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Hebrew in the Hellenistic World

They spoke the language of various peoples.

—*Nehemiah 13:24*

The ideological role of language came to the fore in the Hellenistic world. Language became essential in defining Hellenistic culture and citizenship. Indeed, the word *Hellenism* itself derives from the Greek word ἑλληνίζειν, meaning “to speak Greek.” The knowledge of Greek became a distinguishing criterion of this elite culture. For example, a letter dating to the mid-third century B.C.E. illustrates linguistic ideology, as an Egyptian complains that the Greeks “have treated me with contempt because I am a barbarian” and asks to be paid regularly “so that I do not die of hunger because I do not know how to speak Greek (ἑλληνίζειν).”¹ Language both united *and* divided the Hellenistic world. On the one hand, the Greek language was used to create group identity; on the other hand, it was used to justify oppression and discrimination. Hellenism elevated language ideology, so it is hardly surprising that this context saw the emergence of Hebrew as a language of Jewish cultural and religious identity.

With the end of the Persian imperial administration came the end of scribal training in Aramaic chancellery. Out of the shadow of the Persian Empire,

Hebrew schools and writing emerged, and Hellenism even encouraged the establishment of Hebrew schools in Jerusalem. Although Paleo-Hebrew script had given way to Aramaic in everyday use, it reemerged as a national script on seals and coins. In addition, Hebrew took a special role in religious ideology. Debates between the various groups of Jews in the Hellenistic period would be played out in their differing attitudes toward the Hebrew language. The Greek translation of Nehemiah 13:23–24 is telling in this regard:

In those days also I saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab; and half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, *but they spoke the language of various peoples.* [underlined text omitted in the Greek]

As pointed out in the previous chapter, this text reflects the growing use of Aramaic as a native language among Jews in Yehud during the Persian period. It also reflects an ideological commitment by some Jews toward the Hebrew language that would be taken up in the Hasmonean period. By eliding the final clause, the Greek translator omits precisely the statement that would implicitly critique the Diaspora Jewish community, which used Greek—a language of “various peoples”—as its native tongue. The translation of the Bible into Greek fundamentally challenged the emergent linguistic nationalism that was trying to revive the Hebrew language. When we survey the use of Hebrew in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, most scholars think that spoken Hebrew continued to survive—at least in some isolated communities—as a vernacular language in Palestine until the second century C.E.² Although there were major demographic changes in the Babylonian and Persian periods, there were a number of villages and towns where Hebrew continued to be spoken that survived. One expression of the reassertion of Jewish autonomy in the fourth, third, and second centuries would be the revival of Hebrew scribal institutions. The Hebrew of these institutions drew upon the contemporary vernacular Hebrew as well as the deeply entrenched legacy of the Persian scribal chancellery.

Hebrew and Aramaic after the Persian Period

Hebrew and Aramaic competed for ascendancy after the collapse of the Persian Empire. With its use by successive empires beginning in the eighth century B.C.E., Aramaic had gained a foothold—not only as an administrative language but also as a vernacular language—in the eastern Mediterranean world. After the collapse of the Persian Empire, however, Aramaic

no longer had the privileged support of the state. Indeed, a new language was introduced as the imperial language in the fourth century B.C.E.: Greek. Greek, however, was a foreign language in Yehud. It was a non-Semitic language. This left Hebrew and Aramaic as the local languages of people in the region that would come to be known as “Palestine”—a Greek term derived from the Hebrew word *Philistine*.

The resurgence of Hebrew in Jerusalem had already begun in the fourth and third centuries B.C.E. This is expressed first of all in the minting of coins with inscriptions in the Hebrew language and script.³ The use of Hebrew language and script on the Yeheziah coins in the fourth century B.C.E. is the first expression of this new autonomy. With the emergence of a Jewish state in the second century B.C.E., Hebrew language and Paleo-Hebrew script were then used on the coins of the Hasmonean dynasty as an expression of early Jewish nationalism. And the Hebrew language and script was later used on the Bar Kokhba coins (132–135 C.E.), although by this time the coins actually reflected a poor knowledge of Hebrew. Outside of coins, most “Hebrew” inscriptions of this period were written using the Aramaic script. The inscriptional evidence for Hebrew—apart from the Dead Sea Scrolls—is actually still rather meager.⁴ Of course, Hebrew figures prominently on coins during the Hellenistic and early Roman periods.

Inscriptions can illustrate the complex relationship between Hebrew and Aramaic engendered by the Aramaic chancellery. For example, an inscription (IN 17) discovered in Jerusalem, dating to about 300 B.C.E., has indications of both Hebrew and Aramaic.⁵ The ostrakon is written in Aramaic script and has been deciphered as follows:

לֶחֶם חֲנַנְיָה כֶּכֶרֶן [1] “Loaves (of bread): [1] thousand for Hananiah
בֶּצֶק dough”

The language is mixed. Naveh points out that the word for “dough,” *bṣq* (בֶּצֶק), is typical of Hebrew, as opposed to Aramaic *lyṣʾ* (לִישָׁא), and the word *kkṛ* (כֶּכֶר), if we take its meaning as “loaf,” is also a Hebrew word. Yet the morphology of *kkṛn* with the plural spelling *-n* is Aramaic. Of course, Rabbinic Hebrew would also adopt this Aramaic spelling, but this is an early third-century B.C.E. inscription. Naveh suggests that “this ostrakon served as a label in a public (perhaps military) bakery, where Hebrew was presumably the spoken language.”⁶ Although Hebrew may have been the vernacular, as suggested by the distinctive vocabulary, the writing system was Aramaic, as indicated by the script as well as the Aramaic morphology of the plural word *kkṛn*, “loaves.” How do we classify such a text? It uses distinctly Hebrew

vocabulary but writes with an Aramaic morphology and script. The use of distinctly Hebrew vocabulary indicates the continuation of some type of vernacular Hebrew, whereas the Aramaic script and morpheme would seem to represent the continuing influence of an Aramaic scribal chancellery.

The resurgence of the Hebrew language was also rooted in religion.⁷ This is certainly illustrated by the centrality of reading the Hebrew text highlighted by the book of Nehemiah (see 8:1–5). Though it is difficult to date the composition of late biblical literature precisely, the Dead Sea Scrolls give evidence for the copying of biblical manuscripts by the mid-third century B.C.E. Although the sectarian community itself seems not to have written in Aramaic, the Qumran “library” includes nonsectarian Aramaic works such as Enoch and the Genesis Apocryphon. Such Aramaic literature from the Dead Sea Scrolls corpus reflects the ongoing legacy—at least in part—of the Aramaic scribal training of the Persian period, but it also reflects the continuing use of Aramaic by Jews in Palestine. Although the Hebrew language begins to flourish again in the third century B.C.E., it continues to be written with Aramaic letters, with the exception of a few Dead Sea Scrolls, Samaritan literature, and coins.

The Wisdom of Ben Sira is attributed to an author who wrote in Jerusalem during the early second century B.C.E. and modeled his work on the book of Proverbs. Although the book is known mostly in its Greek version, fragments of the Hebrew original were first discovered in the Cairo Geniza between 1896 and 1900 and then more recently at Masada.⁸ The prologue to the Wisdom of Ben Sira describes the translation of the work into Greek and suggests that by the end of the third century B.C.E., a Jewish school had been established in Jerusalem for studying biblical and Hebrew literature. Ben Sira, in fact, uses the term for “house of instruction” (οἶκος παιδείας), which translates the Hebrew *beth midrash* “house of study” (51:23). This seems to allude to an emerging Jewish social institution dedicated to the study of biblical literature. By the second century B.C.E., manuscript discoveries from the region of the Dead Sea point to a new flourishing of Hebrew religious literature (for example, postbiblical compositions such as Ben Sira, Jubilees, and Tobit).

Although there was a resurgence of Hebrew literature, the shift from Hebrew to Aramaic was profound and irreversible. Often the linguistic changes would hardly have been perceptible to ancient speakers. So, for example, Hebrew increasingly uses periphrastic constructions—that is, the verb for “to be” (*byh*) plus a participle. Thus, we find a variety of periphrastic constructions in postexilic literature, and they become normative in Rabbinic Hebrew:

היו יִשְׁבִּים בַּעֲפֹל, “they were living (*hyw yšbyḿ*) in the Ophel”
(Neh. 3:26)

יִהְיוּ מְרִיעִים בַּחֲצוֹצְרוֹת, “they shall be blowing (*yhyw mryʿym*) on the
trumpets” (1QM 16:19)

וְהִיִּית בּוֹיֵשׁ בָּאֵמֶת, “and you will be ashamed (*whyyt bwyš*) by the truth”
(Sirach 42:1/Mas1h 4:5)

The periphrastic construction, however, is a syntagm (linguistic unit) borrowed from Aramaic.

Another example of Aramaic influence is the syntax of the Hebrew relative particle *š* (שׁ), “that, which.” On the surface, the word *š* appears to be merely a replacement for the SBH *šr* (אשר). However, the syntax of the relative particle *d-*, “that, which,” in Aramaic is much more pliable and more frequent than its Hebrew counterpart, *š*. By way of illustration, the relative particle *šr* (אשר) occurs 411 times in the Hebrew text of Genesis, but the Aramaic relative particle *d-* (-ד) occurs 1,176 times in the Aramaic translation of Genesis in Targum Onqelos. This demonstrates the much broader and more pliable use of Aramaic *d-* as opposed to Hebrew *š-* or *šr*. The Aramaic particle *d-*, for example, routinely introduces causal clauses, whereas *šr* (אשר) generally does not do this in SBH. Even Qumran Hebrew, which studiously avoids Aramaisms, is unaware of the influence of Aramaic on Hebrew syntax and frequently uses the relative particle in syntactically similar ways to Aramaic. To the casual observer of language, Qumran Hebrew is using classical forms like the relative pronoun *šr*, but it frequently employs the SBH lexicon with typical Aramaic syntax. Thus, even when there was a linguistic ideology that resulted in the avoidance of Aramaic, the influence of Aramaic can still be detected in subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) ways.

Hebrew was revived as a literary language and gave voice to the political and religious aspirations of Jewish groups in the Hellenistic period. Still, the progressive shift from Hebrew toward Aramaic was not halted by the ebb and flow of Jewish autonomy in the Persian through Roman periods. By the third century C.E., the language shift from Hebrew to Aramaic was complete (as a result of the Roman displacement of Hebrew-speaking villages), and Hebrew essentially disappeared as a vernacular language in Roman Palestine. Even as Hebrew was receding as a vernacular and written language, it was also being preserved as an icon of political legitimacy and national identity, as a liturgical language, and as a sacred tongue. Hebrew was the official language of the Hasmonean state. This is best illustrated by the use of Paleo-Hebrew script on Hasmonean coins. The Hasmonean kings undoubtedly associated the Paleo-Hebrew writing with the golden age of ancient Israel—

that is, “David, Solomon and the kings following them” (Josephus, *War*, 5.143). Second Maccabees repeatedly speaks about “the ancestral language” of the Jewish people (2 Macc. 7:8, 21, 27; 12:37; 15:29).

One Hellenistic Jewish tradition suggested that Nehemiah founded a library in Jerusalem. Libraries were icons of political power in the Hellenistic world. Note, for example, the description in 2 Maccabees 2:13:

The same things are reported in the records and in the memoirs of Nehemiah, and also that he founded a library and collected the books about the kings and prophets, and the writings of David, and letters of kings about votive offerings.

Nehemiah’s library is associated with royal writing from the golden age of ancient Israel. The cultural importance of mentioning a Jewish library in Jerusalem can be nicely contextualized in the Hellenistic world. Namely, 2 Maccabees is likely a late second-century B.C.E. Greek composition written in Alexandria, which was the location of the largest library of the ancient world. The library was a creation of the early Ptolemaic rulers, probably founded by Ptolemy I Soter (323–283 B.C.E.) or his son Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283–246 B.C.E.). Tradition places the initial translation of the Pentateuch into Greek under Ptolemy II. Thus, Nehemiah’s supposed establishment of a library in Jerusalem paralleled and even preceded the foundation of the Great Library of Alexandria. Unfortunately, external confirmation for the founding of a library by Nehemiah is wanting. It is not mentioned in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah and appears only in a later Hellenistic context; thus, it seems likely that this is a later projection back into an earlier period (Nehemiah’s) to connect it with the golden age (that is, the time of King David).

The earliest mention of the famous Library of Alexandria is actually in the *Letter of Aristeas*, a Jewish Hellenistic work from the second century B.C.E. The letter purports to be a letter from Aristeas to Philocrates and describes the translation of the Jewish law into Greek by seventy-two interpreters—six men from each of the twelve tribes—who manage to translate the law in seventy-two days.⁹ The letter makes a clear distinction between the use of Hebrew and Aramaic among the Jews. In the letter, Demetrius is quoted as saying:

For in the country of the Jews they use a peculiar alphabet (just as the Egyptians, too, have a special form of letters) and speak a peculiar dialect. They are supposed to use the Aramaic (or “Syriac”; Greek, Συριακή) language, but this is not the case; their language is quite different. (§11)

In contrast, the letter emphasizes that the Jewish law is “written *in the Hebrew characters and language* [Ἑβραϊκοῖς γράμμασι καὶ φωνῇ]” (§30). The letter also underscores the distinction between writing (γράμμασι) and speech (φωνῇ) in the text. When the letter speaks of the translation process, it explicitly ties it with writing (§38): “to translate to Greek text/writing from the Hebrew text/writing that is used among you” (μεθερμηνευθῆναι γράμμασιν Ἑλληνικοῖς ἐκ τῶν παρ’ ὑμῶν λεγομένων Ἑβραϊκῶν γραμμάτων). Indeed, this underscores the exceptional situation of the Hebrew language in the Hellenistic period, namely, the fact that it could be written in two different scripts—Paleo-Hebrew or Aramaic.

Hebrew as the Language of the Golden Age

Hebrew had a special religious and ideological role in the Hellenistic period. No doubt its prestige owed much to the role of Hebrew in the golden age of Jewish history and literature. Hebrew was the language of the old Judean monarchy and of their works of classical antiquity—namely, biblical literature. It was the language of the lawgiver, Moses, as well as the patriarchs. In this respect, Hebrew fits easily into one general and deeply held belief about language, namely, the Golden Age Principle. The linguist William Labov observed that people generally believe that at some time in the past, language was in a state of perfection.¹⁰ Every linguistic change therefore represents a movement away from perfection. Not surprisingly, language ideology may try to recapture the golden age of a particular language.

Hebrew was understood to be the language of the Jewish golden age. Indeed, it was the language of God himself. This might be inferred from the first chapter of Genesis, where God creates the world *in Hebrew*, speaking the words *y’hî ʾôr* (יְהִי אֹר), that is, “Let there be light.” This belief is explicitly expressed in the well-known rabbinic idea that Hebrew was the language of creation. This idea, however, is already evident in the book of Jubilees—that is, in a Hellenistic work originally written in Hebrew by the early second century B.C.E.¹¹ In Jubilees 12:25–26, God speaks with Abraham in Hebrew, and Abraham studies books written in Hebrew:

And the Lord God said: “Open his mouth and his ears, that he may hear and speak with his mouth, with the language which has been revealed”; for it had ceased from the mouths of all the children of men from the day of the overthrow (of Babel). And I opened his mouth, and his ears and his lips, and I began to speak with him *in Hebrew in the tongue of the creation*. (emphasis added)

In Jubilees, the author makes a point that Hebrew was God's language. The fact that this point is so explicitly developed by this Hellenistic writer suggests that the knowledge and the use of Hebrew were socially and even politically charged issues.

Not only is Hebrew the vernacular of God's creative acts, but also *books* are *written* in this same Hebrew language. The ideology of Jubilees implicitly identifies God's spoken language of creation with the written:

And he [Abraham] took the books of his fathers, *and these were written in Hebrew*, and he transcribed them, and he began from henceforth to study them, and I made known to him that which he could not understand, and he studied them during the six rainy months. (Jub. 12:27; emphasis added)

According to Jubilees, Hebrew was the language originally spoken by both humankind and animals, and more important, it was the language of heaven. However, after God confused the languages at the Tower of Babel, Hebrew was forgotten. The divine language of creation was later revived when the patriarch Abraham was taught Hebrew by the angels (Jub. 12:26). Enoch was the first man initiated by the angels in the art of writing and wrote down the secrets of astronomy and chronology.

What were the implications of such beliefs about the antiquity of Hebrew as the language of the Jewish ancestors and of God himself? The ideological importance of the Hebrew script is most evident in the Hasmonean (and later in the Bar Kokhba period, and even in the contemporary Israeli) adoption of the Paleo-Hebrew script on their coins. The relative rarity of the Hebrew script also made it a much more powerful religious and political symbol. The religious role is well illustrated in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The political role can be demonstrated by the role of Hebrew in the Hasmonean state.

Samaritan Hebrew

Hebrew was also the sacred language among the Samaritan community. The Samaritans were an ethnic group who claimed their ancestry from the Israelite descendants of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh and resided in the region of Samaria.¹² The ideological value of Hebrew among the Samaritans is indicated, first of all, by the use of a Paleo-Hebrew script for Samaritan inscriptions. James Purvis has argued that the so-called Samaritan script can be traced back to the sixth century B.C.E. and the Hebrew scribal tradition known from inscriptions dating to the late Judean monarchy. The immediate parallels for the Samaritan script are the contemporary scripts of

the Hasmonean period.¹³ Most tellingly, the Samaritans also used this Paleo-Hebrew script on seals and coins—that is, the administrative and political symbols of the state.¹⁴ Finally, the Samaritan Pentateuch reflects the centrality of Hebrew in Samaritan culture. The manuscripts from the Judean desert (near Qumran) have only further solidified the antiquity of the Samaritan tradition. The scholarly view is that the Samaritan Pentateuch was based on an old Judahite version of the Pentateuch, probably dating to the fourth century B.C.E.

The Samaritan community itself developed a strong linguistic ideology. According to their beliefs, “the precise recitation of the Torah in accordance with the rules of grammar, as Moses spoke it from God’s own mouth, is a basic commandment.”¹⁵ Unfortunately, the Samaritan recitation tradition is only known from a much later period. Nevertheless, it is clear that the textual tradition for the Samaritan Pentateuch reaches back at least into the Hellenistic period, and its antiquity is well supported in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Outside of the Samaritan Pentateuch, we have very few textual sources for Samaritan Hebrew dating to the Second Temple period.

The Paleo-Hebrew script played a particularly prominent role in Samaritan written culture. It continued to be the primary script of the Samaritans’ written language, even when writing in Aramaic, and the Samaritan Paleo-Hebrew script was even used later by the Samaritans in Arabic inscriptions.¹⁶ In contrast, Paleo-Hebrew script had already lost its sacredness for the Jewish community by the second century C.E., as noted in *m. Yadayim* 4:5–6. According to the Pharisaic opinion expressed there, only sacred books written in Aramaic script impart uncleanness; thus, the works of Homer—just like biblical texts written in Paleo-Hebrew—do *not* impart uncleanness. Writing the Scriptures in Aramaic script makes the texts sacred, whereas writing in Paleo-Hebrew, according to the Pharisaic tradition, renders the Scriptures profane! This turns on its head the principle that we see, for example, in the use of Paleo-Hebrew from Qumran, where the divine name is frequently written in Paleo-Hebrew instead of regular Aramaic script in order to demonstrate the sacredness of the divine name. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, writing in Paleo-Hebrew was even more sacred than Aramaic script. Indeed, it was precisely this special meaning given to the Paleo-Hebrew script by groups like the Samaritans and the Essenes that must have encouraged the Pharisaic tradition (as reflected in the Mishnah) to reject the special nature of the Paleo-Hebrew script.

The Samaritan reading tradition, as it is preserved from the Middle Ages, postdates the Second Jewish revolt. This is most clear in the treatment of the guttural, as Ze’ev Ben-Hayyim has pointed out. Medieval Samaritan gram-

marians saw the gutturals as “models for shaping the vowel signs.”¹⁷ For the Samaritan reading tradition, the nonpronunciation of gutturals actually was thought to reflect the antiquity of the reading tradition (as opposed to the Masoretic tradition). Nevertheless, the evidence for the pronunciation of gutturals in transcriptions, including Akkadian and Greek, indicate otherwise. Although it is clear that the Samaritan use of Hebrew dates back into the early Second Temple period (and probably into the late Iron Age), the preserved evidence for the Samaritan Hebrew reading tradition is mostly from much later periods.

Qumran Hebrew

The largest repository of Hebrew texts from the Hellenistic world is the Dead Sea Scrolls. First discovered in 1947, these texts have been primarily associated with the sectarian religious site at Khirbet Qumran, although the term *Dead Sea Scrolls* often is used to refer to all texts found near the Dead Sea dating from the fourth century B.C.E. until the fourth century C.E., not just those associated with Khirbet Qumran. For the most part, previous studies have dealt with the formal linguistic aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls using the methods of historical, comparative, structural, and generative linguistics.¹⁸ These approaches have yet to account for the idiosyncrasies in the scrolls. The scrolls include sectarian texts that represent the language of an isolationist religious sect, often referred to by the untranslated term *yahad*, “community,” in scholarly literature or sometimes equated with the Essenes based on correlation of internal and external evidence. The language has usually been called Qumran Hebrew, which closely associates the language with the settlement of Khirbet Qumran. However, the language could more accurately be called Essene Hebrew, which acknowledges that the language belongs to a larger religious movement than the settlement at Khirbet Qumran and that not all the sectarian texts were copied or composed at Qumran. Still, we shall retain the traditional terminology Qumran Hebrew (QH), which identifies the language with the location of the discovery rather than the neologism Essene Hebrew, which has the distinct advantage of identifying the language with the religious group (or, in linguistic jargon, “speech community”) most likely to have authored, compiled, and copied the sectarian manuscripts.

To be sure, the association of the scrolls with the Essenes described by Pliny, Philo, or Josephus has been the subject of some heated debate. Nonetheless, a consensus still holds that the Essenes described in the classical sources can be associated with the religious sectarian literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

I find the argument for this association still cogent and the alternative—namely, that the sectarian scrolls should be related to a yet-unidentified Jewish sectarian group(s)—not particularly useful. Although labels such as “Essene” or “Pharisee” are oversimplifications of the social history of Judaism in the Second Temple period, they are also useful heuristic terms. I will refrain from using the term *Qumran community* because it too-narrowly identifies the sectarian texts with the site of Khirbet Qumran. The term *Essene community*, which I believe is a most plausible designation, is the subject of too much controversy that is outside the scope of this book. As a result, I adopt the more neutral term *yahad community*, which derives from the sectarian literature itself.

There are a number of caveats that must be acknowledged when trying to characterize the language of the Dead Sea Scrolls. To begin with, the scrolls derive from a religious community (or communities) that existed for at least two hundred years in disparate places. The dates of various scrolls actually span three hundred years, though most were copied between 100 B.C.E. and 68 C.E. Not every scroll found in the caves near Khirbet Qumran was composed by the religious sect that inhabited the site; hence, every scroll does not necessarily reflect the community’s particular use of language. Moreover, it has been cogently argued that the settlement of Khirbet Qumran may not even have been the center of the religious community.¹⁹ The scrolls also describe a religious group located in many different places (or “camps,” as they are called in the scrolls). Although Qumran may have been an important religious center for the group, it would not have been the only locale of the group. Indeed, Josephus describes an “Essene Gate” in Jerusalem, which suggests a presence in the capital of Judea. Josephus also speaks of different kinds of Essenes (marrying and celibate), varying locations, and numbers that were at least as large as the Pharisees. Our description of QH is further complicated by the fact that biblical Hebrew is a literary register, whereas Rabbinic Hebrew (RH) arose from the textualization of a colloquial linguistic register. For these reasons, QH should not be expected to fit neatly on a historical continuum from LBH to RH. Such problems underscore the sociolinguistic premise that “language is a complex social fact,”²⁰ and QH is a particularly rich example of this. The complex character of QH can only be appreciated by reference to its social function within an evolving sectarian religious community located in a variety of places in ancient Palestine.

One of the sectarian characteristics of Qumran Hebrew is its use of secret-code terminology as well as ideologically laden references to language. For example, the sectarian documents typically use opaque language like “the

man of the lie,” “the lion of Judah,” “the seekers of smooth things,” or “the wicked priest,” rather than directly identifying people.²¹ The ideological role of language can be illustrated by the many references to language in the *yahad* literature.²² The most important term for language in Hebrew is *lšwn* (לשון), “language, tongue”; other important words in the semantic field include *šph* (שפה), “lip, speech, language,” and *dbr* (דבר), “word.” Chaim Rabin suggested that the scrolls allude to vernacular Hebrew, which the *yahad* community regarded as *lšwn ʿhrt*, “another language” (לשון אחרת, 1QH^a 10:19; 12:16); *lwʿg šph*, “a halting language” (לועג שפה, 1QH 12:16); *lšwn gdwpyw*, “a blasphemous language” (לשון גדופים, CD 5:11–12; 1QS 4:12); and *ʿrwł šph*, “an uncircumcised language” (ערול שפה, 1QH^a 10:7, 18–19).²³ In the *Damascus Document* we find the following apparent critique of the oral law: “Also they have corrupted their holy spirit, and with blasphemous language they have reviled the statutes of God’s covenant, saying, ‘They are not fixed’” (5:11–12). The idea that the law was not fixed must refer to the oral law, which was favored by the opponents of the *yahad*. More specifically, the critique refers to the way the Pharisees interpreted the law of intermarriage. The *Damascus Document* here cites Leviticus 18:13, emphasizing what Moses spoke (CD^a 5:8). Certainly, the authority of the oral versus the written law was a hot topic in the late Second Temple period. The criticism that language as reflected in a particular interpretation of the law was “not fixed” arises out of the Qumran doctrine of predestination, which apparently opposed the fluidity of the oral law.²⁴

The *Thanksgiving Hymns* are additional sectarian texts that are particularly rich in language ideology. They reveal a belief that the community’s language was unique and divinely inspired. For example, 1QH 9:27–29 reads:

You created breath for the tongue (לשון), and You know its words (דבריה). You determined the fruit of the lips (פרי שפתים) before they came about. You appointed words by archetype (דברים על קן) and the utterance of the breath of the lips (ומבעי רוחות שפתים) by calculation. You sent forth archetypes (קיים) for their mysteries (לרזיהם), and the utterances of spirits (ומבעי רוחות) for their plan (לחשבונם).

From such liturgical ruminations it is clear that the *yahad* community had a highly loaded ideology of language that inevitably shaped its linguistic choices. One particularly significant relexicalization in Qumran Hebrew is the term *qw* (קן), which becomes the pattern or archetype for language and speech. This may already be inferred from the statement quoted above: “You

appointed words by archetype" (1QH 9:28). The translation of *qw* as "pattern" would be sufficient, except that it is clear that the sectarian theology of predestination colors its use of the term. For example, in sectarian literature the term *qw* is engraved (חֲקַק): "You engraved according to the archetype" (1QH 23:11; cf. 1QpHab 7:13–14). It is paralleled with a "secret" (סֵדֶר) etched in stone (1QH 14:26), and it is a metaphorical source (מִקּוּר) from which proper judgment derives (1QH 16:21).²⁵

The *yahad* community undoubtedly drew upon the enigmatic use of the term *qw* in the book of Isaiah, where several possible interpretations of its meaning have been offered, including incoherent speech, foreign speech, and children's babbling (18:2, 7; 28:10, 13; also see Ps. 19:5).²⁶ The Teacher instructs according to the "archetype of his justice" (1QS 10:9). This rigidity extended to other areas of *yahad* life and thought. The *Community Rule* speaks of the "law that is determined by the archetype of the ages" (1QS 10:26). Everything was fixed before creation itself. It applies, for instance, to liturgy at Qumran, which was fixed in contrast to the fluid liturgy of rabbinic Judaism (*m. Berakhot* 4:4; *b. Berakhot* 29).²⁷ This issue also underlies code terminology applied disparagingly to the sect's opponents—phrases like "those who move the boundary" (מַטְיֵי הַגְּבוּל, CD^a 1:16; 5:20; 19:15), or "seekers of easy interpretations" (דוֹרְשֵׁי הַחֲלָקוֹת, CD^a 1:18; 1QH 10:32). The ideology seems to be that both the oral law and its linguistic register—that is, vernacular Hebrew—were blasphemous.

The linguistic character of the sectarian scrolls must be related to their ideology, both social and linguistic. The strong social ideology would work its way into the linguistic features of the sectarian scrolls. One strong indication of the separatist nature of the group was the use of a solar calendar (as opposed to the Jewish lunisolar calendar).²⁸ Most Jewish communities as well as the Jerusalem temple used a lunisolar calendar in the Second Temple period. Since a year is not evenly divisible by an exact number of lunar months, the addition of intercalary months is necessary to prevent the agricultural seasons and festivals from drifting each year (as they do in the Islamic calendar). This results in a thirteen-month year every two or three years. Jewish groups debated the intercalation, but they still celebrated the same calendar, which defined them as a group. However, the solar calendar separated the *yahad* community, who intentionally would *not* have celebrated any holidays with the general Palestinian Jewish community using the lunisolar calendar as calculated by the Jerusalem temple aristocracy. This obviously was a point of contention between the *yahad* community and the Jerusalem temple; for example, we find the well-known description in the Habakkuk Peshar, column 11:

This refers to the Wicked Priest, who pursued the Teacher of Righteousness to destroy him in the heat of his anger at his place of exile. At the appointed time of the festival, *the rest of the Day of Atonement*, he appeared to them to destroy them and to cause them to stumble on the fast day, the Sabbath intended for their rest. (emphasis added)

The solar calendar intentionally separated this religious sect, just as their language would separate them.

The analysis of Qumran Hebrew can be aided by setting the *yahad* community within the process of iconization that indexes social groups. The sociolinguists Judith Irvine and Susan Gal write, "Linguistic features that index social groups or activities appear to be iconic representations of them, as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group's inherent nature or essence."²⁹ This small, isolated religious community on the north shore of the Dead Sea used language ideologically as a means of differentiating and further insulating themselves. In this instance, this iconization seems to have become a proactive means of differentiation. Linguistic ideology takes on exaggerated importance among groups that are exclusive and sharply bounded, as the *yahad* community was. Confronted with anomalous forms like the long spellings of the personal pronouns *hw'h*, *hy'h* (הוא, היא), "he, she," scholars have sometimes turned to historical and comparative linguistics for explanations.³⁰ Although this is a valuable preliminary step, it is a questionable approach for explaining such anomalous forms. Are we to believe that the *yahad* scribes used these forms as a result of a direct development of an earlier, yet-unknown Hebrew dialect? Or, is it more likely that these peculiar forms result from the artificial and ideological creation of an idiolect for the community?³¹ The evidence seems to support the latter. Spelling is a way to create identity in the written registers of language; thus, the British spelling *centre* does not reflect pronunciation but does index social identity. Moreover, as the sociolinguist Suzanne Romaine observes, "Due to the social significance of personal reference, pronouns are particularly susceptible to modification in response to social and ideological change."³² In other words, rather than understanding the long forms of these personal pronouns as primarily preserving either an archaic form or a different dialect, we must also anticipate them as arising from social and ideological aspects of the religious community.

Qumran Hebrew can be characterized by the sociolinguistic category of an *antilanguage*.³³ Michael Halliday describes the principle of an antilanguage as "that of same grammar, different vocabulary; but different vocabulary only in certain areas, typically those that are central to the activities of the

subculture and that set it off most sharply from the established society.”³⁴ Small, weak, and marginal religious communities such as the *yahad* community typically cultivate linguistic idiosyncrasies in order to enhance group identity. For example, Hugh Ormsby-Lennon points out that dissenting religious sects like the Quakers in Puritan England actually cultivated both verbal and written idiosyncrasies.³⁵ Judith Irvine writes, “The [linguistic] code’s origin in *counter-societies* is reflected in many aspects of their linguistic form, for instance in their elaboration of lexicon and metaphor relevant to their special activities and their attitudes toward the normative society. . . . Also significant is their conspicuous avoidance and violation of forms recognized as ‘standard.’ . . . The anti-language is not, and has never been, anyone’s native tongue, nor are all its formal characteristics simply arbitrary. Both functionally and formally it is derived from the normative code, just as its speakers define their social role in opposition to the normative society.”³⁶ These sociolinguistic observations seem especially apt for understanding the language of the *yahad* community.

Several lines of evidence point to the conscious creation of an antilanguage by scribes within the *yahad* community. These include the use of code and symbolic terminology, the avoidance of Aramaic and popular language (for example, RH), pseudoclassicizing tendencies, and orthography and paleography. Taken together, this evidence points to the use of language within the *yahad* community as another vehicle for differentiating the group from other Jewish groups in the late Second Temple period.

Antilanguages both relexicalize and overlexicalize, and they betray a familiarity with the native and colloquial languages through grammar. Applying these observations to Qumran Hebrew, we should expect that it was at the same time a continuation of LBH and a reaction against the colloquial languages spoken in Palestine—both Aramaic and Rabbinic Hebrew. In this regard, we should expect new uses of SBH vocabulary (such as *qw*) alongside a framework of LBH and RH syntax. It is important to remember, as William Labov pointed out, “The great majority of linguistic rules are quite remote from any social value,” and consequently they are “well below the level of social affect.” Though he warns against overestimating the role of social factors, Labov continues, “Variables *closer to the surface structure* frequently are the focus of social affect.”³⁷ The attempt to form an antilanguage is most apparent in the surface structure of language (for example, terminology, lexicon), whereas the deep structure (for example, syntax) is less affected. Group ideology finds its reflex in a linguistic ideology that transforms the surface structures of a language. This is the situation we confront in the sectarian literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls.³⁸

Emanuel Tov has emphasized an orthographic distinction in Qumran Hebrew by isolating what he describes as “Qumran scribal practice,” arguing that scrolls not written in the peculiar orthography of the community were not written by the community’s scribes.³⁹ Tov was able to isolate 140 texts that exhibit features of the scribal practice. However, just because a document was *copied* by a *yahad* scribe does not mean it was *authored* within the *yahad* community or at the site of Qumran itself. Biblical scrolls are a good example of this. Even though the Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIs^a) was copied in “Qumran scribal practice,” it was not composed by *yahad* scribes. Scrolls such as the biblical Samuel Scroll, which was copied in the third century B.C.E., predate the site of Qumran and were obviously brought to the site. At the same time, although some scrolls were copied elsewhere and brought to the site, archaeological and scientific evidence also proves that some scrolls were copied at Khirbet Qumran.⁴⁰ For this reason, Qumran Hebrew must be distinguished from the corpus of Dead Sea Scrolls Hebrew, and the Hebrew of the scrolls should not be simply identified with the site of Khirbet Qumran.⁴¹

Orthography is a surface structure of language, and it was easy for *yahad* scribes to exploit orthography in creating their distinctive scribal tradition. The most characteristic feature of sectarian orthography is the use of *scriptio plena* (or “full writing”). This is particularly true of the use of *waw*, which is used where we find long and short *holem*, *shureq*, *qibbutz*, *qametz hatuf*, *hatef qametz*, and even sometimes *vocal shewa* in the Masoretic vocalization tradition.⁴² Also characteristic is the use of *beh* and *ʾaleph* as final vowel letters. Some orthographic peculiarities reflect the diachronic situation of QH. So, for example, the occasional use of *samekh* where *sin* is expected may be understood within the context of a general tendency reflected also in RH.⁴³ Yet, on the whole, sectarian orthography is unique and unexpected. Emanuel Tov has argued that the sectarian orthography reflects a unique system.⁴⁴ According to Tov, notable features of this system include the following:

1. Writing of the vowel /o/ by the *waw* (e.g., זואת/זואת/זואת, כוה, כול, לו, כול, לו),
2. lengthened independent pronouns (e.g., אהמה, אהמה, אהמה, אהמה),
3. lengthened pronominal suffixes for second- and third-person plural (e.g., -מה, -מה, -מה),
4. use of pausal forms (e.g., ויקטלו as well as the pronouns הנה, הנה),
5. form כיא,
6. forms מוארה/מוארה/מוארה,
7. use of initial-medial letters in final position, and

8. writing of divine names *ʾl* and *yhwh* (יהוה and אל) using Paleo-Hebrew characters.

Although the general characteristics of this system are clear, Tov admits that the implementation is inconsistent. In fact, he remarks that “in only a few cases do all the features appear together in one scroll, such as 4Q174 (Florilegium).”⁴⁵ Moreover, Tov also acknowledges that certain clearly sectarian manuscripts such as the *Community Rule* (for example, 4Q258) and the *Damascus Document* (for example, 4Q270) are not written in sectarian orthography.⁴⁶ The inconsistency of the system would be particularly troubling *if all the sectarian documents were copied at Qumran*; however, the realization that the sectarian scrolls were copied by a variety of *yahad* scribes in a variety of places over a two-hundred-year period accounts for the inconsistencies in sectarian orthography. Indeed, the lack of complete standardization points to a loose social structure of the group, with some members living in the desert at Khirbet Qumran and others living in “camps” throughout the land. Still, even though Tov’s “Qumran scribal practice” is not completely standardized, the features of the system are nevertheless quite circumscribed.

Eugene Ulrich questioned Tov’s idea of a distinctly Qumran scribal practice, asking “whether the principles and practices of the scribes at Qumran differed significantly from those of other contemporary Jewish scribes.”⁴⁷ Ulrich’s objections, however, are not convincing. He points specifically to the problem of *plene* spelling using vowel letters, but this is not the real crux of *yahad* scribal practices. The unique features of *yahad* orthography are items such as *hwʾh* for personal pronouns, the use of pausal verbal forms like *yqtwlw*, or the writing of divine names with Paleo-Hebrew characters. Ulrich’s objections could be further contextualized by noting the use of the cryptic scripts—texts that now number as many as eighty manuscripts.⁴⁸ Clearly, script as well as orthography was being used for ideological purposes in the sectarian manuscripts from Qumran. As anthropological linguists have pointed out, script and spelling are often the subject of ideological manipulation.⁴⁹ The very character of the radical religious sect reflected in the documents from Khirbet Qumran, as well as their staunch ideological opposition to the Jerusalem temple, provides a typical motivation for the ideological manipulation of orthography, script, and language.

A slightly different explanation of the Dead Sea Scrolls orthography is hinted at by E. Y. Kutscher’s study of 1QIsa. Kutscher argues that the use of full spelling in the scrolls arises from an attempt to avoid Aramaisms. He notes the natural tendency for homographs in Hebrew and Aramaic—for

example, *l*, *y³mr*, *r³s*—to be pronounced according to their Aramaic rather than Hebrew pronunciation in RH. He argues then that “for both nationalistic and religious reasons” the pronunciation was made clear through *plene* spelling, that is, *lw³*, *yw³mr* or *y³wmr*, *rw³s* or *r³ws* (לוא, יואמר or יואמר, רואש or ראש) in QH.⁵⁰ There is probably some truth in Kutscher’s analysis; however, as he himself admits, it does not account for all the anomalies in the sectarian orthography. More than this, it is hard to believe that the readers of the scrolls, namely, the community itself, needed to be reminded that in Hebrew *l* was pronounced /lō/ and not /lā/. No. The purpose of orthography is to mark identity more than pronunciation, as illustrated by the British spelling *colour* instead of *color*. Indeed, I recall inquiring of a British publisher of one of my books whether I should use British spelling and being told that this was not allowed because I was an American. Moreover, it is worth pointing out that spellings such as *centre* or *labour* do not indicate any special difference between British and American pronunciation. Likewise, with Qumran scribal practice, we should be careful not to equate spelling with pronunciation. Indeed, the pronunciation of common words like “not” (*lw³* or *l³*) and “that” (*ky³* or *ky*) was already clear. Furthermore, the scrolls themselves indicate that there may have been religious reasons that caused the *yahad* community to distinguish the language not only from Aramaic but also from the colloquial Hebrew of their contemporaries.

For the most part, *yahad* orthography has not been found outside of the Qumran scrolls. The nearest parallels are with the Samaritan tradition that uses lengthened second- and third-person plurals, *tmh* and *hmbh* (אתמה and התמה), lengthened suffixes, and the verbal form *yqtlw^h* (יקטילו).⁵¹ The Samaritan tradition, however, also diverges in many important ways. On the one hand, it does not have many important features of *yahad* orthography, such as the lengthened 3s forms *hw^h* and *hy^h* (הואה and היאה) or the general tendency toward *plene* spelling. On the other hand, the Samaritan tradition incorporates features unknown in either *yahad* or standard orthography, such as the 2fs pronoun *ty* (אתי). Other similarities to *yahad* orthography may be found in the Severus Scroll, which is known through fragmentary rabbinic sources, though these should not be overstated. The Severus Scroll uses non-final letters in final position (that is, כ for ך, מ for ם, נ for ן, צ for ץ), as we find in some of the early Qumran manuscripts, and it also uses *plene* spelling, but these are not distinct Qumran scribal practice.⁵² Emanuel Tov was quite conservative in his conclusions regarding the peculiarity of Qumran scribal practice, as it is possible that “new documents may be discovered which would undermine the uniqueness of the Qumran Scrolls.”⁵³ Parallels with other scribal traditions such as Samaritan orthography warrant a cautious

approach. Yet Tov's conclusion that the scrolls written in Qumran scribal practice were copied at Qumran, whereas those in standard orthography were brought from outside, can no longer be sustained.⁵⁴ It has become increasingly clear that the Qumran settlement itself had ties with the outside world. The variability in the "Qumran scribal practice" itself suggests that the sectarian scrolls arose not in a narrowly circumscribed setting but rather "among the camps" throughout ancient Palestine.

The inconsistency of *yahad* orthography indicates that Qumran scribal practice was not "standard" scribal practice, even for many of the *yahad* scribes. William Labov observes that "overt correction tends to be rather unsystematic when it occurs late in life, and it focuses on individual words rather than general rules."⁵⁵ The many orthographic inconsistencies in QH indicate that the system consciously went against well-entrenched scribal practice. This is perhaps most clear in the use of supralinear corrections, which bring orthography in line with the *yahad* system, as well as the use of final letters in medial position (for example, וּמִנְחָתָם, "their offering," 11QT^b frag. 14+15 7; בִּרְעִיתְךָ, "your pasture," 4Q266 frag. 18 5:13; בְּרִיתְךָ, "your covenant," 1QH 10:22).⁵⁶ The appearance of scrolls in *yahad* orthography (for example, 1QIs^a) alongside those in standard (or "Proto-Masoretic") orthography (for example, 1QIs^b) itself indicates that the *yahad* scribes were well aware of the standard orthography. The frequent slips that resulted in final letters placed in medial position or that had to be corrected with supralinear notations also indicate a conscious departure from the standard orthography. The scribes were used to the standard Hebrew orthography, but they were also aware of the special Qumran scribal practice and tried to correct toward it. At the same time, there was no tightly controlled scribal community strictly enforcing "Qumran scribal practice." This fact also argues strongly in favor of a model of dispersed groups living in a variety of places—that is, a *yahad* community living in camps throughout the land, as is suggested both by the scrolls themselves and by Josephus's and Philo's descriptions of the Essenes.

The orthography and scripts used in the Dead Sea Scrolls also point to strong linguistic ideology. Anthropological linguists have shown that orthography and script are ideologically loaded.⁵⁷ Experimentation with Paleo-Hebrew and cryptic scripts in the Second Temple period were also socially marked uses of script. A modern example of this was the decision to write Turkish using the Roman instead of the Arabic script. It is noteworthy that the revival of Paleo-Hebrew script appears on Jewish coins of the Second Temple period, reflecting nationalistic movements. The use of cryptic scripts now appears to be much more extensive than initially thought, with perhaps more than eighty fragmentary manuscripts.⁵⁸ One can only speculate con-

cerning the rationale for the use of cryptic script. It may have arisen from a rejection of the “foreign” Aramaic script or the “Samaritan” (that is, Paleo-Hebrew type) script, or it might have been an attempt to recover the written alphabet from creation. It certainly speaks to the highly charged linguistic ideology of the *yahad* community.

The *yahad* community also used paleography to differentiate the community. The most obvious example of the special use of paleography is in the cryptic texts (for example, 4Q186, 4Q249, 4Q250, 4Q298, 4Q313, 4Q317, and 4Q324c). An analysis of the script (labeled “Cryptic A”) shows an eclectic assortment of influences.⁵⁹ Cryptic A script is clearly an artificial creation. Stephen Pfann observes that “the contents of this short scroll [4Q298] wouldn’t seem to warrant such careful protection” using a cryptic script; yet Pfann concludes that use of the Cryptic A script suggests that “all Essene teaching, even the foundational principles, was treated as crucial, even mystical knowledge, and hence was worthy of concealment from non-members.”⁶⁰ If we understand QH as an antilanguage, however, this need not be the case. Halliday points out that antilanguages do not merely arise from the desire for secrecy, but they help to form group boundaries and reflect the subjective reality of the group.⁶¹

One feature of antilanguages, as Irvine noted earlier, is “their elaboration of lexicon and metaphor relevant to their special activities and their attitudes toward the normative society.” This feature is reflected in the *yahad* community’s use of code terminology and metaphor and in the development of a peculiar lexicon. The use of code (or “typological”) terminology in the scrolls is well known. Code terminology is used for people, such as the Teacher of Righteousness (for example, 1QpHab 1:13; 8:3; CD 1:11; 4QpPs^a frags. 1–10 3:15), the Wicked Priest (for example, 1QpHab 1:13; 4QpPs^a frags. 1–10 4:8), the Man of the Lie (for example, CD 20:15; 1QpHab 5:11), and the Lion of Wrath (for example, 4QpNah frags. 3–4 1:5–6). It is used for concepts like Damascus (for example, CD 6:5, 19), the Kittim (for example, 1QpHab 2:12; 1QM 1:2; 4QpNah frags. 3–4 1:3), or the house of Judah (for example, CD 4:11; 4QpPs^a frags. 1–10 2:13). Lexicon is developed to describe the community’s interpretative activities (for example, the *peshet* genre) and to set it against the establishment that is described as “the seekers of smooth things” (for example, CD 1:18; 1QH 10:32; 4QpNah frags. 3–4 1:2) or “those who move the boundary” (for example, CD 1:16; 5:20).

Another feature of antilanguages, according to Irvine, is “their conspicuous avoidance and violation of forms recognized as ‘standard.’” Qumran Hebrew displays just such a studied avoidance of both Aramaisms and popular language on the surface level of language. Indeed, it seems that none of the

Aramaic scrolls found among the Qumran texts derive from the *yahad* community, as is indicated by the lack of distinctively Qumran terminology or orthography among the Aramaic scrolls. The very fact that none of the Aramaic scrolls appear to have been composed by the *yahad* community already suggests a conscious avoidance of the Aramaic language.⁶² This is not to say that the standard language did not influence the antilanguage developed among the *yahad* community; after all, the creation of the antilanguage arises out of the standard language. Nevertheless, antilanguages are a conscious reaction to the standard language, particularly in some of its most recognizable features (for example, the spelling of personal pronouns like הוּא vs. הוּאָה in QH).

Qumran Hebrew is conspicuous in its paucity of loanwords. Kutscher, for example, writes, “It is astonishing that the DSS should contain so few new foreign loans except for Aramaic and those that are already part and parcel of BH.”⁶³ This contrasts with RH, which is replete with loanwords not only from Aramaic and Greek but also from Latin.⁶⁴ It is noteworthy that the Copper Scroll and MMT (Halakhic Letter)—two decidedly sectarian texts—both indicate that the scribes at Qumran could write in RH. The Copper Scroll itself was first described as being written in “colloquial Mishnaic Hebrew.”⁶⁵ J. T. Milik’s official publication of the Copper Scroll included an extensive discussion of its language. Among other things, Milik noted the exclusive use of the RH relative particle שֶׁ (–שׁ), as opposed to the regular biblical term שָׁר (אֲשֶׁר), and the typical RH plural morpheme -yn (יָ-) instead of the SBH -ym (יָ-). These RH forms occur elsewhere in the scrolls, but only irregularly.⁶⁶ The avoidance of typically RH forms of language must thus be considered a studied avoidance.

The *yahad* scribes were not entirely successful in their avoidance of Aramaisms. Bar-Asher offers examples of what he terms “involuntary” Aramaisms in the sectarian literature, which seem to stem from knowledge of the targumic traditions.⁶⁷ Kutscher notes, “In spite of the strong desire . . . to preserve the purity of the Hebrew language, it was impossible to avoid the absorption—both conscious and unconscious—of elements from the rival tongue.”⁶⁸ Kutscher assumes that the mother tongue of the scribe for the Great Isaiah Scroll was Aramaic and consequently that the scribe “inadvertently grafted Aramaic forms upon the Hebrew text.”⁶⁹ Such examples include the defective spelling *mwznm*, “balances, scales” (מְזוּנִים), which follows Aramaic as against the SBH form *mʿznm* (מְזוּנִים; Isa. 40:12; see also v. 15) that derives from a popular etymology relating to the root זָן (אָן), “ear.”

The area in which the *yahad* scribes had the most difficulty avoiding popular language was the deep structure of language, namely, syntax. It is par-

ticularly unfortunate then to focus overly on vocabulary when analyzing the differences between QH and SBH.⁷⁰ A paradigmatic example of changes in the deep structures of language in QH is the use of the relative particle *šr*, “that, which.” We have discussed this term earlier as an Aramaism, but from the perspective of lexicon it might be called a classicism. In fact, the feature becomes the first argument for Shelomo Morag’s argument that QH “is neither Biblical nor Mishnaic, but rather an independent entity.”⁷¹ However, the syntax of *šr* in the sectarian scrolls approximates *š* in RH as well as *d-* in Aramaic. This is apparent first of all in the fact that *šr* is employed more frequently in QH than in SBH—a tendency that begins already in LBH, which eschews asyndetic syntax. More important, *šr* is employed in ways more typical of *š* in RH; for example, *šr* begins to replace *ky*, “because,” introducing a causal clause, just as we see in RH.⁷² We may take as one example of this phenomenon the phrase “they shall receive judgments of fire *because* [*šr*] they blasphemed and insulted the chosen ones of God” (1QpHab 10:13); in this example, *šr* has become like the Aramaic particle *dy* or RH *š*, introducing a causal clause, much like the use of *ky* in SBH.

Rabin provides examples that he terms “involuntary Mishnaisms.”⁷³ He gives a number of examples of lexical items, including *prwš* (פרוש), “exact” (for example, CD 2:13; 4:8); *msr* (מסר), “to pass over” (CD 3:3); *hrbn* (חרבן), “destruction” (CD 5:20); *hryn* (הרעניה), “fast” (CD 6:19); and *srk* (סרך), “rule” (for example, 1QS 1:1; CD 7:6; 10:4). A prime example of RH morphology in QH would be the infinitive *lyrwš* (לירוש), “to inherit” (CD 1:7);⁷⁴ elsewhere QH invariably uses the SBH form *lrš* (לרשת), for example, CD 8:4; 19:27; 1QpHab 2:15; 3:2; 11QT 51:16). The scribes obviously know both forms, but they do not (and probably could not) consistently employ the SBH form as against the contemporary RH form. This example confirms Rabin’s labeling of such forms as “involuntary.” The involuntary label also accords with the nature of antilanguages and emphasizes the impact of language ideology on QH.

Further examples readily demonstrate that the use of Mishnaic or Aramaic syntax is frequent in QH. For instance, the use of the prohibitive construction *l’ + l-* with the infinitive is quite common (for example, 1QS 1:6, *ולא ללכת*, “and he shall not walk”).⁷⁵ This construction is exceedingly rare in biblical literature, with only ten occurrences, many from late contexts or in biblical Aramaic texts.⁷⁶ This syntactical construction is a regular feature of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic and likely comes into Hebrew through Aramaic influence.⁷⁷ Likewise, the use of periphrastic constructions (that is, *byh* + participle) in QH reflects a transition from LBH, where such constructions are relatively infrequent but attested, to RH, where these constructions

become a regular feature of the language.⁷⁸ Thus, we find both similarity and distinction between QH and RH. Even where scribes could replace RH lexemes with their more classical counterparts, they were not consistently able to eliminate the influence of contemporary syntax from RH.

It is impossible to fully account for the linguistic peculiarities of QH by supposing that it was simply an attempt to imitate biblical Hebrew. We must dismiss the idea that QH is simply archaizing. There is something more going on. There is no evidence, for example, that distinctive Qumran forms like the long pronouns *hwʿh* and *hyʿh* are archaic, other than fanciful historical linguistic imagination. These are anomalous forms, yet they are the most recognizable feature of QH. This is certainly not archaizing based on any orthography known from the Masoretic tradition or ancient Hebrew inscriptions.⁷⁹ In this respect, it is not even a pseudoclassicism. In contrast, it could be argued that forms such as the elongated *hmbh* and *hnbh* are based on biblical forms—that is, they are archaisms or pseudoclassicisms. Likewise, the so-called long imperfect (for example, *ʿdʰ*, “I shall know,” 1QH^a 7:26) found in sectarian texts could be understood as a pseudoclassicism. The form apparently occurs only in the first-person imperfect.⁸⁰ Such elongated forms in SBH are cohortatives (for example, Gen. 18:29); however, already in LBH such forms are sometimes used as simple indicatives, and the cohortative (along with the jussive) will completely disappear in RH.⁸¹ Undoubtedly, the cohortative as a unique morphological form no longer existed in the vernacular of the late Second Temple period. The *yahad* scribes employ what may only be understood as an attempt to use the cohortative form, but often without an understanding of the grammatical form. A particularly instructive example of the eclipse of the cohortative may be found in 11QT 56:13, where a scribe makes a supralinear correction, ואמרתי אשימה עלי מלך ככול הגוים, in order to correct 11QT according to Deuteronomy 17:14 (אשימה), “and you shall say, ‘Let me set a king over me like all the nations.’” The 11QT manuscript uses the final *mem* for the verb, indicating that it is morphologically a simple imperfect. Although the correction above the line might be construed as morphologically correcting this to a cohortative, in fact, this elongated form is a typical form for the simple imperfect in QH. This error and correction exhibits the natural tendency for the cohortative forms to disappear. The frequent misuse of the cohortative suggests that the use of these long forms reflects the classicizing tendency of *yahad* scribes.

Another apparent example of an attempt to imitate biblical style is the regular use of SBH “pausal” forms. For example, the penultimate accentuation of the *qal* imperfect forms, that is, *yqtwlw* (for example, 1QS 6:4, 7, 17, 21, 22), which is one of the characteristics of Qumran scribal practice, is widely

known in biblical Hebrew as a pausal form resulting from the accent on a final syllable. Another example of a pausal form in Qumran scribal practice is the 3m and 3f pronouns, *hmb* and *hnb*. It has been argued that “the pausal forms [in biblical Hebrew] act as punctuation, reflecting a logical system of text division.”⁸² The pausal forms are well known in biblical literature but especially common in prophetic speech and poetry (for example, Pss. 10:8; 56:7; Isa. 1:18; 5:11; 9:18; 11:10; 13:17; Jer. 3:16; 5:26; Ezek. 23:47; Hosea 4:10; 8:7). This is partly because pausal forms mark syntactic units, and poetry naturally tends to be broken into smaller syntactical units than prose. As a result, pausal forms are much more dense in poetry (for example, psalms, prophetic literature) than in prose. Moreover, poetry also exhibits irregular word order, so that verbs (for example, *yqtwlw*) and pronouns (for example, *hmb*) are more likely to appear as the last word of a syntactical unit and therefore in pause. If these pausal forms in biblical literature are a form of punctuation, as has been suggested, then the use of pausal forms as regular scribal practice obviates their biblical meaning. They can no longer serve as a form of punctuation, because they are used indiscriminately. What were the *yahad* scribes trying to do by making these pausal forms a feature of Qumran scribal practice? They are not precisely trying to imitate biblical style, because they would have known quite well that these were not regular forms.

The changing meaning and use of the *waw* consecutive (that is, the *waw* + prefix conjugation) also illustrates the use of biblical form (surface structure) without understanding the biblical meaning (deep structure). In SBH, the *waw* consecutive is a narrative tense, whereas in QH it becomes a tense converter without regard to syntax (as the medieval grammarians understood it—*waw ha-hipukh*, “converting *waw*”).⁸³ The SBH use of the *waw* consecutive as a narrative preterite was already in decline in LBH and completely disappeared by RH. For example, a staple of SBH prose is the narrative formula *wyhy*, “and it came to pass”—a feature no longer present in QH. Qumran Hebrew used the *waw* consecutive as a converted tense in imitation of classical style but did not capture the nuances of its narrative syntax.

By way of concluding the discussion of QH, it is worthwhile to reflect on how the Halakhic Letter (or MMT) as well as the Temple Scroll fit into our description of QH as an antilanguage.⁸⁴ MMT was written using an epistolary expression: “we have written to you” (אָנֵחְנוּ כְּתִיבֵנוּ, 4Q398 frag. 14–17 2:2). Many scholars think this is rhetorical, that is, it was not legal correspondence addressed from the community to the Jerusalem temple leadership. Nevertheless, it is couched in such terms, and the linguistic register must be contextualized as part of this rhetoric. In their publications, Elisha Qimron and

John Strugnell have emphasized some of the striking differences between the Hebrew of MMT and the rest of the sectarian literature. In a word, MMT is more “Mishnaic.” It uses, for instance, the usual RH relative pronoun *š* (שׁ), “that, which,” as opposed to the more typical Qumran use of SBH *šr* (שֶׁר). Qimron and Strugnell summarize the situation as follows: “A close examination of the linguistic components proves that the similarity to RH is restricted to vocabulary and to the use of the particle שׁ, whereas in areas of grammar (spelling, phonology, morphology, and syntax) there is very great similarity to the Hebrew of other Dead Sea Scrolls.”⁸⁵ Two factors account for these differences. First of all, MMT was rhetorically couched as a letter sent to the Jerusalem aristocracy; hence, it used the common vernacular. Second, as indicated by the content of MMT, it is couched as a rapprochement to the Jerusalem aristocracy and therefore uses a common rather than sectarian language. As Halliday points out, antilanguages arise as “a counter-reality, set up in opposition to some established norm.”⁸⁶ The attempt at rapprochement in MMT would not have been conducive to the use of an antilanguage.

The Temple Scroll is another Dead Sea text that illustrates a strong language ideology. First it needs to be acknowledged that the Temple Scroll seems to be an early text, with fragments dating to 125 B.C.E. It dates to an early period in the formation of the *yahad*—certainly a very early period in the development of Qumran scribal practice—and predates the Qumran sectarian settlement.⁸⁷ As previously mentioned, the classicizing tendencies in QH generally follow the lines of biblical poetry known primarily from the Psalter but also from the prophets. More specifically, the elongated forms of the Temple Scroll follow classical Hebrew poetry. Second, poetic texts such as the Psalms and prophetic books were believed to be the speech of God. The prophetic speeches are explicitly introduced as the speech of God, for example, “Thus says the Lord” (כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה), and texts such as the Psalms Scroll show the Psalms were “prophecy” as well (note 11Q5 27:11). Third, the Temple Scroll rewrites the voice of the Torah (especially Deuteronomy) so that the book frames itself as the direct speech of God. In keeping with this direct speech, the language used idiosyncrasies in Hebrew known especially from biblical poetry and prophetic speech, for example, forms like *הַמָּה*, *אֲחֵיהֶם*, or *יִקְטֹלוּ*. The peculiar language of the Temple Scroll is a reflex of the change in voice. In other words, now the Torah is a direct revelation of God, and God’s speech is different from human speech. The linguistic register of the Temple Scroll reflects this. We get glimpses of this divine language in biblical poetry or prophetic speech, both considered by the sectarians as more directly divine speech than the canonical Pentateuch. The penultimate accentuation of the *qal* imperfect forms, that is, *יִקְטֹלוּ*, is also considered

a classicism. Such forms are known in biblical poetry but especially in the prophetic speech of God (for example, Pss. 10:8; 56:7; Isa. 1:18; 5:11; 9:18; 11:10; 13:17; Jer. 3:16; 5:26; Ezek. 23:47; Hosea 4:10; 8:7). The reasonable inference is that these forms are used as a reflex of the *genre* of the Temple Scroll. The Temple Scroll is the speech of God; its language is the language of God. In this respect, the Temple Scroll is quite similar to the theology of the *yahad* poet who writes: “my language is as one of your disciples” (1QH 15:10). It is quite typical for religious sectarians to develop such strong religious ideology with regard to language.

In sum, it is important to create a systemic analysis of Qumran Hebrew. Typical analyses of QH have labored under the neogrammarian approaches to language with assumptions about the immutability of linguistic rules and the isolation of language from the rest of the cultural system. In the case of QH, however, the very obvious linguistic ideology of the speakers—which was, moreover, a more general issue of Jewish culture in the late Second Temple period—begs for a sociolinguistic approach that tries to account for a whole array of linguistic data with the theory that language (and linguistic data) must be explained within a cultural system.

Commonly Proposed Features of Qumran Hebrew

The corpus of sectarian religious texts from the region of Khirbet Qumran begins with the characteristic texts and genres found in multiple copies. These include the *Damascus Document*, the *Community Rule*, the pesher texts, and the *War Scroll*. More fragmentary texts as well as texts that include only a single exemplar must be approached more cautiously in describing the sectarian speech community, though they are a valuable resource for describing the broader phenomenon of Hebrew in the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods.

Some commonly proposed features of Qumran Hebrew include the following:

1. Increased use of vowel letters (i.e., *plene* spelling). For example, the negative particle *lwʔ*, “not” (compare SBH *lʔ*); *kwh*, “thus” (compare SBH *kb*); or *rwʕ*, “head” (compare SBH *rʕ*).
2. Elongated forms. Some of these are merely new spelling conventions based on vernacular phonology, such as nominal and verbal suffixes like *-kh*, “you” (compare SBH *-k*). Others seem to be partially formed on the basis of biblical pausal forms; hence, pronouns like *bmb*, “they”; the suffix *-mb*, “their” (compare SBH *-m*); or the

3mp verbal form *yšmwrw*, “they shall guard,” have clear antecedents in biblical pausal forms. In contrast, elongated forms like the pronouns *hw’h*, “he” (compare SBH *hw’*); *’tmh*, “you [plural]” (compare SBH *’tm*); or the adverb *m’wdh*, “very” (compare SBH *m’d*) seem to be analogical.

3. Spelling with final *aleph*. New spellings for words add a final *aleph* with no apparent historical antecedent, as in *ky’*, “because” (compare SBH *ky*), or *my’*, “who?” (compare SBH *my*).
4. Changes in the verbal system. The decreasing use of forms such as the *waw* consecutive, the infinitive absolute, and infinitive constructs with *b-* or *k-*. The archaic passive *qal* is replaced by the *niphal*. The periphrastic verbal syntax (the verb *byh*, “to be,” coordinated with a participle) becomes more common.
5. Use of classical Hebrew lexemes with later Hebrew and Aramaic syntax. The most notable example is the relative *šr*, “that, which, because,” in a manner similar to RH *š-* and Aramaic *dy*, *d-*.
6. The use of asyndetic syntax (typical of SBH) almost disappears. Relative particles, especially *šr* and sometimes *š-*, coordinate clauses.