

A NOTE ON 4Q398^{A*}

Abstract

This article deals with the papyrus manuscript 4Q398^a (frags. 1–10), which came from a different hand than 4Q398^b (frags. 11–17). At least four of the ten fragments can be isolated on physical and paleographic grounds as having been penned by the same hand (frags. 2–7). Each of the remaining four fragments probably belongs to a different hand. The separation of frag. 1 from frags. 2–7 is crucial since they have been used to reconstruct the composite text (B 21–24) based on 4Q397 1–2 and 11Q19 51:4–5. As a result, there is no unequivocal evidence to associate frags. 2–7 with MMT. While these fragments contain some words attested to in that document, they are not unique to it, and the grammatical forms of the words are not identical. In addition, some readings are uncertain, and the letter traces in line 2 of frag. 1 complicate the reconstruction of the DJD X. It is, therefore, reasonable to accept the possibility that 4Q398^a does not make up MMT and, consequently, to look for better-justified relationships between these ten fragments and other manuscripts based on their physical and paleographic features.

Keywords: 4Q398, 4QpapMMT, MMT, halakhic letter, halakhic section

IT is recognized that two different hands can be distinguished in the 4Q398 manuscript. The first hand is responsible for frags. 1–10, being part of the halakhic section, and the second hand is responsible for frags. 11–17, making up part of the hortatory section. One of the first who suggested that frags. 1–10 may belong to a different manuscript was Philip R. Callaway, who pointed out the differences in letter size

* This article was made possible by funding from the National Science Centre in Poland under the project “Hebrew manuscripts of the Qumran halakhic document 4QMMT (4Q394–399),” project number: 2023/51/D/HS1/00102. I am grateful to two reviewers for their valuable comments, which helped me improve this article. I also thank Beatriz Riestra, curator of the Dead Sea Scrolls Unit of the Israel Antiquities Authority, and her team for their kindness and assistance during my several visits in April 2024 to the IAA laboratory at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

between the two groups of fragments.¹ The editors of the DJD X also noted that the average size of the letters and line spacing of frags. 11–17 differ from the remaining fragments; nevertheless, they treated 4Q398 as a single manuscript.² Later, Hanne von Weissenberg, in addition to the difference in letter size, pointed out both the material and penmanship differences, indicating that frags. 1–9 originated from a manuscript other than frags. 11–17.³ Since then, it has been accepted to divide the manuscript into 4Q398^a (frags. 1–10) and 4Q398^b (frags. 11–17),⁴ although not everyone shares the belief in the validity of this division based on the differences indicated by Weissenberg.⁵ As the text of 4Q398^a

¹ Philip R. Callaway, “4QMMT and Recent Hypotheses on the Origin of the Qumran Community,” in *Mogilany 1993: Papers on the Dead Sea Scrolls Offered in Memory of Hans Burgmann*, ed. Z. J. Kapera, QM 13 (Kraków: Enigma 1996), 22.

² Ada Yardeni, *Qumran Cave 4.V: Miqsat Ma’ase ha-Torah*, DJD X (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 28–29. Yardeni’s paleographic analysis of 4Q398 concerned only frags. 11–17. Instead of referring to frags. 11–13 and 14–17, she discussed frag. 1 and 2, respectively, based on the numbering used in the concordance (*A Preliminary Concordance to the Hebrew and Aramaic Fragments from Qumran Caves II–X: Including Especially the Unpublished Material from Cave IV. Vols. 1–4*, ed. H.-P. Richter and H. Stegemann (Private Print: Göttingen, 1988)). Frank M. Cross also referred only to 4Q398 11–17; see Cross, “The Development of the Jewish Scripts,” in *Leaves from an Epigrapher’s Notebook: Collected Papers in Hebrew and West Semitic Palaeography and Epigraphy*, ed. F. M. Cross, HSS 51 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 37–42.

³ She notes that the letters *aleph* and *lamed* are drawn differently. The former is written on the line in frags. 1–9, while in frags. 11–17 on the imaginary headline. In addition, the hook of the *lamed* is “tighter” in frags. 1–9. As for the *aleph*, the letter’s strokes are rectilinear in frags. 1–9, whereas in frags. 11–17, they are curvilinear. As for the material features, she pointed out that in frags. 1–9 “the papyrus is ‘tidier’, smoother on the surface, and lighter in color than that in 11–17. The edgings of fragments 1–9 are even, while fragments 11–17 are uneven in form and are fringed by loose fiber-ends.” H. von Weissenberg, *4QMMT: Reevaluating the Text, the Function and the Meaning of the Epilogue*, STDJ 82 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 42.

⁴ Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, “Material Construction and Palaeographic Dating of 4QMMT. The Evidence of the Manuscripts,” in *Interpreting and Living God’s Law at Qumran. Miqsat Ma’ase Ha-Torah, Some of the Works of the Torah (4QMMT)*, ed. R. G. Kratz, SAPERE 37 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 63, n. 24. Adding to von Weissenberg’s paleographic remarks, Tigchelaar also points out the difference in drawing the *ayin* between frags. 1–9 and 11–17. In the former, the right downstroke tends toward the horizontal, while it is more upright in the latter.

⁵ Émile Puech, “La lettre essénienne MMT dans le manuscrit 4Q397 et les parallèles,” *RevQ* 27/1 (2015): 99–100, n. 1. In his later editions, Elisha Qimron does not divide this manuscript in two hands, either. See Qimron, “Some Works of the Torah 4Q394–4Q399 (= 4QMMT^{a-d}) and 4Q313,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Texts with English Translations. Volume 3: Damascus Document II, Some Works of the Torah, and Related Documents*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth et al., PTSDSSP 3 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 224–29; idem, *The Qumran Texts: Composite Edition*, 3 vols. (Tel Aviv, 2023), 2:204 [in Hebrew]:

https://www.academia.edu/108085446/The_Qumran_Texts_3rd_Edition_volumes_1_3_2023.

does not overlap with 4Q398^b, it cannot be determined whether the two hands wrote one manuscript or whether the two hands testify to the existence of two different manuscripts.

The problem is even more complex since, as I will argue, at least two hands can also be distinguished within the 4Q398^a manuscript. Indeed, if one isolates frags. 1–10 and compares them paleographically, it is easy to see that four of them (frags. 1, 8, 9, and 10) do not match the other six fragments (frags. 2–7). Since the reconstruction of the composite text (B 21–24) is based on frags. 1–3 and the parallel text of 4Q397 1–2, exclusion of the close connection of 4Q398^a frag. 1 with frags. 2–3 entails revising the relationship of these two texts (4Q398^a 1–3; 4Q397 1–2) and the composite text B 21–24. In this article, I will put forward two theses. First, 4Q398^a 2–7 were penned by the same hand, but their text does not allow a link to MMT. Second, the exclusion of the association of frag. 1 with frags. 2–3 calls the restoration of the composite text (B 21–24) into question.

1. 4Q398a, frags. 1–10

In general, frags. 1–9 are preserved in good condition.⁶ They are precisely in the same position on the plate as seen in the July 1985 photo and the May 1999 photo by Tsila Sagiv (cf. I-190448 = B-298638; I-676702 = B-299356). However, comparing the two photos, one can see that between 1985 and 1999, frag. 1 was moved to plate 157c and remains on this plate. Paleographically, frags. 2–7 appear to come out of the same hand. The connecting feature between them is the characteristic crescent-shaped stamp, perhaps reflecting the cutting of the nib.⁷ Other features of this hand are the irregular size of the letters as well as the irregular space between them within words, the upright stance of the letters, the use of defecting spelling, the concave roofs, the convex base strokes, the use of the cursive *mem* and looped *tav*, and the extra stroke across the horizontal bar of the *he* (cf. the *he* in 5,4; 6,1; 7,3⁸). As we will see below, the handwriting of the remaining frags. 1 and 8–10 differ from that of frags. 2–7.

⁶ Frag. 10 is missing. The last witness to it is a photo from May 1960 (PAM 43.489 = B-284517).

⁷ See the top of the left arm of the *tet* (frags. 2–3,3), the left extremity of the roof of the letters *he* (frags. 2–3,3; 5,4; 6,1; 7,3), *kaph* (frag. 6,2) and *resh* (frag. 4,4), the top of the left downstroke of the *ayin* (frags. 2–3,4) and *tav* (frag. 4,3), the bottom of the right leg of the *aleph* (frag. 4,2), and of the left leg of the *tav* (5,1). It must be noted, however, that this extra crescent-shaped stamp is drawn from different angles and was not used consistently.

⁸ At the very top of frag. 7, an ink trace can be seen, so four lines are preserved in this fragment.

1.1 4Q398a, frag. 1

4Q398^a, frag. 1 (life-size)

Courtesy of The Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library, IAA.

Photo: Shai Halevi⁹



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]בָּה וְ

Frag. 1, seen in PAM 40.977 (B-279124), 41.992 (= B-280442), 42.838 (= B-284805), 43.489 (= B-284517), and I-190448 (=B-298638), is 1.43 cm high and 1.34 cm wide. In the DJD X, it is attributed to 4Q398^a based on Strugnell’s testimony, referred to by Qimron, that the word הנושה[ה], following הטהורה[ה], “cannot be seen on any photograph, but Strugnell said that it did exist.”¹⁰ It should be noted that Qimron does not specify that this word existed in this fragment. On the contrary, the reconstruction of the article suggests that Strugnell joined a tiny piece of the papyrus with this word to frag. 1,¹¹ but it was not directly joined to this fragment. Strugnell’s testimony was crucial since the sequence of these two words was reflected in the reconstructed phrase

⁹ Courtesy of the Dead Sea Scrolls Unit of the Israel Antiquities Authority, I have included infrared photos Shai Halevi took in August 2015. These photos have not been published on the LLDSSDL, which may confuse readers. Nevertheless, I have decided to use these photos since they are better for reading ink traces than the PAM photos. As Strugnell notes, in Albina’s photos, it is sometimes difficult to separate the shadows made by the holes and edges of the papyrus from the actual strokes of the pen (John Strugnell, “On the History of the Photographing of the Discoveries in the Judean Desert for the International Group of Editors,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Microfiche. Companion Volume*, ed. E. Tov with the collaboration of S. J. Pfann [Leiden: Brill, 1993], 129). Also, using Halevi’s photos allows the reader to see the unpublished photos for the first time and compare them with the older PAM photos. The exception is the missing frag. 10, of which Albina’s PAM photos remain its only witness. One also may note that frag. 6 is absent in the PAM photos and appears for the first time in a photo taken in 1985 (I-190448 = B-298638). Except for frag. 1, whose ink is faded and needs highlighting, I have not applied filters or other transformations to the images.

¹⁰ Qimron and Strugnell, *DJD X*, 34.

¹¹ In his edition, Qimron seems to confirm that Strugnell *joined* צירף this tiny piece of papyrus with the word הנושה[ה] to frag. 1 (Qimron, *The Qumran Texts: Composite Edition*, 2:207 [in Hebrew]).

א[הנוש] הטהורה from 4Q397 1–2 3.¹² However, even if the connection of the two pieces that make up frag. 1 is correct, the affiliation of frag. 1 to 4Q398^a 2–7 raises some doubts.

First, frag. 1 differs from the other fragments regarding the papyrus color and letter size. Its papyrus color is darker than the light buff of the remaining fragments, while the letter sizes, even though they correspond to the smallest letters in frags. 2–10, the average letter height of the latter is almost a millimeter higher,¹³ which is noticeable when frag. 1 is juxtaposed with the rest of the fragments on the plate. An even more significant difference between frag. 1 and the rest of the fragments can be seen in the line spacing: frag. 1 differs by more than 1 millimeter on average.¹⁴

Furthermore, frag. 1 shows paleographical differences as compared with frags. 2–7 (see Table 1). Its formal *he* differs in how the roof and legs are penned,¹⁵ especially the right leg, which in line 1 curves to the right at the bottom by analogy to the right leg of the *het* from line 2.¹⁶ The cursive *he* does not appear in frags. 2–7, which may be accidental.¹⁷ The head of the *vav* is rounded and relatively more prominent than the head of the *vav* from frags. 2–7. Also, the leg of the *vav* is shorter than that of frags. 2–7. The preserved components of the letters *tet* and *resh* do not have distinctive features. One should also note that in frag. 1, the position of the written line is more even than in frags. 2–7.

¹² Frags. 1 and 2 of 4Q397 were juxtaposed side by side from at least August 1958 (PAM 42.717 = B-284130), while 4Q398 1 appeared along with several other fragments of 4Q398^a from at least March 1956 (PAM 41.992 = B-280442).

¹³ Frag. 1: ca. 3.2 mm; frag. 2–3: ca. 3.2–4.1 mm; frag. 4: ca. 3.1–3.9 mm; frag. 5: ca. 2.9–4.0 mm; frag. 6: ca. 3.1–4.0 mm; frag. 7: ca. 2.8–3.8 mm; frag. 8: ca. 3.2 mm; frag. 9: ca. 2.7–3.2 mm; frag. 10: ca. 3 mm.


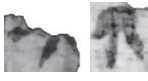
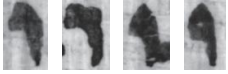





¹⁴ Frag. 1: ca. 6.2 mm; frags. 2–3: ca. 7.4–7.8 mm; frag. 4: ca. 7.3–7.8 mm; frag. 5: ca. 6.3–7.3 mm; frag. 6: ca. 9.1 mm; frag. 7: ca. 6.7–7.9 mm; frag. 8: ca. 7.8 mm; frag. 9: ca. 5.2 mm.

¹⁵ The alternating use of the formal and cursive letter *he* by the same hand, even within the same word, is not unusual in semicursive scripts. Compare the regular distinction between the final *he* and initial/middle *he* in 4Q398^b.

¹⁶ This feature may help attribute frag. 1 to the correct papyrus manuscript in the future.

¹⁷ The presence of only the formal *he* can indicate that we are dealing with a mixed script rather than semicursive. As Tigchelaar notes, “many editors have qualified hands of manuscripts as ‘semi-cursive’ simply on the basis of the presence of a looped *taw* or cursive *mem*, without paying attention to the style of other letters. If those others would be formal, one should rather refer to the hand as mixed.” Tigchelaar, “Seventy Years of Palaeographic Dating of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Sacred Texts and Disparate Interpretations: Qumran Manuscripts Seventy Years Later. Proceedings of the International Conference Held at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, 24–26 October 2017*, STDJ 133, ed. H. Drawnel (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 273, n. 64.

Table 1. Comparison of the letters of frags. 1 and 2–7.

Fragments 2–7	Frag. 1
	
	
	
	

1.2 4Q398^a, frag. 8

4Q398 frag. 8 (life-size)

Courtesy of The Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library, IAA.
Photo: Shai Halevi

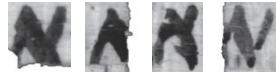


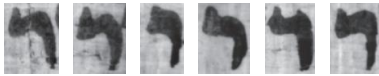





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Frag. 8 can be found in PAM 42.557 (=B-283845), 42.838 (= B-284805), 43.489 (= B-284517), I-190448 (= B-298638), and I-676702 (B-299356). It is 1.1 cm high and 0.85 cm wide. The line spacing is ca. 7.8 mm. Compared to frags. 2–7, the paleographical differences of this tiny fragment are clear (see Table 2). The tilt angle of the diagonal stroke of the *aleph* is smaller than that from frags. 2–7, whereas the right leg of the *aleph* is bowed, bending inward at the bottom. The left downstroke of the *sin/shin* only slightly extends beyond the meeting point with the lower right arm, and the bend to the left of its short sting is sharper. The latter feature also distinguishes this letter from the one in frag. 9. The serif of the *resh* is looped, which rules out the connection of this fragment both with frags. 2–7 and with frag. 10. The looped serif and the sting bending to the left of the *sin/shin* are traits that can help identify the hand to which this fragment belongs.

¹⁸ The letters are so close that there is no need to separate them as belonging to two different words, as was done in DJD X (Qimron and Strugnell, *DJD X*, 35).

Table 2. Comparison of the letters of frags. 8 and 2–7.

Fragments 2–7	Frag. 8
	
	
	
	

1.3 4Q398^a, frag. 9

4Q398 frag. 9 (life-size)

Courtesy of The Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library, IAA.
Photo: Shai Halevi



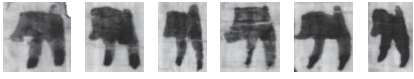



¹⁹הב[
]שק[

Frag. 9 is attested by PAM 41.992 (= B-280442), 42.838 (= B-284805), 43.489 (= B-284517), I-190448 (= B-298638), I-676702 (= B-299356). The height is 1.2 cm, the width is 0.65 cm, and the line spacing is 0.5 cm. Even though merely two letters serve as comparative material, their distinctive features are sufficient to make a judgment (see Table 3). Regarding the *he*, the left leg is doubly curved, while the meeting point between the horizontal bar and the left leg is angular. The straight right leg also distinguishes this letter form from the one in frag. 1. As for the *sin/shin*, compared with frags. 2–7 (and frag. 8),

¹⁹ In PAM 41.992 (= B-280442), one can see a trace of the base stroke to the left of the *he*. I am grateful to the reviewer for pointing out this element in the photo. However, the ink trace is missing in all later photographs and cannot be seen with the naked eye in direct contact with the fragment; therefore, the top layer of papyrus must have fallen off in this place in the meantime. Besides the *bet*, the trace could be a remnant of the letters *kaph*, *pe*, or even *aleph*. In line 2, the two letters are close enough to be a part of the same word rather than two separate words, as proposed in the DJD X. See Qimron and Strugnell, *DJD X*, 35.

the left downstroke is straight and thickened and only slightly extends the meeting point with its lower right arm. One may note the similar crescent-shaped left extremity of the roof of the *he*, but in contrast to that of frags. 2–7, it is facing upwards.

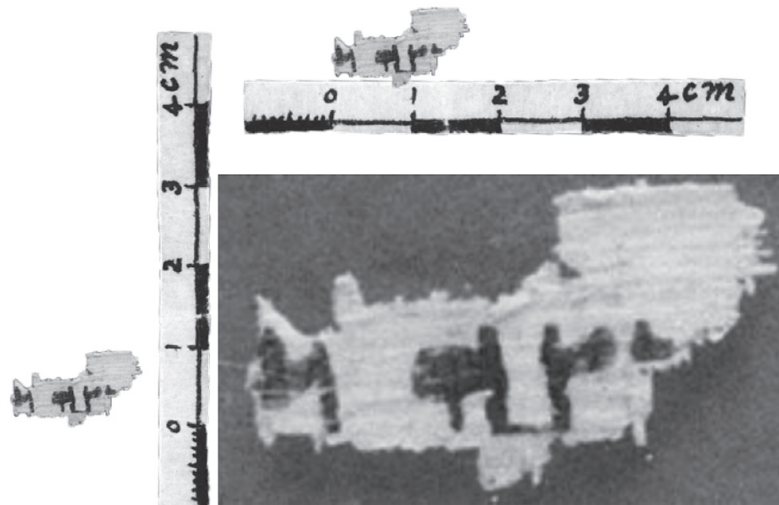
Table 3. Comparison of the letters of frags. 9 and 2–7.

Fragments 2–7	Frag. 9
	
	

1.4 4Q398^a, frag. 10

4Q398 frag. 10

Courtesy of The Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library, IAA.
Photo: Najib A. Albina





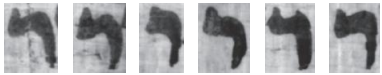



]רצה מ[

Frag. 10 has been lost over time; therefore, its analysis must rely on PAM 41.992 (= B-280442), 42.838 (= B-284805), and 43.489 (= B-284517). The size of the fragment is ca. 1 cm × 1.8 cm. Compared with frags. 2–7, the left extremity of the roof of the letter *he* is rounded instead of crescent-shaped, while the legs are straight. The serif of the *resh* is relatively smaller. Assuming that the scribe drew the final *tsade* by analogy to its medial letter form, the right arm is thicker than that of

frag. 4, but is penned at the same angle and meets the stem almost at the same point. As for the *mem*, only the cursive *mem* has been preserved in frags. 2–7.²⁰ The letters *he* and *resh* also rule out a connection between this fragment and frags. 1, 8 and 9 (cf. Tables 1–3).

Table 4. Comparison of the letters of frags. 10 and 2–7.

Fragments 2–7	Frag. 10
	
	
	

2. 4Q398^a, frags. 2–7

The text of the paleographically isolated frags. 2–7 does not overlap with any extant text of the other MMT copies. Nevertheless, the cluster of words and phrases attested in MMT, such as ארץ (cf. 4Q398^a 4,2; 4Q396 1–2 iii,3), נבלת (cf. 4Q398^a 2–3,2 and 4Q397 1,3), לטהרת (cf. 4Q398^a 2–3,3; 7,3 and 4Q394 8 iv,4 = 4Q396 1–2 ii,6), and תערובת (cf. 4Q398^a 5,3 and 4Q394 8 iii,18 [= 4Q397 5,6], 8 iii 20 [= 4Q396 1–2 ii,2]), may support their connection to this work. The first three words can be found in a few other Qumran texts,²¹ while the latter is common only in MMT and the Temple Scroll.²² Interestingly, all four words/phrases appear together only in these two compositions. Nevertheless, none of these four words/phrases occur in a word sequence (or in the context of a word sequence) that would overlap with the extant MMT text in other copies.²³

²⁰ See n. 17.

²¹ For נבלת, see 4Q162 2:9; 4Q176 1–2 i,3; 4Q365 17a-c,1; 11Q19 51:4, 64:11; 4Q251 12,4, and also see 11Q19 48:6 for its *status absolutus*. For לטהרת, see 4Q258 1:7; 4Q512 1–6,5; 4Q512 29–32,7, and 4Q365 18,3 as well as 11Q19 45:15 for its suffixed form. The noun ארץ is all too well common to compare.

²² Cf. תערובת in 11Q19 45:7 and 50:2.

²³ Ideally, one would expect a sequence of at least two words to substantiate the connection between the two texts. The history of the *biglal* fragment (4Q397 24) should warn against linking texts based on single words. Cf. Tigchelaar, “Publication of PAM 43.398 (IAA #202) Including New Fragments of 4Q269,” in *From 4QMMT to Resurrection. Mélanges qumrâniens en hommage à Émile Puech*, ed. F. García Martínez et al., STDJ 61 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 269; Puech, “La lettre essénienne MMT,” 109–10.

Furthermore, frags. 2–7 also diverge lexically from MMT. The relative pronoun אשר (4Q398^a 5,2) appears in this document only in scriptural quotation (cf. 4Q394 3–7 ii,19 and Deut 12:5), while the active verb in the third person plural cannot be found at all in the halakhic section of MMT, and the expression [א]שר עשו (4Q398^a 5,2) is closer to the phraseology of the Temple Scroll than MMT.²⁴ However, what led the editors of the DJD X to recognize frags. 1–10 as part of MMT was connecting frag. 1 with frags. 2–3²⁵ and linking it to the text 4Q397 1–2, based on the common motif of cattle skins and carcasses. While the reconstruction of the text (4Q397 1–2, 4Q398^a 1–3 = B 21–24) is based on 11Q19 51:4–5, its placement in the composite text is determined by the restoration of the word עורות in 4Q395 1,12 (cf. 4Q394 3–7 ii,2 = B 18).²⁶ As we will see, both the connection of frag. 1 with frags. 2–3 and their link to 4Q397 1–2 raise some doubts.

3. 4Q398^a 1–3 vs. 4Q397 1–2 (= B 21–24)

Regarding the relationship of frag. 1 to frags. 2–3, it should be noted that the fragments differ in color and fiber pattern, which in frag. 1 are darker and denser, respectively. In addition, the difference in the height of the letters is about one millimeter, whereas the difference in line spacing oscillates between 1.2 mm and 1.6 mm (see Fig. 1). Third, compared with the DJD X, some readings need to be corrected. In line 2 of frag. 1, letters [בָּה וְ] should be restored.²⁷ The restoration of this line rules out the reconstruction of the phrase לטהרת ה[קודש] [י]גש from line 3.²⁸ Furthermore, the restoration of the word [ע]ור in line 2 of frags. 2–3 is uncertain.²⁹ Here, rather than the head of the *vav*,³⁰ we

²⁴ Note that the phrase עשו אשר in 11Q19 62:16 is preceded by the noun תערובת. The phrase עשו אשר is also attested in 4Q269 8 ii,2 and 4Q385a 18 i a-b,10.

²⁵ Frags. 2 and 3 had been joined before they were closely related to frag. 1 (cf. PAM 42.067 = B-280707; PAM 41.992 = B-280442; PAM 42.557 = B-283845). It should be noted that frag. 1 is not located next to frags. 2–3 in any PAM photo; the fragments only appear next to each other in the DJD X (pl. VII).

²⁶ Qimron, “The Nature of the Reconstructed Composite Text of 4QMMT,” in *Reading 4QMMT: New Perspectives on Qumran Law and History*, ed. J. Kampen and M. J. Bernstein, SBLSS 2 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1996), 11–12.

²⁷ H. von Weissenberg only notes the presence of the letter *het* (von Weissenberg, *4QMMT: Reevaluating the Text*, 41, n. 34), but there are also traces of the horizontal base stroke of the preceding letter, which touches the bottom of the right leg of the *het*. Of course, a *kap* or *pe* is also possible instead of the *bet*. Following the letter *het*, traces of the *vav* can be seen.

²⁸ Or [מקדש]ה, as suggested in the parallel text of 4Q397 1–2,3 (Qimron and Strugnell, *DJD X*, 29).

²⁹ Traces of letters can be seen in the top part of the fragment; hence four lines are preserved.

³⁰ The heads of the *vav* in frags. 4, 5, and 7 are larger and more extended than the head of the alleged *vav* of frags. 2–3,2.

are dealing with the top of the left arm of perhaps a *sin/shin* since there are no traces of a base stroke or descender.³¹ Finally, if one takes into account the traces of the final *mem*, preceding the word [ה]טהורה in the lost piece of frag. 1 (PAM 40.977 = B-279124),³² then the close connection between frag. 1 and frags. 2–3 becomes all the more unwarranted.

Fig. 1. Juxtaposition of frag. 1 with frags. 2–3 (life-size).

Courtesy of The Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library, IAA.

Photo: Shai Halevi



According to the editors of the DJD X, the text of 4Q398^a 1–3 corresponds to 4Q397 1–2, which is reflected both in the transcription and the composite text (B 21–24).³³ In the latter, the text has been placed as a continuation of the text from col. ii of 4Q394 3–7.³⁴ The two texts have been related to each other based on three common words: עור (4Q397 1,1; 4Q398^a 2–3,2), נבלה (4Q397 1,3; 4Q398^a 2–3,2), and הטהורה (4Q397 2,2; 4Q398^a 1,1). The text 4Q397 1–2,3 is restored based on the alleged parallel text 4Q398^a 1–3,1–2.³⁵ However, if one excludes the relationship of frag. 1 from frags. 2–3 on physical and paleographic grounds, which I argue for, then their connection to 4Q397 1–2 begins to rest on shaky ground, and the restoration of the latter, along with the composite text (B 21–24), needs to be revised.

³¹ Thus, the reconstruction of [ב]שר נבלת [הבהמה], “meat of the cattle carcass,” is possible, even though this phrase, like עור נבלת, is uncommon. In addition, one may note that the trace of ink preceding the letter *sin/shin* is found above the imaginary baseline, suggesting remnants of a diagonal stroke of a *lamed* or *ayin*, but restoring the verb שגשג is also acceptable.

³² I owe this early image to one of the reviewers. It is crucial since an additional piece of papyrus at the top right of the fragment can be seen, which seems to be an integral part. Although the restoration of the final *mem* is likely in this lost piece of the fragment, the letter *tet* is also possible to restore.

³³ Qimron and Strugnell, *DJD X*, 25, 34, 48.

³⁴ Qimron and Strugnell, *DJD X*, 48–49, n. 3.

³⁵ According to von Weissenberg, the two texts (4Q397 1–2; 4Q398^a 1–3) contain only one overlapping word: על (von Weissenberg, *4QMMT: Reevaluating the Text*, 41). However, taking Qimron’s reconstruction for granted, this cannot be the same על, as Puech’s reconstruction reflects well (Puech, “La lettre essénienne MMT,” 116).

Indeed, after the separation of 4Q398^a 1 from frags. 2–3, there is no sequence of at least two words that overlap in the two texts. In addition, as mentioned, the restoration of the word עֹרֵר is uncertain (4Q398^a 2–3,2), and even if one accepts this reading, a common motif without text overlap is insufficient evidence. One should note that even the editors of the DJD X had some problems with the combination of frags. 4Q397 1–2. On the one hand, in their restoration of 4Q397 1–2,4 and of the composite text (B 24), they omitted lines 4 of 4Q398^a 2–3 and 2 of 4Q398^a 1. On the other hand, they restored two words between frag. 1 and 2 of 4Q397, which is problematic.

The restoration of the first word, עֹרֵר[וֹת]מָה (4Q397 2,1 + 1,2), is based solely on the letter *ayin* (4Q397 2,1) and the suffix -מָה (4Q397 1,2),³⁶ while אֶ[הַנּוֹשֵׂא] is restored based on the piece of fragment, which no one has seen in photographs nor found on the plates, so it remains known only by second-hand testimony. In addition, this word belongs to 4Q398^a 1, the second line of which does not correspond to the accepted reconstruction. Not surprisingly, in his figure of col. i of 4Q397, Puech hardly fit the word אֶ[הַנּוֹשֵׂא] in the space between frags. 1 and 2, drawing it very narrowly while extending the word עֹרֵרמָה almost to the limit, drawing it very spaciouly, which looks unnatural.³⁷ Thus, the difficulty in reconstructing 4Q397 1–2 based on 4Q398^a 1–3 raises further doubts about the reconstruction of the latter in the DJD X and the composite text based on these two texts.

4. Conclusion

Based on the physical and paleographic features, frags. 2–7 can be isolated as belonging to the same hand. Different hands probably penned each of the other four fragments (1 and 8–10). While the tiny frags. 8–10 are irrelevant, frag. 1 is crucial since combining it with frags. 2–3 and the alleged parallel text of 4Q397 1–2 allowed the editors of the DJD X to fill in the lacuna in col. ii of 4Q394 as a continuation of 4Q395 1,12 and to place the reconstructed text in the composite text (B 21–24). However, the association of frag. 1 with frags. 2–3 is doubtful, and there is no unequivocal evidence that 4Q398^a 2–7 is part of MMT. A few words common to 4Q398^a 2–7 and 4Q397 1–2 may support the interrelationship of these two texts, but these words appear in

³⁶ No evidence of the letter *resh*, then. Cf. PAM 41.583 [= B-299036] and 41.762 [= B-280181].

³⁷ See Puech, “La lettre essénienne MMT,” 116. In addition, the evident meeting point of the two strokes in the remnants of a letter in 4Q397 2,3 does not reflect the top of the left arm of the *sin/shin* in this manuscript to reconstruct the word אֶ[הַקּוֹרֵא] following 4Q398^a 2–3,3 as he suggested.

different grammar forms and are not unique to MMT. In addition, the reading of the word עור from 4Q398^a 2–3,2 is uncertain, and the restored line 2 of 4Q398^a 1 does not correspond to the reconstructions assumed by the editors.

All in all, if one prefers the maximalist approach to tentatively associate small fragments with other fragments based on individual common words to fill in lacunae in the text, 4Q398^a provides enough grounds for doing so. However, if one shares a minimalistic approach and expects more evidence, such as overlapping more than one word, then the material of 4Q398^a is insufficient to associate it with MMT.

Michał KLUKOWSKI
John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin