15.9.2020

Dear members of the committee,

I am writing to apply for a postdoctoral affiliation with Oriel College, Oxford University. My research focuses on two main disciplines: Textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible and Dead Sea scrolls. I recently completed my PhD, with a dissertation titled *The Contribution of Variant Readings Due to Graphic Similarity between the Masoretic Text and Samaritan Pentateuch to Textual Criticism of the Pentateuch* at the Bible Department, Bar-Ilan University. The dissertation was carried out under the supervision of Prof. Emanuel Tov (Hebrew University) and Dr. Nili Samet (Bar-Ilan University). A systematic review of these variants, and their philological and palaeographical analysis produced several important conclusions, some of which concern the Samaritan Pentateuch specifically (its dating, the script in which it was transmitted, the nature of its transmission) and some of which are more broadly concerned with textual criticism of the Pentateuch (the relationship between the textual traditions of the Pentateuch, the transmission of the Pentateuch in the last centuries BCE and the chronological framework of transmission in Hebrew script). I am currently revising the dissertation for publication and intend to complete it by March 2021. It additionally yielded an article dealing with the script in which the Samaritan Pentateuch was transmitted, which was published in *Textus* 28.

During my work on my dissertation, I engaged in reading manuscripts from Qumran and their paleographic analysis. This year, I am also engaged in the research of the Dead Sea scrolls, particularly in their material culture, as a part of my postdoctoral fellow in the German-Israeli *Scripta Qumranica Electronica* (SQE) project. The aim of this project is to produce digital edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls. I am working on 4Q415 (4QInstructiona), one of the copies of the sapiential composition *Musar LeMevin* (*Instruction*). I have proposed a new material reconstruction of the scroll, encompassing approximately one third of the 32 fragments of the scroll. The reconstruction yielded an article accepted for publication in *Revue de Qumran.* I am additionally preparing a new critical edition of 4Q415 for subsequent inclusion in the critical edition of the whole composition.

In my future research, I intend to use the skills I acquired in the dissertation and in the postdoctoral research on SQE project to advance the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible. I have been fortunate to receive a generous stipend from the Israeli Council of Higher Education for a postdoctoral fellowship at Oxford, upon Prof. Hindy Najman’s invitation, based on a proposal titled: *Digitizing the Material Reconstruction of the Biblical Dead Sea Scrolls and Its Contribution to Textual Criticism of the Bible: 4QpaleoGen-Exl as a Case Study*. I am interested in utilizing material reconstruction of fragmentary Pentateuchal scrolls from Qumran, as a means to reexamine the matter of their textual classification. One hopes that, following the material reconstruction of a fragmentary scroll, it will be possible to complete the missing text between fragments of the scroll and estimate its quantity. In this way, it will be possible to assess whether it comprises editorial changes or large harmonizations appearing in the Samaritan Pentateuch tradition. The study will be demonstrated by means of the reconstruction of 4QpaleoGen-Exl.

The primary importance of my future research lies in the conclusions it will produce through the material reconstruction of 4QpaleoGen-Exl, as well as the implications for textual classification of the scroll. In addition, it bears methodological importance. One hopes that the interdisciplinary approach proposed for this research will serve as a methodological tool for the study of other fragmentary biblical scrolls, which I hope will lead to significant results both materially and textually. The research’s innovativeness lies also in the fact that it employs technological aids in order to decode fragmentary scrolls whose investigation could not be completed for many decades. By means of cutting-edge technology it is possible to achieve a breakthrough in the study of these scrolls, adding to the existing scholarly work. Use of the method proposed in the research is likely to impact our understanding of the formation and transmission of the biblical text in the ancient period in particular, as well as our understanding of the intellectual history of Israel in that period more generally.

Oriel College, its facilities and the specific context of the Centre of the Study of the Bible in the Humanities is the absolute ideal setting for promoting my future study. I am concerned with issues related to Prof. Najman’s research on the Dead Sea scrolls, i.e. on literary and historical questions of the textual and hermeneutical formation of scriptual traditions in the ancient world. Therefore, I am grateful for her willingness to mentor me. In addition, Prof. Najman contacted with two leading researchers: Prof. Stefan Schorch (Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg), specializing in the Hebrew Bible, ancient Jewish literature and the literary heritage of the Samaritans; Prof. Eibert Tigchelaar (KU Leuven), specializing in Dead Sea Scrolls and Ancient Judaism. To my delight, they very graciously agreed to co-mentor me for my research.

I was invited by Prof. Najman to become a member of the Programme Committee of the Centre for the Study of the Bible. Specifically, I was asked to give a keynote lecture at the early career researchers workshop which she will be running with Prof. Geoffrey Khan of the University of Cambridge, to attend seminars and to mentor masteral and doctoral students. I hope for the opportunity to contribute to both the intellectual and the teaching community at the college. Thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely,

Hila Dayfani