4QPs^{x} – A Collective Interpretation of Ps. 89:20-38

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A puzzling fragment (4QPs^{x}= 4QPs89) containing at least part of Psalm 89 was discovered among the manuscripts of cave four in Qumran. Although the fragment is small (6,3 cm high, 4,4 cm wide) it has received a fair amount of scholarly interest because of its contents.[1] The fragment has aptly been described as 'one of the most unusual Psalms manuscripts found at Qumran'[2] as well as a 'battered and isolated bit'.[3] It has text corresponding with MT Psalm 89:20-31, but with variance in the form of the text and its order. Estimations as to the importance of these variants in understanding the textual development of Psalm 89 vary considerably. At one end of the spectrum are scholars who argue that the fragment is part of an ancient source for the Psalter[4] or at least for Psalm 89.[5] On the other end is the view of Patrick Skehan who argues that the fragment is a random text jotted down from memory by an inept scribe and as such clearly secondary to the MT Psalm 89.[6] Other scholars have just taken the text of the fragment into account when discussing variant readings, without judging the text as a whole,[7] and Matthew Mitchell has declined to assess the text critical importance of the fragment, at the same time maintaining that the fragment gives a clear idea of the

[1] The fragment (at the time classified as 4Q236) was preliminarily published in 1966 by Josef T. Milik, "Fragment d'une source du Psautier (4QPs89) et fragments des Jubilés, du Document de Damas, d'un phylactère dans la Grotte 4 de Qumran," *RB* 73 (1966): 94-106; and after him interpretations of the text were offered by Johannes P. M. van der Ploeg, "Le sens et un problème textuel du Ps LXXXIX," in *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Henri Cazelles*. (Ed. A. Caquot and M. Delcor; AOAT 212; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 471-81; Patrick Skehan, "Gleanings from Psalm Texts from Qumrân," in *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Henri Cazelles*. (Ed. A. Caquot and M. Delcor; AOAT 212; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 439-52; Uwe Gleßmer, "Das Textwachstum von Ps 89 und ein Qumranfragment," *BN* 65 (1992): 55-73; and Peter Flint, . "A Form of Psalm 89 (4Q236 = 4QPs89)," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Texts with English Translations. Vol. 4A, Pseudepigraphic and Non-masoretic Psalms and Prayers*. (Ed. J. H. Charlesworth & H. W. L. Rietz; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1997), 40-45. The official edition finally came out in 2000 prepared by Ulrich et al., "4QPs^{x}" in *Qumran Cave 4, XI Psalms to Chronicles*. (Ed. E. Ulrich et al.; DJD XVI; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 163-69. In this edition the classification of this fragment was changed to 4QPs^{x} to account for its perceived status as a Psalms manuscript. After this two articles have dealt with this fragment in some detail i.e., Klaus Koch, "Königspsalmen und ihr ritueller Hintergrund: Erwängungen zu Ps. 89, 20-38 und Ps. 20 und ihren Vorstufen," in *The Book Of Psalms: Composition and Reception*. (Ed. P. W. Flint and P. D. Miller, Jr.; VTSup 99; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 9-52; and Matthew Mitchell, "Genre Disputes and Communal Accusatory Laments: Reflections on the Genre of Psalm LXXXIX," *VT* 55/4 (2005): 511-27.

[2] Ulrich et al., "4QPs^{x}," 163.

[3] Skehan, "Gleanings," 439.

[4] Milik, "Fragment," 102-04.

[5] Gleßmer, "Das Textwachstum," 71; Flint, "A Form," 41; Ulrich et al., "4QPs^{x}," 164; and Koch, "Königspsalmen," 26-31.

[6] Skehan "Gleanings," 439, 441.

[7] See for example Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II, 51-100* (AB 17; Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), 316-17; and Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (WBC 20. Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 410.

original Gattung of Psalm 89 as an angry lament.[8] Thus far only Johannes P. M. van der Ploeg has suggested that the fragment should be viewed mainly as something else than as a text pertaining to give a version of Psalm 89. He argued that it belonged to a libretto of messianic testimonia, had been intentionally modified for this purpose and is thus secondary to the MT Psalm 89.[9]

It seems most scholars have followed the classic rule of textual criticism that the shorter version is the more original one, when evaluating the importance of this text as there is not much argumentation as to why 4QPs89 should be seen as a source of MT Psalm 89. Josef Milik proposed this on the basis of language i.e., the orthography and some word forms,[10] but did not explain the different order of the verses (or the ones missing from 4QPs89). Uwe Gleßmer compared 4QPs89, MT Psalm 89 and 2 Sam 7 and suggested that 4QPs89 might have an earlier form of the text than the other two.[11] Klaus Koch took this line of thought to its limits as even when he points out that 4QPs^{X} has clear secondary tendencies in comparison to the MT text, these are thought of as the work of a redactor and that by removing these tendencies layer by layer one would eventually get to the original source text of Psalm 89 (and 2 Sam 7).[12]

In this paper it is investigated, whether there would be a common reason present in 4QPs^{X} that could account for the textual variants between the texts without having to posit theoretic stages of textual development between them. This quest is approached by first considering several different material aspects (i.e., the fragment itself, the script etc.) which will help in determining whether the manuscript originally contained the whole Psalm 89 or only a part of it. Then the structure of the text on the fragment is considered and variants with other versions will be discussed. A common reason for most of the variants will be offered and finally a suggestion as to what else the text might have originally contained is presented.

Analysis of the Material Aspects

Skehan argued that the fragment comes from a blank guard sheet of a scroll already in use. The scroll would have contained another text and this would have been written from memory

[8] Mitchell, "Genre Disputes," 512, 520-21. Although he states that the text critical importance of the text is an open issue, his view on the text of 4QPs89 as a whole can clearly be observed by reading his comments on it. These comments clearly imply that the text is secondary to the MT.
[9] Van der Ploeg,"Le Sens," 480-81.
[10] Milik, "Fragment," 95-104.
[11] Gleßmer, Das Textwachstum," 71.
[12] Koch, "Königspsalmen," 20-31.

to the backside of the guard sheet attached to the final sheet of the manuscript.[13] Perhaps a bit surprisingly this suggestion has not merited comments from other scholars nor is there another clearly argued suggestion as to how much material, if any, there was before this fragment. Milik proposed that the fragment comes from the final sheet of a longer manuscript which would have been a source for the Psalter and ended with this version of Psalm 89,[14] but does not give arguments relating to the material that would really support this view. Van der Ploeg's suggestion that the text belongs to a collection of messianic testimonia[15] also presupposes other material (either preceding or following the current text) and Ulrich et al. present the possibility that a couple of words (אז דברת) found in the MT Psalm 89, not fitting on 4QPs^{x} line 1 might be included 'at the end of the previous column' which implies an understanding that there were more columns before the text that now survives.[16]

However, Skehan seems to be correct about this being a guard sheet or a handle sheet. He argued this on the basis that letters on the fragment are frequently crowded which implies a shortness of writing space that is a bit hard to merit if the text continued on to another sheet.[17] This is a valid argument, but not decisive on its own as it does not rule out preceding text. An even more important factor is that the usual scribal practice was to write the intended text on the different sheets and only afterwards sew the sheets together.[18] In this fragment its evident that the sewing was there before the text i.e., the scribe has clearly had to avoid the stitching present on the left edge of the fragment by placing a few of the very last letters above the last word on several consecutive lines (at least 5 and 6).[19]

Another point in this respect is the lack of ruling, both horizontal and vertical, on the fragment. There is no ruling visible on the fragment and its evident from the way the lines slant, especially as they slant in different directions, that the ruling has not just faded away, but was not there. Finally, if at least some of the reconstructions based on Ps. 89 are correct the original dimensions of the fragment fit a handle sheet nicely, but would be a very short column (especially as in normal circumstances there should be at least 1 cm of space left blank at the left edge for the stitching). Thus, unless it is supposed that this fragment is an exception as to how things were usually done, it is likely that the text was written down later

[13] Skehan, "Gleanings," 441.
[14] Milik, "Fragment," 103-104. Gleßmer, "Das Textwachstum"; 67; supports this view of the material.
[15] Van der Ploeg, "Le Sens," 481.
[16] Ulrich et al., "4QPs^{x}," 166.
[17] Skehan, "Gleanings," 441.
[18] Emanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judaean Desert* (STDJ 54. Leiden: Brill, 2004), 37; where he also notes a couple of possible exceptions to this practice.
[19] Ulrich et al., "4QPs^{x}," 166-67; also note that the scribe has had to avoid the stitching on these lines, but do not draw any conclusions from this.

than the rest of the scroll it was on (the sewing does indicate that there was something else on this scroll and the fragment is not an isolated piece of leather). This makes it also clear that as there was no material preceding this fragment, this text does not have the beginning of Psalm 89, but only a section of it beginning from verse 20. Although the exact original dimensions of the handle sheet can only be guessed at, the way that the scribe has written the text would seem to indicate that it probably wasn't a very tall strip of leather and it is doubtful that the whole ending of the Psalm would have fit the leather even in a shorter form. Thus it is likely that if the text was covering a coherent whole from the Psalm, it is either an abbreviation or an early form of God's promise to David in 89:20-38.[20]

Thus far, a suggestion for the original length of the material has been offered, but whether the text is from the handle sheet preceding the scroll or from the one at the end is still to be decided. Skehan did not argue why the text should have been on the backside of a guard sheet and not the front. This is an important factor as, if the text was written on the backside, it would likely have been a secondary text in comparison to the text already present on the scroll because it would have been at the end of the scroll and in the innermost layer which would not have been visible until the scroll was almost completely rolled open (and even then only partly). On the other hand, if the text is written on the front side it means that it was written on the handle sheet preceding the material on the scroll and would likely have a connection with the text already there as it would have been the first thing seen when the scroll was opened. Unfortunately the material itself cannot give a definite answer to this question and it needs to be decided on the basis of the script and the contents.

An important feature of the material side is the hand writing. The scribe has gotten quite a bit of critique (and with good reason) and Skehan goes as far as calling him inept.[21] There are many indicators of this in the text. First of all, fitting the text to the available space. It seems that the first line was either written later or that the scribe initially thought that he would need a lot more space than available for writing the text as the line is really crammed. This crowding of letters continues on other lines, but on the other hand the script on these is quite large in comparison to most of the scrolls so that it seems that the text would have fitted well if the scribe would have written a bit neater. As the text now stands, space is not always left between words and half the lines end with crowding the left edge.

[20] This seems to be a distinct section in Psalm 89 and Frank Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100* (Hermeneia- A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Ed. K. Baltzer. Transl. L. M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 402; state that there has long been a consensus about the division of Psalm 89 into three parts: 2-19, 20-38 and 39-52.
[21] Skehan, "Gleanings," 441-42.

Furthermore, there are many small mistakes corrected later by the same scribe and for example the use of final form for mem varies (sometimes he uses medial, sometimes final form). There are at least two possible explanations for the number of clear mistakes in the text. Either an experienced scribe worked with a great haste without taking care of spacing or final forms etc. or the text is the work of an inexperienced scribe, who is still learning his trade.[22] In view of the large number of mistakes and especially the spacing of the text it is unlikely that a professional scribe would have written this even in haste and thus this is likely the work of a beginner.

Skehan used the scribe's errors and the Aramaic influence found in the text as indicators that the scribe was not checked by a written prototype.[23] If the mistakes had been left uncorrected his view would be easier to accept. However, the scribe has corrected his errors by inserting supralinear (l. 6-7) and infralinear (l. 1) letters, dotting out an extra word (l. 4) and apparently also changing a letter from a yod to res (l. 2). In addition, if the first line was written later, as might well be the case,[24] this would seem to indicate that there was a written prototype rather than a text put down from memory, because it is hard to conceive that the scribe would have started from the middle of a verse and just later put in the first part as an afterthought (thus Skehan).[25] The possible Aramaic influence on the text can just as well (if not better) be explained by its presence in the text being copied than a characteristic of the scribe. These indicators might not make it a certainty that the scribe had a written prototype, but they do point towards it. If this is the case, it is hard to think of this text as a random text written down on the backside of a handle sheet. Rather it suggests that the text had some purpose and it is likely that it was copied on the front side rather than the back.

A clearer picture of the text has been gained by the analysis of these material aspects. The fragment is part of the handle sheet preceding a scroll that was already written and sewed together before this text was put on it. The text consists of some verses of Psalm 89 starting from verse 20 and likely not going beyond verse 38 and thus this fragment is not a part of a version of the whole psalm 89. There are two possible reasons for inserting this bit of text before another composition. Either it is part of the composition already on the scroll and it was accidentally left out when the scroll was first inscribed or someone thought that this text would fit as an introduction to the text present on the scroll. What the message of this text is will be discussed next.

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[22] The second option is suggested by van der Ploeg, "Le Sens," 475.
[23] Skehan, "Gleanings," 441.
[24] Thus Milik, "Fragment," 95-96; Skehan, "Gleanings, 440; Flint, "A Form," 42; Ulrich et al., "4QPs^{x}," 163.
[25] Skehan, Gleanings," 440-41.

Text and Translation:

4QPs^{x}

Top margin

1[בחזון ל]בחריכ תאמר שתעו[זר על]
ג[בור]
2 [הרימותי ב]חר מן עמ מצתי[ו]

3 [ומשחתיו]מזשמן קדשי vacat

4 [ ] {שמן} ידו תכנכם
ת
5 [ותאמצכם]שמתי בימ יד בנהר
ו ו
6 [ימין לא יוסיף] אואב ובן על לענות
נ
7 [יקראני א]בי את אני בכור אתנ[ו]

8 [עלין למלכי]ארץ אמ יעזבו

1. [In a vision to] your chosen ones you will say: ”a hel[per] was appointed [upon] a mi[ghty one]

2. [I have exalted one ch]osen from the people. I have found [him]

3. [and anointed him] with some of my holy oil”

4. [...] {oil} his hand will establish you (pl.)

5. [and he will support you (pl.)] I shall set the hand to the sea and to the rivers

6. [the right hand. No more shall] the enemy and the son of wickedness oppress him.

7. [He will cry to me:] “You are my father”. I will make [him] my firstborn

8. [the highest of the kings] on earth. If they forsake

MT verses 20-31

20 אז דברת בחזון לחסידיך ותאמר שויתי עזר
על גבר הרימותי בחור מעם 21 מצאתי דוד עבדי
בשמן קדשי משחתיו 22 אשר ידי תכון עמו אף
זרועי תאמצנו 23 לא ישא אויב בו ובן עולה לא
יעננו 24וכתותי מפניו צריו ומשנאיו אגוף 25
ואמונתי וחסדי עמו ובשמי תרום קרנו 26 ושמתי
בים ידו ובנהרות ימינו 27 הוא יקראני אבי אתה
אלי וצור ישועתי 28 אף אני בכור אתנהו עליון
למלכי ארץ 29 לעולם אשמור לו חסדי ובריתי
נאמנת לו 30 ושמתי לעד זרעו וכסאו כימי שמים
31 אם יעזבו בניו תורתי

20 Once you spoke in a vision to your devoted ones, and said: "I have set help on a mighty one, I have exalted one chosen from the people. 21 I have found David my servant, with my holy oil have I anointed him. 22 My hand will remain with him, and my arm will strengthen him. 23 No enemy will rise up against him, and the son of iniquity will not oppress him. 24 I will crush his enemies before him, and strike down those who hate him. 25 And my faithfulness and steadfast love are with him, and in my name his horn is exalted. 26 And I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. 27 He will cry to me: 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation!' 28 Also, I will make him the firstborn, the highest among the kings of the earth. 29 Forever I will keep my steadfast love for him, and my covenant will stand firm for him. 30 I will establish his seed forever, and his throne as long as the days of heaven. 31 If his sons forsake my law, and do not walk according to my ordinances,

Notes on the Readings

The letters on the fragment have mostly been seen in similar ways by the scholars and also the offered reconstructions are quite close because they are mostly based on the MT version of Psalm 89. Where there are differences in readings the scholars basically follow two different ways of seeing them. One way of reading the disputed letters is argued by Milik (followed by Gleßmer and in most cases also by van der Ploeg),[26] but the readings offered by Skehan (followed by Peter Flint and Ulrich et al.)[27] fit the traces of the letters better in every case and the text presented in this paper agrees in all these instances with the latter group of scholars. Sufficient arguments for these readings[28] and reconstructions following from them have been given by the above mentioned scholars and thus the following notes are only on issues where the offered interpretation differs from all the previous editions. Photographs have been used for the readings, but the original fragment was consulted in 2008 to ascertain them.

Lines 2-3, David is mentioned explicitly in verse 21 of the MT Ps 89 and because of this, the mention has been reconstructed in the lacuna before line 3 by most who have dealt with the text in detail.[29] But from the point of view of the contents (see below) its doubtful that David would be explicitly mentioned in 4QPs89. Support for this view is offered by three things in the text of the fragment. First of these is the spacing used by the scribe for the last word on line 2. The spacing between the letters in this word is markedly larger than elsewhere on the fragment and indicates that it was most likely the last word the scribe intended to write on the line and because of that he spread the letters to fill out most of the line. However, the word דוד is short and would almost (but not quite) fit the end of line 2 even with the current spacing. If the scribe would have written מצתי in his usual way דוד would have fit well at the end of the line. Thus it is likely that the scribe intended to write a longer word in the beginning of line 3 that had no possibility to fit on line 2. The second reason why the mention of David is unlikely is the change of preposition from ב to מן in verse 21. Starting

[26] Milik, "Fragment," 96-98; van der Ploeg "Le Sens," 476; Gleßmer, "Das Textwachstum," 60-66; read the text differently in the following cases: l. 2 instead of בחר they read בחיר. L. 4 they read ידי instead of ידו. L. 6 is read and reconstructed quite differently ימין לו ישאו אבו בן על לועגוה. On line 7 Milik reconstructs הוא in the beginning of the line following the MT. They read the last word on the line as אתנן.

[27] Skehan, "Gleanings," 442-43; Flint, "A Form," 42-44; Ulrich et al., " 4QPs^{x}," 165-66.

[28] There is one exception. Ulrich et al., " 4QPs^{x}," 167; argue that the supralinear letter near the end of line 7 cannot be meant as the final letter of the word because its medial in form. This is not a decisive argument as at least in 1QIs^{a} medial forms are used in supralinear corrections even when meant as a final letter. More important for deciding this issue is the placement of the supralinear letter. It is not written at the end of the line as are the supralinear letters above the previous two lines which means that it is not to be read as the final letter of the word, but as a medial one.

[29] Milik, "Fragment," 98; Skehan, "Gleanings," 442; Gleßmer, "Das Textwachstum," 58-66. Flint, "A Form," 44; Ulrich et al., "4QPs^{x}," 165.

the colon with מן would be quite awkward; the verb should come before it. The last argument is that the reconstruction suggested to the lacuna preceding line 4: משחתיו אשר is too long.[30] This clearly argues in favor of a different place for the verb and in light of all these considerations it is suggested that משחתיו should be reconstructed already in the lacuna before line 3 and not the one before line 4 and a suffix (3rd masc. sg.) should therefore be reconstructed in the lacuna at the end of line 2.

Line 3 ends in a vacat i.e., an empty space left intentionally by the scribe. It is quite large (c. 1, 2 cm) and there are two possible reasons for it. The first possibility is that there was a long word beginning line 4 that would not have fit the end of line 3 and the second is that it signifies a break in the composition.[31] Both are valid options and there is no certainty as to which would be the correct one. If the scribe wrote the last word of the previous line with larger spaces between letters to cover most of the empty space left on the line, the same has not been done on this line which could indicate that the vacat is meant as a compositional break. This view is supported by the contents as there is a clear break in the text at this point. Thus this option is the preferable one, but only tentatively.

Line 6 The vertical stroke of lamed in על changes to a shape resembling a head of waw/yod at the very top, and careful observation reveals that the vertical stroke is not completely continuous. It seems that the stroke breaks off and an extralinear waw is written above it. The identification is not certain, but the trace is ink and not a shadow (this was confirmed with the original fragment). There has been a lot of speculation and linguistic argumentation as to why the waw was not written here even though it is in a consonantal position in the word,[32] but it looks like it has been there all along.

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[30] Almost all of the reconstructions offered by Skehan, "Gleanings," 442; Flint, "A Form," 44; Ulrich et al., "4QPs^{x}," 165; make the lines practically the same length (as they should). There are two notable exceptions, this reconstruction that is nearly 1cm longer than the other reconstructions and the reconstruction on line 6 which is slightly too long in comparison to the others. The reconstruction on line 6 fits the available space, albeit barely, if the space between the words is similar to the spacing at the end of the same line (and not for example line 4) and the letters are written quite tightly. Although this casts a small amount of doubt on that reconstruction it is still a real possibility and as there is no convincing alternative to it, it is accepted, although with slight hesitation. As for the reconstruction of line 4, reconstructing both אשר and משחתה or משחתיו, so Milik, "Fragment," 98; Flint, "A Form," 44; Ulrich et al., "4QPs^{x}," 165; is simply too long for the lacuna. On the other hand reconstructing only משחתיו in the lacuna, thus Skehan, "Gleanings," 442; is a bit short in comparison to the other lines.

[31] The use of vacates to indicate compositional breaks is well attested in the Qumran corpus, see for example 1QpHab.

[32] Milik, "Fragment," 102; Dahood, *Psalms II, 51-100*, 316; van der Ploeg, "Le Sens," 480; Skehan, "Gleanings," 441-42; Flint, "A Form," 43; Ulrich et al., "4QPs^{x}," 166.

The Structure of 4QPs89 and Relation to Other Versions of Psalm 89:20-38

4QPs89 has quite a few differences to the Masoretic version (the Septuagint supports the MT in all, but one case) and there has been much discussion about which reading is in each instance the more original one. Thus far none have offered a reason that would account for most of the variants, but there seems to be one. The suggested reason is found most clearly presented in verse 22 of the Qumranic text. There it can be clearly seen that God's promises to David are adopted into a collective use. The collective reinterpretation of earlier passages inside the MT Psalter is a phenomenon of the post exilic period and is explicitly present in some passages of the MT Psalter and implicitly in many more. Marko Marttila has studied these references and among the Psalms he studied is also Psalm 89,[33] but for some reason Marttila does not deal with 4QPs89 in his study. This is unfortunate, as however this text and its worth in explaining the textual development of Psalm 89 is judged, it does contain a very explicit collective interpretation of the promise to David. It shows that at least someone in the Second Temple period was interpreting Psalm 89:20- in a collective way. Koch noticed this tendency in connection with 4QPs89 and correctly judged it a secondary feature in comparison to the MT tradition, but he only gave one example of this tendency and then left it at that. He also judged that the text of 4QPs89 is more original than the MT after this tendency is removed from it as a later redaction layer.[34] However, when the textual variants are seen from this perspective, it is obvious that this is the central reason behind the Qumranic version. It is a collective interpretation of the core of God's promise to David.[35] It has been both edited and abbreviated.[36]

In verse 20 the recipients of the oracle have been changed into the 'chosen' of God. This might denote a specific group at some point in time, but it is none the less a more general name than the 'faithful ones' in the MT which is a term that might also have had some political implications. Another alteration in verse 20 is the timeframe of the oracle. It is brought from a past event to a future/present one by leaving out אז דברת 'once you spoke'. After this setting comes what God has and will say to his chosen ones. It is likely that the

[33] Marko Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation in the Psalms: A Study of the Redaction History of the Psalter* (FAT, 2. Reihe 13; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 135-144.
[34] Koch, "Königspsalmen," 26-31.
[35] The core of the promise from a collective point of view i.e., for an individual like David the promise of a dynasty would have been part of the core.
[36] The tendency of 4QPs89 to abbreviate the text of the MT Psalm 89 was noticed already by Skehan, "Gleanings," 443.

rarer verb root שוה of the MT is here changed to the much more common שית.[37] The verb is likely used here in the passive sense in line with בחר in the next colon, but Skehan's suggestion that the form is due to Aramaic influence is also a possibility.[38] The change from noun to participle in עוזר 'helper' is in Koch's view part of the democratization tendency of 4QPs89 and this is quite possible.[39]

It is doubtful whether David is really mentioned in the Qumranic text in verse 21 (see above). Although it is not certain as the text is in a lacuna, it is more likely that there would be a more general reference than a mention of the specific figure of David. Anointing could be understood in a collective way in the post exilic period. This has been shown by Marttila's study of the term משיח 'anointed' in some of the post exilic Psalms.[40] Thus it seems that the reference to the choosing of David in the MT Psalm 89 is here modified to a more general remark about God electing chosen individuals (or groups) from the people.

After verse 21 there is a break in 4QPs89 that has not been noted by scholars. Skehan followed by Flint and Ulrich et al., argue that 4QPs89 would say that the hand establishing the chosen in verse 22 would actually be David's, not God's as in the MT.[41] Without going into the theological implications of this reading it is to be noted that it does not fit into the sense of the passage. There has been a failure to notice that there is a change of address here. It is not God speaking to David, but a reader leading the audience to a new point in the oracle (the same voice that addresses God in verse 20 and recites the text). This is more probable than God suddenly deciding to speak directly to the audience in the present day and then turning back to David in the historical scene.[42] The promises made to David in verse 22 are in the Qumran fragment directed to the chosen and at least the first one has a slightly different meaning i.e., in it the past promise of God to remain with David is changed with a

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[37] Thus also van der Ploeg, "Le Sens," 479. Milik interpreted the word as a Hebrew form with ancient ortography, but especially in view of the whole text this seems unlikely.
[38] Skehan, "Gleanings," 442.
[39] Koch, "Königspsalmen," 28.
[40] Marttila, *Collective*, 177-91.
[41] Skehan, "Gleanings," 442; Flint, "A Form," 41; Ulrich et al., " 4QPs^{x}," 164. Mitchell, "Genre disputes," 320-21, 326; interprets the verse in 4QPs89 the same way and concludes that this feature and the absence of the word חסד in 4QPs89 bring the emphasis of Psalm 89 as an angry lament into sharper focus. As will be argued, this is not the way the verse in 4QPs89 should be interpreted, but putting that aside, there is nothing present in 4QPs89 itself that would make it a lament and neither is there anything in it that might be termed as angry (an argument out of silence without any backing in the surviving text is not enough) on the contrary it clearly looks forward to a time when God's eternal promise will be made a reality again in the fate of his new chosen ones. This type of argumentation serves as an example of the danger of looking at a text through another text (the whole MT Psalm 89 in this case) without first analyzing the text thoroughly as it is.
[42] The place of verses 20-38 in the MT tradition also makes it clear that it's reciting a promise once made by Yahweh that is contrasted with the present situation in what follows this section. It is not giving the promise to anyone at that moment which the Qumran text explicitly does.

small alteration in verb form into a future promise to establish the chosen, and the second part of the verse is abbreviated. What this interim speech directed to the audience tells is that God will establish the chosen and support them after that. Proof of this promise is then given by continuing the oracle again in a more direct quotation than verse 22 is in 4QPs89 and with God's first person speech making a return to the scene. Verse 26 has been moved after verse 22 in 4QPs89 because it states the first part of the promise just given to the audience: God will establish you i.e., give you the land. Verse 23 that follows does the same for the second part of the received oracle.[43] It gives the promise of god's support a concrete frame. Verse 27a continues upon the same theme and verse 28 comes back to the establishing part[44] rounding up the promise God has given to all his chosen i.e., land and support.

The verses that are left out in 4QPs89 are the ones most clearly relating to the Davidic dynasty and throne (vv. 29-30) and thus would not fit well within a collective framework. This makes better sense of the absence of these verses than the ideas by Gleßmer and Koch that these verses are later insertions to the original oracle traceable through 4QPs89.[45] Verses 24-25 are just continuing the message of v. 23, and considering the fact that all the verses present in 4QPs89 have been at least slightly abbreviated, these verses were probably cut out to avoid unnecessary repetition. Verse 27a might be a similar case, but it could also be related to the language i.e., there is some indication that 'my God' is reserved at least in some texts for the use of the king (cf., 4Q381) and reflects the close relationship between God and king. Finally the section turns to a warning about what will happen to the chosen if they fail to do God's will. They will lose the protection and the land. If the fragment contained something else from Ps 89:20-38, it is likely, when taking its tendency into consideration, that it might have continued the list of admonitions (vv. 31-33) and had a reference to God's mercy and fidelity (v. 34), but this is only speculation.

[43] 4QPs89 seems to work with a text form close to the Septuagint (οὐ προσθήσει τοῦ κακῶσαι αὐτόν) in verse 23 (which is likely dependant on 2 Sam 7). The most simple explanation for this is that either the vorlage that the author of 4QPs89 modified his text from was in this instance the same as the vorlage of the Septuagint or they both modified the verse independently of each other from the text of 2 Sam 7. The first option is the more likely. This connection with 2 Sam 7 is best explained in the above way rather than positing from this textual connection that 2 Sam 7 was based on this version (or a core behind the current version).

[44] Marttila, *Collective*, 143; has correctly noted that the term בכור 'firstborn' in verse 28 actually fits better into a collective use than referring to the king as Psalm 89:27 is the only instance in the Hebrew Bible where the term is connected with the king.

[45] Gleßmer, "Das Textwachstum," 67; Koch, "Königspsalmen," 26.

To put the structure of 4QPs89 in a short form:

1. A promise is presented that God will choose people from among the nation(s). This is proven by God's promise to David when he was chosen. The use of the same term for David and the audience is significant.
2. God's promises to his chosen are told i.e., to establish them and support them. Again a proof is given as God's own words. The chosen will get the land and God will support them in also keeping it as long as they act in accordance to his will.

The text of the Qumran fragment is an abbreviation of Psalm 89:20- to give the core of God's promise to his chosen. It removes this promise from applying to only David and his descendants, as is clear from the missing verses dealing with the dynasty, and attaches it to the new chosen of God i.e., the group addressed in vv. 20 and 22. An audience versed in Scripture would have known that the original recipient of the promise was David so what is new is the interpretation that such a promise applies also to the audience. 4QPs89 probably does not contain a more original reading than the MT as the whole is not meant as a direct quotation and as such it is mostly secondary to the MT version. Before even suggesting a reading in this fragment as more original than a reading in the MT one will first have to prove that it cannot be counted upon by cutting out repetition or making the text more general to fit the collective aspect. In addition, two further points must be made against seeing 4QPs89 as an early form of Psalm 89. The first is a practical issue that no one has addressed so far i.e., why would this form of the text have been copied for hundreds of years after 2 Sam 7 and Psalm 89 were already in existence.[46] The reason why this text form should have had such a status is not self evident. The other point is about poetics. All of the verses of Psalm 89 found in 4QPs89 are shorter than in the MT, but they are also in their present state mostly to be seen as blunt statements rather than poetic units. No answer has thus far been given as to why these statements should be seen as more original than poetic verses.

An Excursion: A Connection to 4QNon-Canonical Psalms B (4Q381)?

There is at least one text among the Qumran manuscripts that deals with the themes of land, chosen and justice extensively and in poetic style. This is 4Q381 the so called Non-Canonical Psalms B. In the following a rough sketch of the similarities will be given. A much more

[46] The dating of Psalm 89 is a contested issue, dates ranging from post Davidic monarchic era to post exilic times, for an overview on how scholars have dated the Psalm, see Tate, *Psalms 51-100,* 414-17. For the purposes of this paper it is sufficient to note that even a relatively late dating of Psalm 89 as a whole (after 515 BCE) supported by Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 402; Marttila, *Collective*, 141; means that the supposed core oracle should be pre exilic.

thorough discussion of these aspects will have to await the completion of my dissertation as making this connection even hesitantly is heavily dependant on the new perspectives offered in it for 4Q381.

There is no overlapping text between these two so this connection must remain hypothetical, but there are enough similarities to offer this as a possibility. The scribe is different which should not be a surprise as 4QPs89 was written later on the manuscript than the text already there and of course there is no real need to argue that they are parts of the same manuscript. They might as well be separate copies of the same text. They are both dated by paleographical analysis to the Hasmonean period. Eileen Schuller has dated manuscript 4Q381 to c. 100-75 BCE,[47] and there are two dates argued for 4QPs89 i.e., between 175 and 125 BCE by Milik[48] and to the second half of the first century BCE by van der Ploeg.[49] If a date between these two ends is supposed for 4QPs89, the date of the manuscripts would be quite close. This is a minor issue; more important are the parallel ideas in the contents:

1. The central theme is the same in both texts i.e., land, chosen and justice.
2. The use of long Scriptural quotations.
3. The use of collective terms and reinterpreting earlier Psalms in a collective way.
4. Aramaic influence.
5. Some of the vocabulary.

The most important aspect is the theme. 4QPs89 fits the topic so well that it is actually strange if it was not part of 4Q381. It would introduce the theme already present in 4Q381 in a short and concise way which would instantly tell a person glancing at the handle sheet what the whole scroll is about. The rest of the scroll would then elaborate on this theme giving examples throughout history on God choosing people, giving them the land and protecting them from enemies. The other side of the promise is also present in 4Q381 i.e., that if the chosen transgress God's command he will punish them and take the land away from them to eventually give it to his new faithful chosen.

4Q381 uses long quotations of Scripture and especially Psalms. They are far longer than any found in other apocryphal psalm compositions. Sometimes they are more like allusions, but there are long quotations of for example Psalms 18 (verses 3a, 7-9, 13-16) and 89 (verses 10-12, 14, 18). These earlier texts are given a new collective framework. For

[47]Eileen M. Schuller, "4QNon-Canonical Psalms A and 4QNon-Canonical Psalms B," in *Qumran Cave* 4. *VI Poetical and Liturgical Texts, part* 1. (Ed. C. Newsom and E. Schuller; DJD XI; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 88-89.
[48] Milik, "Fragment," 102. His dating of the fragment was accepted by Ulrich et al., "4QPs^{x}," 163.
[49] Van der Ploeg, "Le Sens," 475.

instance before the quotation from Psalm 18 begins it is stated that ‘to his tested ones he will say:’. This is quite close to line 1 of 4QPs89. There are other collective terms than ‘his tested ones’ used in these psalms among them the ‘chosen’. In addition, the language of the psalms has Aramaic influence. These similarities (and the dating of the compositions) point to a possible connection between them and hopefully more study will clarify this issue.

Conclusions

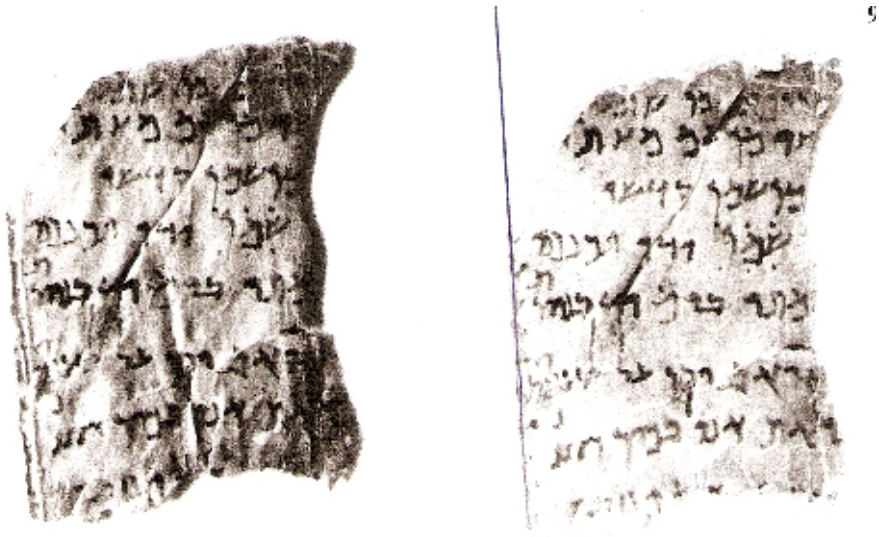
This short study of the manuscript 4QPs89 has provided many fresh solutions to old problems. It has provided an idea of the probable length of the original text of the fragment and its relation to the MT Psalm 89. By considering the material aspects it was strongly suggested that the fragment is part of a handle sheet preceding a composition already written on the scroll proper at the time of the writing of this text. Thus it was argued that 4QPs89 did not have the beginning of Psalm 89, but an abbreviated version of the text beginning from verse 20 and likely not going beyond verse 38.

After this several new readings were offered and the central reason behind the version of Psalm 89 on the Qumran fragment was presented. Nearly all of the variants between the versions could be explained from this point of view i.e., that 4QPs89 is an abbreviated collective interpretation of the oracle to David and his descendants in Psalm 89:20-38. It has been shown in this paper that the shorter version is not always necessarily the more original one. There are other things that need to be considered beside the length of the text and if these offer a more simple solution than what is otherwise available then they should be granted pole position in interpreting the importance of the text. To put it slightly differently: if a text form can be explained by existing versions and an editorial theme (that is also attested as a theme elsewhere during the same time period) it is preferable to positing several theoretical stages of textual development of which no evidence survives. Thus it is concluded that 4QPs89 is secondary in comparison to the MT version (as Skehan and van der Ploeg have already previously suggested) and should be mainly seen as something else than a text pertaining to present a version or even a direct quotation of Psalm 89. As such the grouping of this fragment under Biblical manuscripts done by the official editors is misleading and should be reconsidered.

Finally, a possible connection of 4Q381 and 4QPs89 was explored in a cursory way. The existence of such a connection is a possibility, but making it more probable will require a lot more work on both manuscripts. If a connection exists it would offer a view into Scriptural interpretation practiced by a group thinking themselves the chosen of God and

interpreting God's earlier promises as relating to them and their time i.e., God's work in the past anticipates his actions in the future.

Below is a picture of the fragment (or actually two):



PAM 43.399 PAM 41.438

98d. 4QPs[a] **98e.** 4QPs[c] **98f.** 4QPs[e] **98g.** 4QPs[c]

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