4Q27 Numbers

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Among the thousands of fragments found in Qumran Cave 4, some have been pieced together to form a fragmentary copy of the book of Numbers known as 4Q27 Numbers. The photograph in the Qumran exhibit was of some of these fragments. Comprising twenty-seven columns of text, 4Q27 Numbers corresponds to Numbers 11–36 and is written in early Herodian semiformal Hebrew script dating to about 30 B.C.

Scholars studying these fragments have noted a number of differences between this version and the Masoretic text of the book of Numbers. Many of the textual variations found in 4Q27 Numbers agree with the version of Numbers found in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint), indicating that differing versions of the book of Numbers were in circulation during the period of the Second Temple, about 525 B.C.–A.D. 70.

In company with other biblical texts found at Qumran that agree with the Septuagint, 4Q27 Numbers provides strong evidence that there were at least two Hebrew versions of many biblical texts in existence before the Masoretic text became the normative Hebrew text of the Old Testament.