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Stichographic Layout in the Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls: Observations on its Development and its Potential

1 Introduction

In cultures where means of mass production for written texts were (or are) unknown, unavailable, or uncommon, every script-bearing artifact is in a way unique in realizing the combination of text, writing, and material. Therefore – as has become increasingly acknowledged since the "material turn" within the humanities and social sciences – pre-modern artifacts showing writing should not just be taken as witnesses of the respective text, but as agents in a textual culture. In consequence, interpretation cannot just focus on the content, but has to consider the material features of a script-bearing artifact as well.[1] By combining both aspects, script-bearing artifacts are perceived as the outcome of an artisanal process of production, revealing much more than just the texts.

As part of a broader research project on the writing practices in the Second Temple Period of Ancient Israel, concretely of those scrolls containing "biblical"[2] psalms, the present article deals with one aspect that might be relevant to detect indications of intended or actual practices of reception connected to the psalms manuscripts. Since most – probably all – of the texts collected in the psalms

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1 Cf. e.g. Markus Hilgert, "Materiale Textkulturen: Textbasierte historische Kulturwissenschaften nach dem *material culture turn*," in *Materialität: Herausforderungen für die Sozial- und Kulturwissenschaften*, ed. Herbert Kalthoff, Torsten Cress and Tobias Röhl (Paderborn: Fink, 2016): 255–56.

2 The term "biblical" is anachronistic since an authoritative (Hebrew or Christian) Bible did not exist when the manuscripts were written. Furthermore, some of the psalms scrolls dealt with in this article contain also both apocryphal and formerly unknown compositions. Thus, when the term "biblical" psalms is used, it is referring to psalms that are part of the (later) canonical Psalter. The identification of scrolls which contain both "biblical" and other compositions as "biblical psalms scrolls" is used to distinguish these scrolls from those manuscripts which contain only apocryphal psalms compositions.

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scrolls from the Judean Desert are older than the writing in the extant manuscripts, the production of the concrete script-bearing artifact can already be interpreted as an act of reception and can be analyzed as such. Therefore, the layout of a psalms scroll, dealt with in the following, promises insights both into how the scribes of a certain manuscript understood the texts copied and for what use their scroll was intended. Thus, in the following, a short overview on the materiality and the layout features of the psalms manuscripts from the Judean Desert will be given. After that, we will concentrate on one special feature, the stichographic layout, and analyze its chronological development in a case study on Ps 119 and the potential of its use by the example of Ps 118.

2 Preliminary Remarks on the Format of the Psalms Scrolls

The scrolls that are generally referred to as the Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls are in fact a most heterogeneous corpus both in format and content. From the thirty-nine scrolls listed in the index of the major edition of the scrolls (Discoveries of the Judean Desert XXXIX),[3] sixteen are too fragmentary to decide on whether they were real psalms scrolls or just citing a passage from a psalm in a different context.[4] With the exception of 1Q10,[5] these fragments are not part of the following overview and analyses. 1Q10 remains part of this study because its special layout is taken as an indication that this manuscript represents indeed a psalms manuscript.

All psalms manuscripts from the Judean Desert are written on animal skins.[6] The horizontal scrolls are usually made from several sheets of prepared skin sewn together. Their size varies a great deal according to both their height and

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[3] Emanuel Tov, ed., *The Texts from the Judaean Desert: Indices and an Introduction to the* Discoveries of the Judaean Desert *Series*, DJD 39 (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 173f., 181.

[4] Cf. Eva Jain, *Psalmen oder Psalter? Materielle Rekonstruktion und inhaltliche Untersuchung der Psalmenhandschriften aus der Wüste Juda*, StTDJ 109 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 217. In addition to the fifteen scrolls listed there, 11Q9 must be assigned to this group, as well, since its only extant fragment is very small and contains just a few hardly readable letters.

[5] The designation of the scrolls in this essay follows the numerical nomenclature as presented in DJD 39.

[6] Cf. Emanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert*, StTDJ 54 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 32.
The broad discussion on whether it is more suitable to call the material used for the scrolls either "leather" or "parchment" and the related question of which scrolls are made of either the one or the other material, can be left aside for the purposes of this article.

the length of a scroll – and in most cases it can only be partially reconstructed because of the fragmentary state of the scrolls. The scrolls also vary substantially in their content. Some of them, e.g. 5/6Hev 1b, might have contained the psalms 1–150 in the arrangement that we know from the Hebrew Bible. Most, however, comprise only a portion of this psalter. Some arrange the psalms in a different way and again some of these scrolls also add other "biblical" and apocryphal material. The writing – in all cases Hebrew – was carried out with a carbonaceous black ink.[7] In addition, many of the scrolls show horizontal and vertical rulings applied by a sharp instrument ("dry-point-rulings") as a preparation to achieve rather constant columns and lines. However, the concrete sizes of columns and lines vary both within one document and between the individual manuscripts. The type and size of the script also differs from scroll to scroll. The script is often the only possible source to pinpoint the date of inscription for the respective manuscripts. Based on this paleographical dating, it can be shown that psalms manuscripts were produced throughout the timespan covered by the Judean Desert manuscripts. The oldest psalms manuscript, 4Q83, is dated to ca. 150 BCE, the youngest manuscripts (e.g. 4Q85 and 5/6Hev 1b) were most likely inscribed during the second half of the first century CE.

3 The Layout of the Psalms Scrolls

Layout can be understood as the "way in which text or pictures are set out on a page."[8] It is an umbrella term that covers all kinds of aspects influencing the layout of a thing – in this case: an inscribed object. Consider for example the decisive role of a manuscript's format with regard to its layout. A codex with separate sheets offers different possibilities for the arrangement of a text and pictures than a vertically inscribed scroll that may even consist of several layers of sheets. This kind of scroll, again, allows for a different layout than horizontally inscribed scrolls like the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The layout can also hint towards modes of reception connected with the respective scroll as in the following examples from the layout features in the Dead Sea psalms scrolls.

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7 Cf. Yoram Nir-El and Magen Broshi, "The Black Ink of the Qumran Scrolls," *DSD* 3 (1996): 157–67.
8 Oxford Living Dictionaries: English, consulted online on 23 May 2018 (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/layout).

1) The aforementioned format of the individual scrolls, i.e. their physical dimensions which determine the surface that can be written on, can be a first indicator towards the practicability of a scroll.
2) The dimensions of the columns, the number of lines per column, and the question whether the columns and lines were marked by rulings, show the intensity of planning of a scroll. Furthermore, the relation between the rulings, the format of a scroll (e.g. narrower columns towards the end of a sheet), and the textual layout are instructive.
3) The letter size and its connection to the size of the scroll, the columns, and the length of lines can be interpreted as clues for the intended use of a scroll.
4) The arrangement of the text on the scroll, i.e. the representation of the poetical structure of a text in the layout, the marking of individual compositions/ psalms, paragraphs, and superscriptions can be evaluated as to their influence on reception.

In the following, the focus will be solely on the representation of the psalms' poetical structure in the layout of the "biblical psalms scrolls" and the possible impacts of a special layout on the reception of psalms.

3.1 Different Forms of Layout in the Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls

Contemporary Bible translations almost invariably format poetic texts in some form of structure that sets them apart from prose. Readers of the text today would be forgiven for assuming that such structural formatting has always been a part of the biblical text – but this is not the case. The textual arrangement of "biblical" psalms in the Dead Sea Scrolls varies a great deal, both from one scroll to another, and even within a scroll. The differences show how the scribes were able to represent the poetical structure of psalms in several ways.[9]

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9 It is of course correct to say "that taxonomy doesn't tell the full story" (Shem Miller, "Multiformity of Stichographic Systems in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *RdQ* 29 [2017], 243) and that it is necessary to keep an open mind about the living oral culture behind liturgical and poetic texts (ibid., 244f.). However, systematizing a phenomenon like the heterogeneous layout of the Dead Sea psalms scrolls is helpful to gain an overview over the actual range of possibilities, their similarities and differences. Furthermore, it does not exclude one from then zooming into the details and take those aspects of scribal habits and practices into account that are not covered by a systematization. Thus, in the following the textual arrangement will be classified, knowing that this is merely the foreword to the tale of the full story. Another taxonomy can be found in: Emanuel Tov, "The Background of the Stichometric Arrangements of Poetry in the Judean Desert Scrolls," in *Prayer and Poetry in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature. Essays in Honor of Eileen*
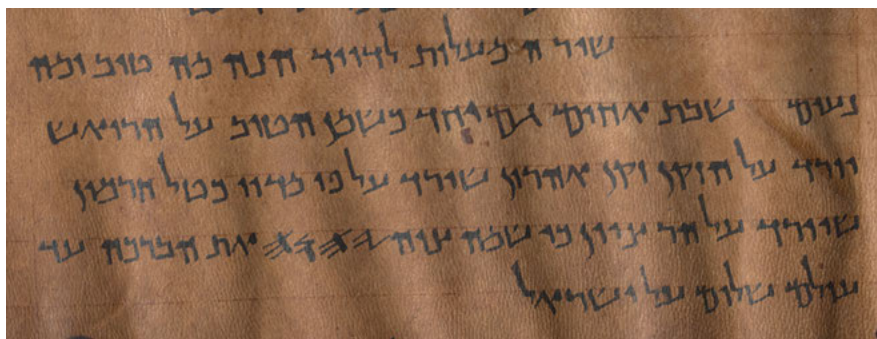
Fig. 1: *Prose-layout in 11Q5, Col XXIII,6–12*. Courtesy of The Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library; Israel Antiquities Authority, photo: Shai Halevi.

1) In most cases, the scribes did not incorporate the poetical structure of the psalms into the layout. This will be called the "prose-layout" in the following, since the psalms are represented like prose texts without any accentuation of their poetical structure (see Fig. 1). Such a designation, however, is disputed, both since the layout of prose texts may vary and since generally prose should be distinguished from poetry. Yet, other terms are just as much or even more problematic, like e.g. s*criptio continua*. This term does not describe the same phenomenon, because it does not only neglect sense units but also the grouping of single letters to form a word.[10] These considerations are more than mere hair-splitting because most of the "biblical psalms scrolls" – and all the apocryphal[11] – are written in such a way.[12] A fitting description of this phenomenon is, therefore, necessary.

Schuller on the Occasion of Her 65th Birthday, StTDJ 98, ed. Jeremy Penner, Ken M. Penner and Cecilia Wassen (Leiden: Brill, 2012): 415–17.

10 Cf. Tiziano Dorandi, "Punctuation I. Greek," in Brill's New Pauly, ed. Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider and Christine F. Salazar (2006), consulted online on 23 May 2018 (http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e702150).

11 Cf. Tov, "The Background of the Stichometric Arrangements," 410 with footnote 5.

12 "Prose-layout" is used exclusively in the following scrolls: 4Q83; 4Q87; 4Q88; 4Q92; 4Q94; 4Q95; 4Q98; 4Q98a; 11Q7; 11Q8. In some other scrolls, the "prose-layout" is predominant with just one psalm each in a stichographic arrangement: 4Q86 (Ps 104); 11Q5 (Ps 119); 11Q6 (Ps 119).

2) When the poetical structure *is* represented in the layout, different strate-
    gies are chosen to arrange the text, mainly in order to highlight the verses or
    stichs[13]:

    a) Once, in Mas 1f, the single stichs are separated by a short *vacat*[14] but the
        length of the line is not taken into account. Thus, the single lines do not
        start with a new stich or verse each. This layout seems to be a hybrid of
        "prose-" and stichographic layout.

    b) Each line begins with a new verse. This type of stichographic layout can
        be subdivided into such manuscripts that

        a. usually separate the stichs of a verse by a short *vacat*[15] and those that

        b. generally do not separate the single stichs from each other.[16]

    c) Several manuscripts arrange the texts with just one stich per line.[17]

Four conclusions can be drawn from this statistical overview:

Firstly, it must be noted that the textual arrangement of psalms can change
within a scroll and even within a single psalm. This includes alterations both
from the "prose-layout" to a stichographic arrangement and from a one-verse-

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13 A note on the terminology used in this article: A verse of Hebrew poetry can be divided into
smaller parts which are called stichs (singular: stich), here. A verse usually consists of two stichs
(*bistichon*). Sometimes, a verse contains three stichs (*tristichon*).

14 This is a blank space of varying length but larger than the usual space between words.

15 1Q10 (Ps 119); 4Q85; 5Q5 (Ps 119); 11Q6 (Ps 119); Mas 1e; 5/6Hev 1b. Concerning 1Q10, Tov
finds only Ps 119 to have a stichographic layout ("The Background of the Stichometric Arrange-
ments," 411). This is disputed by Miller, who suggests a stichographic arrangement of all psalms
of this scroll ("Multiformity of Stichographic Systems," 227f.). See also Dominique Barthélemy
and Józef T. Milik, eds., *Qumran Cave 1*, DJD 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955), 69; Peter Flint, *The
Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms*, StTDJ 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 31; Armin Lange,
*Handbuch der Textfunde vom Toten Meer 1: Die Handschriften biblischer Bücher von Qumran
und den anderen Fundorten* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 374. Since only the stichographic
arrangement of Ps 119 can be identified with certainty, the other psalms of this scroll will not
be included in this survey. In 4Q85 some of the verses are longer than the columns provided
and continue in the following line. In consequence, the next verse begins in the middle of that
line. Nevertheless, the attempt for stichographic layout is clearly visible (see especially 4Q85,
fragment 15ii, 7–10).

16 4Q84 (Ps 118:1–24); 4Q89 (Ps 119; an interesting case of a scribe ignoring the given layout:
instead of writing one stanza per column as indicated by the eight ruled lines per column, the
scribe inserts a blank line after each stanza, so that the blank line "wanders" through the col-
umns, in each column one line below the blank line of the preceding column and jumping back
to the top line once it has wandered through eight columns); 4Q90 (Ps 119); 11Q5 (Ps 119).

17 4Q84 (except Ps 118:1–24); 4Q86 (Ps 104:11ff.); 4Q93 (Ps 104).

per-line to a one-stich-per-line format. The former phenomenon occurs only in connection with Ps 104 and 119,[18] the latter just once.[19]

Secondly, it seems that the choice for a stichographic arrangement of the psalms is made in order to highlight the structure of the text. The visualization of smaller sense units may facilitate the reader's understanding of the psalm.[20] However, at least in one instance, it can be assumed that the layout's aesthetic appeal is more important than the accentuation of the textual structure. Mas 1e is arranged according to the type 2ba-layout, that is: in columns with two separated stichs per line (see Fig. 2). Even when a tristichon occurs, the scribe does not deviate from this strategy.[21] Thus, not every verse begins in a new line but rather shares a line with another verse after every second verse with three stichs. This strict arrangement of columns with two stichs per line does still structure the text in smaller sense units but the larger units – that is: verses – are not visualized through this kind of arrangement. Thus, it seems plausible that in this case the aesthetical appeal of the arrangement is more important to the scribe – or its possible *Vorlage* – than the visualization of the textual structure.

Thirdly, scribes had to adapt to the given space of a line and they did so in different ways, as can been seen in the comparison of Mas 1e with 4Q85.[22] And finally, two psalms seem to be favoured when it comes to a stichographic arrangement of the text.[23] Not only are Ps 104 and 119 among the most prevalent psalms on the psalms scrolls, they can also be written in a special layout while all other psalms on the scroll follow the "prose layout". Psalm 104[24] can be associated with layout type 2c (one stich per line), since it is always arranged in that way when written stichographically. This is the case on the scrolls 4Q93 and 4Q86. The latter scroll witnesses a surprising change from the "prose-layout" to the layout type 2c

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18 4Q86, column III (Ps 104:11); 11Q5, columns VI–XIV (Ps 119); 11Q6, fragment 2 (Ps 119).

19 4Q84, columns XXXIV–XXXV (Ps 118:1–24), see below 5.3.

20 It should be noted that the arrangement in text units according to the stichographic structure of the psalms is already an interpretation of the text's content. Therefore, it is also possible to state that the reader's understanding of the text is influenced by the textual arrangement in a certain way.

21 A similar phenomenon can be seen in 4Q85, see above footnote 15. This may point to a common practice concerning tristicha in a text arranged according to stichs (separated by short *vacats*). 4Q85 does not, however, seem to be following the pattern as strictly as Mas 1e; see 4Q85, fragment 15iii, 4.

22 See above, footnotes 15 and 21.

23 In the case of Ps 104 this connection to stichographic layout may have faded over the course of time. See the chronology, below 3.2.

24 Preserved on 4Q86, 4Q87, 4Q93, and 11Q5 (as well as on 2Q14 which, however, cannot safely be reconstructed as a proper psalms scroll).
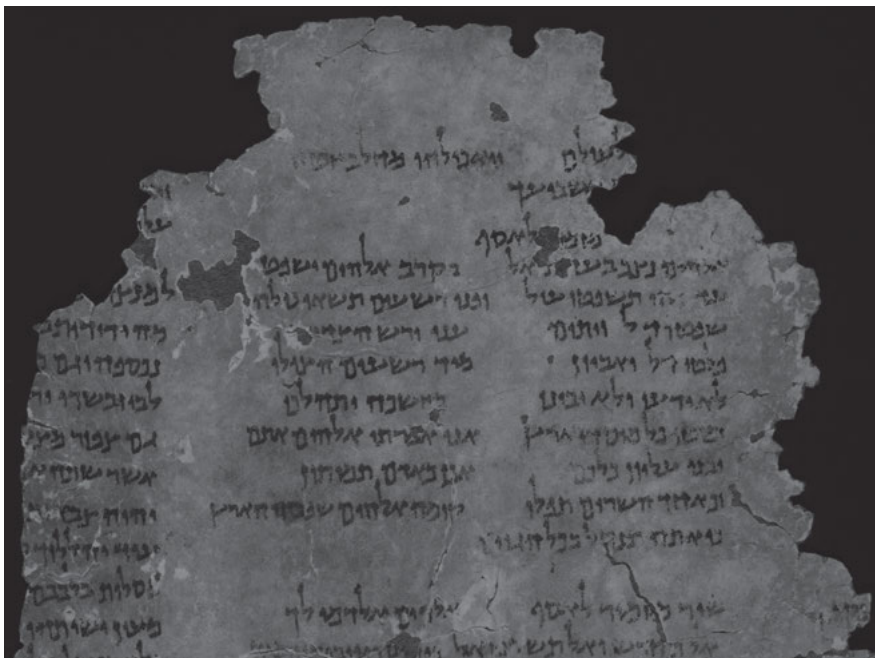
Fig. 2: *A column with two separate stichs: Mas 1e, Col ii and iii*. Courtesy of The Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library; Israel Antiquities Authority, photo: Shai Halevi.

starting with Ps 104:11 (column III). All other scrolls containing Ps 104 arrange this psalm in the "prose-format".[25] Even more striking is the case of Ps 119. No other psalm is preserved by the scrolls as often as this one.[26] More importantly, this psalm is *always* arranged stichographically even when all other psalms on the scroll are not written in a special layout.[27] Furthermore, there is only one scroll, 4Q89, that *certainly* contained just one psalm, and this is Ps 119. It does not come as a surprise that a highly structured text like Ps 119 is arranged according to the type 2b-layout.[28] It is an alphabetic acrostic of 22 stanzas, containing 8 verses each. Other highly structured psalms, however, e.g. Ps 136 or further

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25 Jain claims that Ps 104 was always arranged stichographically (*Psalmen oder Psalter?,* 126). This, however, is not correct, since the material evidence for 4Q87, fragments 14–16, and 11Q5, fragment E displays a non-stichographically arranged Ps 104.

26 At least parts of the psalm are extant on six scrolls, namely: 1Q10; 4Q89; 4Q90; 5Q5; 11Q5; and 11Q6.

27 See 11Q5 and 11Q6.

28 Apart from 11Q6 (2ba) always according to the type 2bb.

acrostics like Ps 112, are usually written in the "prose-layout." Such psalms are only arranged in a stichographic layout when the same applies to *all* psalms on the respective scroll.[29] Nowhere are they treated differently from other psalms of the same scroll. Psalm 119, though, seems to be an exception to the rule that psalms (both acrostics and others) are usually written in a "prose-layout" but *can also* be arranged in a special layout.

After this systematic overview on the layout of the psalms manuscripts, the chronology of the psalms scrolls should be taken into account. Psalm 119 will be discussed in more detail in the first case study below.

3.2 A Chronology of Special Layouts

Table 1: Dating of the Dead Sea psalms scrolls according to paleography.

Paleographical Dating	Manuscript
2nd century BCE	
1st half 2nd century BCE	
mid-2nd century BCE	4Q83
2nd half 2nd century BCE	
1st century BCE	
without closer dating	4Q92
1st half 1st century BCE	
mid-1st century BCE	4Q86, 4Q88
2nd half 1st century BCE	4Q93, 4Q94, 4Q95, Mas 1f
"Herodian" (30 BCE to 70 CE)	4Q90, 4Q98a
1st century CE	
without closer dating	1Q11, 4Q98, 5Q5
1st half 1st century CE	11Q5, 11Q6, 11Q7, Mas 1e
mid-1st century CE	4Q84, 4Q87, 4Q89, 11Q8
2nd half 1st century CE	4Q85, 5/6 Hev 1b

Can the chronology of the psalms scrolls from the Judean Desert (tab. 1) reveal any development in the arrangement of texts? Due to the palaeographic dating of the scrolls, the chronology cannot be fail-safe: first, because paleography does not allow for absolute dating and can only give a time span for each document,

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29 E.g. Psalm 112 on 4Q84, see below p.27.

and second, because it can hardly ever be made out whether a scroll is a copy of an older scroll, and if so, whether layout features were strictly copied or could be varied in the process of copying. Nevertheless, some tendencies can be made out:

1) The "prose-layout" seems to have been the standard (not the norm!) layout for poetical texts.[30]

2) The early cases of a special layout – i.e. those from the pre-Christian period – are all somewhat exceptional:
   a. Mas 1f is the aforementioned hybrid of "prose-" and stichographic layout.
   b. All other cases of special layout refer to either Ps 119 or Ps 104 (1Q10, 4Q86, 4Q90, and 4Q93). While all other psalms on 4Q86 are written in a "prose-layout," the same cannot be said with certainty for 4Q90 (Ps 119) and 4Q93 (Ps 104) since no other psalms are extant on these scrolls. Thus, the question of whether these scrolls contained more than just Ps 119 and Ps 104, respectively, and what type of layout would have been chosen for these additional texts remains unanswered.[31]

3) Over the course of time, Ps 119 retains its special role, while Ps 104 seems to lose it.

4) The number of scrolls with all psalms written in a special layout increases.

5) The layout 2ba – that is, one verse per line with (usually two) separate stichs – seems to be more prominent in the younger manuscripts.

To summarize the chronological analysis: it seems to be possible to make out a trend from "prose-layout" to an increasing number of stichographic arrangements of psalm texts with Ps 119 at the centre of the development.[32]

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30 The material evidence from Qumran and other sites in the Judean Desert suggests that the "prose-layout" was the standard layout for poetical texts. It should, however, not be called a "norm," both because there is no transmitted rule for the layout of scrolls from the Second temple Period and because the few scrolls with a special layout reveal that it was indeed possible to arrange poetical texts in another way, cf. Klaus Seybold, *Poetik der Psalmen*, Poetologische Studien zum Alten Testament 1 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003), 65: "Eine Norm, wie sie die talmudischen Vorschriften und die masoretischen Handschriften zeigen, gab es offenbar im gleichen Maße noch nicht."

31 For the material reconstruction of these scrolls cf. Jain, *Psalmen oder Psalter?*, 117f., 126f.

32 This is contrary to Tov's proposition that the evidence – which does also include the poetic units outside the psalms scrolls – suggests a link between the stichographic arrangement and "*scribes writing in the proto-Masoretic tradition*" (Tov, "The Background of the Stichometric Arrangements," 419; italics in the original). He argues that poetic units arranged as running texts do clearly not belong to the (proto-)Masoretic (MT) tradition, whereas texts with a stichographic layout represent the textual tradition of the later MT. Since the textual fluidity within "biblical" psalms is generally rather low and "mostly the variant readings of the Qumran Psalms manuscripts are constrained to minor disagreements such as grammatical differences" (Armin Lange,

4 Ps 119 as the Prototype of Stichographic Layout

The peculiarities of Ps 119 have already been mentioned and can be summarized as follows: Ps 119 has been preserved on six different scrolls and is *always* written in a type 2b-layout, irrespective of the other psalms' layout on the same scroll. Furthermore, it is the only psalm certainly known to have been written down without the context of a collection of psalms (4Q89). It has also been mentioned that the acrostic structure of the psalm suits an arrangement of one verse per line (with or without separated stichs), whereas other similarly structured psalms do *not* share this affinity with special layouts. So, the question is: Why is Ps 119 so special in this regard? In an attempt to answer this question, the content of Ps 119 will be taken into account in the following. It might reveal why Ps 119 was so popular, why it has an acrostic structure, and why its connection to a special layout is so strong.

Some modern scholars judged this psalm harshly as monotonous and lacking in content.[33] Psalm 119 is indeed a text that circles around the theme of the study of the Torah using a relatively small vocabulary, thus evoking a feeling of redundancy with the reader. However, the material evidence from Qumran[34] suggests that this psalm was held in a high regard by the recipients collecting the scrolls. This points more toward a high esteem and a reading- or even prayer-practice that regarded Ps 119 as the "golden ABC," an expression coined by Martin Luther. The redundancy in the expressions and the seemingly formalistic structure give the psalm a meditative character somewhat similar to the Rosary. To write the analogy out: reading or reciting Ps 119 is a meditative exercise of praying and the single letters of the alphabet are like the beads leading the praying person

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"Collecting Psalms in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *A Teacher for All Generations 1: Essays in Honor of James C. VanderKam*, ed. Eric F. Mason et al., JSJS 153/1 [Leiden: Brill, 2012]: 301), Tov's complete characterization of the alignment of the scrolls lacks a firm ground. Taking into account not only the textual character but also the order of compositions on a scroll compared to the MT-Psalter, the following can be observed. Not all manuscripts close to MT arrange the psalms stichographically and those that do so display different kinds of stichographic layout. On the other hand, some scrolls deviating from the MT order of psalms use stichographic arrangements – at least for Ps 119 and Ps 104. Therefore, the connection of a special layout for psalms to a certain textual tradition – and an assumed scribal tradition behind it – seems to lack foundation. Both a chronological approach and a look into the special connection of Ps 119 to stichographic arrangements seem to be more promising in tracing the source of special layouts for psalms.

33 Cf. e.g. Bernhard Duhm, *Die Psalmen*, 2nd ed., KHC 14 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922), 427f.; referred to by Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalmen 101–150*, HThKAT (Freiburg: Herder, 2008), 350.

34 There is no evidence of Ps 119 on scrolls found at other locations in the Judean Desert.

through the text. Eight "beads" each form a strophe, which is also marked in the layout of the written text. Yet, the text does not suggest that the act of praying is in fact to be equated to the study of the Torah. There are no concrete contents that would imply an actual process of learning. It is rather an unspecific and comprehensive discourse of the Torah that seems to be subordinated to the actual learning process. The prayer is more an act of realisation and self-assurance of the already familiar subject.

Arranging the content as an alphabetical acrostic and highlighting its single verses and strophes in the layout may have helped to memorize the text.[35] It is even possible that the layout of Ps 119 was stichographic from the very beginning and that scribes never had a *Vorlage* deviating from this schema[36] – thus, the strong connection between Ps 119 and a stichographic layout. Another option would be to say that the layout *reflects* the way in which people memorized the psalm and passed it on in the oral tradition. So, although Ps 119 may have been written down in a "prose-layout" at the beginning, it eventually became closely related to a stichographic arrangement because people basically could not think of it in any other way.

It may even be suggested that Ps 119 was some kind of "prototype" for a stichographic arrangement of poetic texts. As shown above, stichographic arrangement of psalms – and, it may be added, of other poetic texts as well – in the Dead Sea scrolls is the exception, not the rule, and develops only later to a more popular and in the end essential feature of "biblical" poetry. It can also be argued that stichographic layout served first to highlight the textual structure of a poetic unit while later on the focus shifted towards the aesthetics of the textual graphic.[37]

But where does this development start? Looking for a starting point, one must not forget Ps 104 which is also a frequent and early example for special layout among psalms in the Dead Sea manuscripts. Furthermore, there are other poetical texts from outside the Book of Psalms – and even the Hebrew canon – which

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35 Seybold denies that the intention of acrostics was an aide for memorizing the texts (*Poetik der Psalmen*, 69). Even if memorization was not the main function of an acrostic, it can nevertheless prove helpful in this process.

36 Similar Seybold, *Poetik der Psalmen*, 69.

37 E. Tov thinks that the principle of graphic beauty was not yet reflected in the Dead Sea manuscripts (Emanuel Tov, "Special Layout of Poetical Units in the Texts from the Judean Desert," in *Give Ear to My Words: Psalms and other Poetry in and around the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honour of Professor N.A. van Uchelen*, ed. Janet Dyk [Amsterdam: Societas Hebraica Amstelodamensis, 1996]: 128). However, as the example of Mas 1e shows, this may well have been the case for some of the scrolls.

display a stichographic layout.[38] In particular, Dtn 32 is frequently and early on arranged according to its stichs. An influence of this – and possibly other – texts on the development of the stichographic arrangement of psalms cannot be excluded. However, none of these texts is *exclusively* connected to a special layout. Only Ps 119 is always represented in a stichographic arrangement and it is also the most frequently found psalm among the Qumran psalms scrolls. The fact that this text is a meditative prayer reflecting the study of the Torah may be the reason why it was so popular among these scrolls. Evidently, not even space was an argument against displaying this longest of all "biblical" psalms with one verse by line and often also separating the stanzas by a blank line. Even if all other psalms on a scroll were arranged in a "prose-layout," this psalm *had* to be arranged stichographically (cf. 11Q5). All other psalms, even Ps 104, are treated with more flexibility when it comes to textual graphics. It has been argued above that memorization practices and perhaps the length of the text made it necessary to display Ps 119 in a special layout from an early stage onwards. It may be assumed that Ps 119 was the prototype for other psalms to be arranged stichographically. What was a necessity for Ps 119 became an option for other psalms and eventually turned into a characteristic feature of "biblical" poetry. Thus, Ps 119 could be called the prototype of stichographic layout.

5 The Potential of Stichographic Layout: Considering the Example of Psalm 118 in the Dead Sea Scrolls

5.1 Ps 118 in the Dead Sea Scrolls

Whereas Ps 119 is always written down in a stichographic layout within the Dead Sea Scrolls, the second test case, its neighboring psalm in the Masoretic order, Ps 118, appears in rather different shapes concerning both its textual form and its layout. Since there seems to be no general rule for the layout of this psalm, its concrete shape in the individual scrolls is all the more interesting and promises helpful insights in the potential of the stichographic layout.

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38 4Q365 (Ex 15); 1Q5; 4Q29; 4Q30; 4Q44 (all Dtn 32); 4Q102 (Prov 1); 4Q103 (Prov 9); 3Q3 (Lam 3); 2Q18; Mas 1h (both Sir); 4Q521 (Messianic Apocalypse).

Parts of Ps 118 are attested by at least three – maybe four – scrolls from the Judaean Desert: 4Q84, 11Q5, 11Q6 and 4Q87. However, in the case of 4Q87 the assignment to that psalm is less certain. The evidence here is limited to a few letters that could be part of Ps 118:29, because this is the only psalm ending with the formula "כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו" ("for he is good, for his grace endures forever") according to the Masoretic Psalter. But since that formula is widespread in the biblical psalms, its attestation on 4Q87 could also be the end of any other psalm in a textual form slightly varying from its Masoretic shape or a superscription to the following composition, Ps 104.[39] Therefore, 4Q87 will not be taken into account in the following.

5.2 11Q5 and 11Q6

11Q5, the so called "great psalms scroll," is the most comprehensive and best-preserved psalms scroll from the Judean Desert. It contains psalms that appear in the fourth and fifth Book of Psalms from the Masoretic Psalter and some additional compositions that are attested in other parts of the Hebrew Bible or other ancient traditions and some that were unknown prior to the discovery of 11Q5. Psalm 118 appears twice in 11Q5, once on fragment E, column i, which contains parts of verses 25–29, and once on the scroll proper in column XVI. Concerning the first appearance, it is not possible to reconstruct the column before and, thus, to find out whether Ps 118 was presented there in entirety.[40] The second version does not comprise the complete psalm, but a catena consisting of verses 1, 15–16, 8–9, a verse similar to the two before but otherwise unknown, and verse 29. Thus, this composition differs decisively from Ps 118 in its Masoretic form – which is also the best explanation for the twofold appearance of one psalm in one single scroll, a phenomenon that is nowhere else to be observed. Thus, the textual character of Ps 118 in 11Q5 is remarkable. Its layout, however, is hardly noteworthy. As shown above, 11Q5 is mainly written in "prose-layout" – with the exception of

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39 In DJD 16, the editors identify this line with Ps 118:29 under reserve; cf. Eugene Ulrich et al., eds., *Qumran Cave 4. XI Psalms to Chronicles*, DJD 16 (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 81.
For example, in 11Q5, fragment E iii Ps 105 starts with the very same as an addition to the Masoretic form of the psalm; cf. Florentino García Martínez, Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar and Adam S. van der Woude, eds., *Qumran Cave 11. II 11Q2–18, 11Q20–31*, DJD 23 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 35.
40 If fragment D was immediately followed by fragment E, there would not have been enough space for Ps 118 in its Masoretic form. But there might have been additional columns between the two fragments that would allow for all the verses of the psalm; cf. García Martínez, Tigchelaar and van der Woude, *Qumran Cave 11. II 11Q2–18, 11Q20–31*, 30f.

Ps 119. Accordingly, Ps 118 is presented in "prose-layout" as is all the rest of the scroll. Thus, in the writing there is no representation of the poetical structures – neither concerning the end of the psalm presented in fragment E i, nor concerning the selected verses of the catena in column XVI.

11Q6 shows significant similarities to 11Q5 and is commonly regarded as a parallel manuscript to 11Q5.[41] As far as the extant material allows for reconstruction, its layout features are similar to those of the latter: "prose-layout" is used for most of the scroll, except for a stichographic rendering of Ps 119.[42] Concerning Ps 118, on fragment 3 a few letters can be made out that are to be identified as parts of verse 1 and verses 15–16 immediately following the aforementioned. Since this sequence is identical to the catena version of the psalm in 11Q5, column XVI, it is highly probable that 11Q6, fragment 3 can be seen as another witness of this composition. As in 11Q5, it shows no distinctive poetical layout and is, therefore, interesting especially as a counter-example to the rendering of the psalm in 4Q84 that should be analyzed in more detail.

5.3 4Q84

4Q84 belongs to those few psalms scrolls from the Judean Desert that present all their compositions in a stichographic layout. In most parts of the manuscript the system of one stich – i.e. usually three to four words – per line is used (layout type 2c), and the scroll, thus, shows exceptionally small columns of just about 2.5–3.5 cm.[43] A good example of the potential of this layout is the presentation of the alphabetic acrostic Ps 112 in fragment 25 iii. Due to the poetic structure of this psalm, every stich starts with another letter in order of the Hebrew alphabet. The stichographic arrangement, here, puts every poetic unit in a new line. Thus, the alphabet can be read at the right margin of the column – in the extant part the sequence ז *z* – ח *ḥ* – ט *ṭ*. Whereas twenty-four of the twenty-six partly extant columns are written in that scheme, the third- and second-last columns, those

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41 Cf. e.g. García Martínez, Tigchelaar and van der Woude, *Qumran Cave 11. II 11Q2–18, 11Q20–31*, 38.
42 To be precise, the stichographic mode varies, since in 11Q6 the two stichs of a verse are separated by a *vacat* (layout-type 2ba) which is not the case in 11Q5 (type 2bb); see above p. 18–20.
43 Cf. the analysis of decisively narrow columns within the Dead Sea Scrolls by Kipp Davis, "Structure, Stichometry, and Standardization: An Analysis of Scribal Features in a Selection of the Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls," in *Functions of Psalms and Prayers in the Late Second Temple Period*, BZAW 486, ed. Mika S. Pajunen and Jeremy Penner (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017): 155–84. However, Davis fails to note the layout change concerning Ps 118:1–24, since even the broader columns attesting these verses are small compared to the overall corpus of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

attesting Ps 118, show a different layout. The first of these columns presents the beginning of the psalm in a layout with two stichs per line and, thus, lines more or less twice as long as in the rest of the scroll (layout type 2bb). From the analogy of the other columns, it can be assumed that there were 4–6 lines in the column before the initial line of Ps 118, which might or might not have been written in the same layout.[44] The other column then continues with the text of Ps 118, covering the complete column. But astonishingly the fragment comprising the bottom part of that column shows again the scheme of more-narrow columns – one stich per line (type 2c).[45] Such a shift in the stichographic system used within one single scroll is to be observed nowhere else in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Two explanations for this phenomenon might at first come to mind:

1) The fragments of the two respective columns might belong to a different scroll. But several aspects contradict this assumption. The two columns seem to have been written by the same hand, and they show just the same preparation for the act of writing by scored aid lines ("dry-point rulings") as the rest of the scroll – which in their case do not correspond to the written lines and are all the more remarkable. Moreover, the fragments representing the diverging columns do not only show columns with longer lines but indicate the twofold change in column width itself. Fragment 28 shows the bottom part of the previous column with the ending of Ps 116 in a stichographic layout type 2c with one stich per line as well as Ps 118:5–10,12 in the varying scheme 2bb. Fragment 34 adumbrates the change back to the one-stich-per-line rendering by presenting the transition from the first to the second stich of Ps 118:24 in the middle of its first line. Thus, that line should have comprised a complete verse with two stichs and not just one stich as the following lines do. As a result, it is rather unlikely that the two diverging columns should not belong to the scroll. The reason for the change in column width therefore has to be found within the document.

2) There might have been material reasons that would have made the change in layout necessary. But again, this assumption is untenable: the leather in this part is neither better nor worse than in other parts of the scroll, and the scribe would not have saved any space by writing two stichs per line the way

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[44] Since the order of compositions in 4Q84 is very similar to the Masoretic Psalter, the editors presume that the first line of Ps 118 had been preceded by הללויה *hallelujah* as an ending of Ps 116 (l. 1), one blank line (l. 2), the two verses of Ps 117 written also in the layout of two stichs per line (l. 3–4), another הללויה *hallelujah* finishing Ps 117 set off to its own line (l. 5), and finally another blank line (l. 6; partly extant); cf. Ulrich et al., *Qumran Cave 4. XI Psalms to Chronicles*, 45. However, this reconstruction is not without alternatives.

[45] Cf. Ulrich et al., *Qumran Cave 4. XI Psalms to Chronicles*, 46f.

he does it. Thus, material aspects seem not to be the reason for the change in column width, as well.

Since none of these explanations led to a satisfying solution, the reason for the change in column width might be found in the poetical structure of the respective psalm. Or – to put it the other way round – the attestation of Ps 118 in 4Q84 reveals the potential of the different modes of stichographic layout.

The composition is a highly formalized poem. Its most remarkable feature is the repetition of words and phrases, which starts already in the first verses of the psalm (tab. 2).[46] The first four verses share an identical second stich, namely the hymnic affirmation "כי לעולם חסדו" ("His grace endures forever"). In verses 2–4 the refrain-like second stich is each time preceded by the call to a group to express this hymnic avowal, varying only concerning the addressees, which in consequence leads to a sequence of four verses with very close parallelisms.

Table 2: Poetic structure of Ps 118:1–4 (Masoretic text).

כי לעולם חסדו	הודו ליהוה כי־טוב	Praise Yhwh for he is good!	His grace endures forever.
כי לעולם חסדו	יאמר־נא ישראל	Israel should say:	His grace endures forever.
כי לעולם חסדו	יאמרו־נא בית־אהרן	The house of Aaron should say:	His grace endures forever.
כי לעולם חסדו	יאמרו־נא יראי יהוה	Those who fear Yhwh should say:	His grace endures forever.

This poetical structure can best be presented by a layout that puts the correlating – respectively identical – stichs exactly below each other. And this applies to the stichographic layout type 2b with one complete verse per line.[47]

In addition to the beginning of the psalm, its last attested verses – the bottom of the second column – are also of interest, as they are presented in the stichographic layout type 2c with one stich per line, as happens elsewhere in the main parts of the scroll. Here again, the poetical structure of the text provides an explanation for the layout-change. In Ps 118:25–26, it is also the repetitive character of the text that strikes the eye (tab. 3). The parts of the two verses extant in fragment 34 show similar endings by twos: an intensified jussive in the first two lines and a construct relation with the name of God as *nomen rectum* in the third and fourth

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46 Cf. J. Henk Potgieter, "The structure and intent of Psalm 118," *OTE* 16 (2003): 393.

47 To be precise, a stichographic layout type 2ba (one verse per line with stichs separated by a *vacat*) would have served the purpose even better than the type 2bb used in 4Q84 (one verse per line without the separation of stichs).

line.[48] The beginnings of the stichs – that are lost due to material deterioration of the fragment – are even more closely connected: In v. 25 both stichs begin with the invocation "אנא יהוה" – "Please, Lord," in v. 26 both with a form of the verb ברך, "bless". Thus, the parallelisms are no longer on the level of verses but on the level of stichs.[49]

Table 3: Poetic structure of Ps 118:25–26 (Masoretic text).

אנא יהוה הושיעה נא	Please, Yhwh, save us!
אנא יהוה הצליחה נא	Please, Yhwh, grant success!
ברוך הבא בשם יהוה	Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yhwh.
ברכנוכם מבית יהוה	We bless you from the house of Yhwh.
‏[ב]רֹכֹנֹו אתכם מבית יהוה	

The layout used within 4Q84 takes up this change in poetic structure and switches to the stichographic arrangement of stichs (= type 2c) from verse 25 onwards. Thus, in both cases, the graphic presentation of the syntactic units supports a rapid perception of their poetic arrangement. While these are the most evident examples, the same can be said for the complete text of Ps 118 as presented by 4Q84.[50]

Paleography dates 4Q84 to the mid first century CE, making it one of the younger of the Dead Sea psalms scrolls.[51] Despite the general uncertainty of chronologies based on paleography, the chronologic arrangement of the scrolls shows that there is an increase of stichographic layout during the time-span represented by the scrolls. If this is more than a coincidence caused by the fragmentary transmission, 4Q84 can be explained as representing an advanced stage of stichographic arrangement of poetical texts – a stage in which the correspondence between linguistic structure and graphic arrangement is valued higher than the optical uniformity of a manuscript.

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48 Concerning line four, there is a small textual variance between the received text of the Masoretic tradition and the text extant in 4Q84, fragment 34 (cf. tab. 3): the object – second person plural – is once reflected by a suffix attached directly to the verb (MT) and once by an additional object-marker with the respective suffix (4Q84); cf. Cf. Ulrich et al., *Qumran Cave 4. XI Psalms to Chronicles*, 47.

49 Cf. the analysis by Erich Zenger in Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalmen 101–150*, 330f., which, however, does not note the similarities in the structure of the two verses.

50 See e.g. the parallel openings of verses 6 and 7, and verses 8 and 9 that are also supported by the layout used here.

51 See above section 3.2.

6 Conclusion

Trying to reconstruct modes of production and reception of psalms scrolls in the late Second Temple Period of Ancient Israel, the present article sheds some light on the materiality and layout of the scrolls, especially by asking if and how poetical structures of the texts were represented in the writing. In total, five modes of layout can be discerned within the Dead Sea psalms scrolls. Whereas the first, the "prose-layout," is used the most, it is the exceptions, the various forms of stichographic layout, that are dealt with in the main part of this essay. Summarizing the analyses of the layout of the psalms scrolls in general and the two case studies Ps 119 and 118 as attested in the Dead Sea scrolls, three major results can be noted:

1) The varying layout of the scrolls – which goes far beyond the stichographic arrangement covered in this paper – along with other features diverging between the scrolls requires us to interpret each scroll and its pragmatics individually.

2) In general, it is highly probable that a stichographic arrangement is chosen to highlight the linguistic structure of a text. As such, stichographic layout predetermines the reading of a poetic text and, therefore, can be interpreted as an act of authority. At the same time, this layout feature supports the text comprehension and the readability of the scroll and is geared to serving the intended reader.

3) If the chronology is more than a coincidence, it can be observed that the scribes of the Dead Sea psalms scrolls increasingly considered the linguistic structure of the poetic texts and tried to reflect it in the layout of their writing, thus making use of the different modes of stichographic layout between the individual scrolls – and in the exceptional case of 4Q84 within one scroll. As a prototype for this layout feature, Ps 119 can be identified, since its poetical structure matches the stichographic arrangement of verses very well and it is never attested in a different shape within the scrolls from the Judean Desert. It is easily conceivable that scribes applied the same or a similar layout to other psalms – and even complete psalm scrolls – because they knew about their advantages from documents bearing Ps 119. The increasing relevance of the layout of texts can be further followed up in the manuscripts and editions of the biblical psalms from late antiquity and medieval times and influenced interpretation and translations down through the centuries (see also the chapter from Poleg in the present volume). Thus, this material feature is a key aspect in the reception of the psalms as poetic literature.

In summary, it can be seen from analysis such as that presented in this essay that considering materiality, that is, material aspects as well as the structure and

layout of the writing, helps to understand the role of text-bearing artifacts as agents in a textual community. In the transition from an oral to a textual culture, texts are reliant on their material embodiment to be preserved. The modes in which a text is recited influences its layout on written artifacts and, reciprocally, the layout of a written text plays a role in predetermining its reading, reciting, and interpretation.

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