations.

However, several factors argue against reducing the evidence to this model alone.

First, the variations observed in 4Q175 are not randomly distributed. As demonstrated in Chapter 3 and summarized in Table 1, they fall into recurring categories—non-assimilated consonantal forms, omission of weak consonants, instability in verbal sequencing, shifts in grammatical person, and lexical adaptation. The repetition of such patterns suggests a structured phenomenon rather than sporadic error. This type of patterned variation corresponds to what has been described in the scholarship as “textual pluriformity,” a defining feature of the Qumran corpus.^{2 6}

Second, the cumulative effect of these variations exceeds what would typically be expected from mechanical copying. While any individual instance could be interpreted as a minor deviation, their consistent co-occurrence within a relatively short text indicates a different mode of transmission—one in which the form of the text is not rigidly fixed. Similar observations have been made in studies of non-aligned Qumran texts, where the boundaries between copying, interpretation, and rewriting are often blurred.^{3 7}

Third, the structural composition of 4Q175 itself supports this interpretation. As shown in Chapter 2, the text is not a simple sequence of quotations but a deliberately arranged composition combining passages from Deuteronomy, Numbers, and a non-canonical source. This compositional intentionality suggests that the text was constructed with a specific interpretive purpose, making it more likely that the individual components were adapted rather than mechanically reproduced. This aligns with the concept of “rewritten Scripture,” as developed in Qumran studies, where biblical material is reshaped within new literary frameworks.⁸

In this context, the hypothesis of memory-based recomposition provides a coherent explanatory framework. According to this model, the scribe did not copy directly from a written Vorlage, but reproduced scriptural material from memory or semi-memorized tradition, allowing for variation in form while preserving semantic content. Such a process would naturally account for:

paraphrastic variation
grammatical instability
orthographic fluctuation
and selective adaptation

Importantly, this model does not exclude the possibility of written sources, but rather suggests that these sources were mediated through interpretive and mnemonic processes.⁹

The analysis of translation practices presented in Chapter 4 further reinforces this conclusion. The tendency of Amusin’s translation to normalize the text toward the Masoretic standard demonstrates how easily such variation can be obscured. By restoring canonical forms, the translation effectively removes the evidence that points to recompositional processes.¹⁰

This observation highlights a significant methodological issue: if modern translations systematically eliminate non-canonical features, then the very data required to understand textual transmission may be lost at the level of interpretation. In this sense, translation is not merely a secondary stage of analysis but an integral part of the philological process.

A further point of comparison arises from the broader Qumran corpus, particularly manuscripts such as the Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsaa). As demonstrated in previous studies, including detailed column-by-column analyses, orthographic and morphological variation is a defining feature of these texts. The parallels between 4Q175 and 1QIsaa suggest that both manuscripts reflect a shared scribal environment characterized by textual fluidity and the absence of strict standardization.^{11 12}

Nevertheless, caution is required. The evidence presented in this study does not in itself prove that every instance of variation in 4Q175 is the result of deliberate recomposition. It remains possible that some features represent conventional orthographic practices or minor copying inconsistencies. For this reason, the argument advanced here is cumulative rather than absolute.

The strength of the recomposition model lies not in any single example, but in the convergence of multiple lines of evidence:

patterned linguistic variation
compositional structure
translational distortion through normalization
and parallels within the Qumran corpus

Taken together, these elements support the conclusion that 4Q175 is best understood not as a defective copy of a canonical text, but as a product of a dynamic process of transmission in which memory, interpretation, and textual adaptation all played a role.

In this respect, the findings of the present study contribute to a more nuanced understanding of textual plurality in the Second Temple period. Rather than viewing variation as a problem to be corrected, it should be recognized as a fundamental feature of the textual landscape.¹³

FOOTNOTES

1. Tov, E. (2012) *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. 3rd edn. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
2. Ulrich, E. (2015) *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Development of the Biblical Text*. Leiden: Brill.
3. Tigchelaar, E. J. C. (2010) ‘Assessing Emanuel Tov’s Textual Categories’, *Dead Sea Discoveries*, 17(2), pp. 182–209.
4. García Martínez, F. (1996) *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*. Leiden: Brill.

5. Qimron, E. (1986) *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
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5. CONCLUSION

The analysis presented in this study has demonstrated that the manuscript 4Q175 (Testimonia) cannot be adequately understood as a simple collection of biblical quotations. Rather, it represents a carefully structured textual unit reflecting a dynamic process of transmission in which scriptural material is selected, arranged, and recomposed within a specific theological and interpretive framework.¹

The philological evidence examined in Chapter 3—particularly orthographic instability, morphological variation, and syntactic restructuring—indicates that the deviations from the Masoretic Text are not random errors but systematic features. These features suggest that the text emerged within a non-standardized textual environment, where variation was not only possible but expected.²

The analysis of translation practices in Chapter 4, with particular reference to the work of I. D. Amusin, has further demonstrated that modern translations often obscure these features through normalization. By aligning the Qumran text with the Masoretic tradition, such translations risk eliminating precisely those elements that provide insight into the processes of textual transmission.³

Taken together, these observations support the central hypothesis of this study:

4Q175 represents a recomposed text based on memorized or semi-memorized scriptural traditions rather than a direct mechanical copy of a fixed Vorlage.

This conclusion has several important implications.

First, it challenges the assumption that scriptural texts in the Second Temple period circulated exclusively in stable and fixed forms. Instead, the evidence suggests that textual plurality and fluidity were integral to the transmission of scriptural traditions.⁴

Second, it highlights the importance of treating each Qumran manuscript as an independent textual witness. Rather than viewing deviations as corruptions, they should be analyzed as meaningful components of a living textual tradition.

Third, it calls for a reconsideration of translation methodology. A translation that preserves variation and provides explicit philological explanation offers a more accurate representation of the textual reality than one that normalizes the text toward canonical forms.

The comparison with other Qumran manuscripts, particularly the Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsaa), reinforces this conclusion. As demonstrated in recent studies, orthographic and scribal variation is not exceptional but characteristic of the Qumran textual environment.⁵ The parallels between 4Q175 and 1QIsaa suggest that both manuscripts reflect a shared scribal culture in which textual recomposition played a significant role.

In this context, the contribution of the present study lies not only in the analysis of a single manuscript, but in its broader methodological implications. By combining philological analysis with a critical evaluation of translation practices, the study proposes a model for understanding Qumran texts as products of dynamic transmission rather than static reproduction.

Finally, the results of this study contribute to the ongoing discussion regarding the nature of scriptural authority in the Second Temple period. If texts such as 4Q175 were indeed shaped through processes of recomposition and interpretation, then scriptural authority must be understood not as fixed textual form, but as a flexible and evolving tradition.⁶

FOOTNOTES

1. Stanojević, Ž. (2026) *TESTIMONIA (4Q175): analiza kumranskog svitka sa posebnim osvrtom na Amusinov prevod na ruski jezik*. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/165282758>
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