

The Servant of Jehovah in Isaiah and the Dead Sea Scrolls

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SOURCES: *THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS OF ST. MARK'S MONASTERY*, VOL. I, EDITED BY MILLAR BURROWS WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF JOHN C. TREVER AND WILLIAM H. BROWNLEE. KITTEL HEBREW BIBLE, SEVENTH OR EIGHTH EDITION, THIRD CRITICAL APPARATUS. ET CETERA.

In consultation with the Chairman of the Program Committee, this paper represents a textual critical study of the major poems concerning the Servant of Jehovah in Isaiah as found in the Masoretic Text and in the Dead Sea Scrolls, in Isaiah A.

PART I

Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12. The word *mish-chath*, commonly translated: marring of, has an extra yodh at the end of the word. The Hebrew Grammar of Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley treats various of such final extra yodhs, showing that no change of meaning is usually involved. But Brownlee has repointed this word with the extra yodh, in such a way that an altogether different meaning is involved: *ma-shach-ti*, meaning: I anointed. This meaning has been attacked and defended with vigor, but neither side has clinched the argument. It remains an interesting alternative reading, but its authority cannot be established. No doubt this reading deserves further discussion, more calm than the discussion Brownlee had to face. "So had I anointed his face more than man and his form more than the sons of man" is debatable. 52:15 The two relatives, 'asher and 'asher, are preceded by 'eth's, as the sign of the accusative. There is nothing wrong about the insertion of the 'eth's, but in poetry the 'eth, as the sign of the accusative may be omitted. (See article on Poetry, in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*.) Now who put those 'eth's in here, one of the professors or one of the students? Probably the latter, because the alteration is very amateurish, and unnecessary for the obvious meaning. 53:2 adds *lo*, to him, after comeliness, there is no form to him and no comeliness to him. This second *lo*, this second: to him, does not essentially change the sense, it is also quite unnecessary, for the sentence is not ambiguous without it; and so the addition of this second *lo*, to him, may also be regarded quite amateurish, and we might as well credit the students with it and not the professors, at old Qumran.

52:15 But whether we have the work of the Qumran professors or students, in 52:13 and in 43:2, we do not have a plural in 52:15, in the Hebrew word, *yaz-zeh*, he shall sprinkle, where the Greek, Septuagintal form is the plural *thau-ma-son-tai*. The Hebrew root *na-zah* has been given its usual meaning of sprinkle by many translators, but some have translated it: cause to leap, startle (in joyful surprise). If the Qumran reading were a plural, it might be read as a *hophal*, thus shall many nations be startled, surprised at him, and this reading would then be a good deal like the Septuagintal sense, thus shall many nations wonder at him. But the Septuagintal reading, *thau-ma-son-tai*, receives no such support from the present Dead Sea scroll, which has the singular *yaz-zeh*. 53:3 The Masoretic form, *wi-dua*, translated

acquainted (with grief) is a qal passive participle, but the present Dead Sea scroll has an active participle, qal, here, weyo-dea", and knowing grief. This may yield a simpler meaning, but probably no one would recommend this variant from the Masoretic text.

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53:8 The Masoretic form, "am-mi, my people, has an alternate reading in the present Dead Sea scroll, "am-mo, meaning his people, but this alternate reading does not have the support of the Septuagint, nor of the other main versions. In this same verse, 53:8, there is another reading in which the Septuagint is not followed: eeX-thee eis tha-no-ton, he was led to death, but both the Masoretic text and the present Dead Sea scroll have: ne-go" la-mo, stroke to him, to whom the stroke (was due). Here the Greek presupposes that la-mo is read lema-weth, to death, with an extra letter tau, at the end of the word, and then repointed with different vowels, so to speak, in terms of the later Masoretic pointing. It will be seen that in this single verse, 53:8, the present Dead Sea scroll differs twice from the Septuagint.

53:9 Passing by some very minor variants, for lack of time, we now come to a change of preposition. This is the second preposition for: with, in the phrase translated: with a rich man. In the masoretic text we have the preposition, 'eth, with, used twice, with the wicked and with the rich man. But in the present Dead Sea scroll, the second word, translated as with, does not occur as 'eth but as "im, if we may believe the Kittel Bible's footnote. This footnote reads substantially: as it seems: "im. What is there so mysterious about this "im, as with? It might look like a mere error of memory, but it is much more. There would be nothing mysterious about the matter, if the only thing evident were a change of prepositions in question are as nearly alike in meaning as 'eth and "im. There would still be the question, how it happened that this variant arose, which is always the important question, but the English translation would be the word with, for both Hebrew prepositions in this context. However, the matter is not as simple as all that. For the Dead Sea scroll in question has two extra letters with the ayin and the mem, which are the two consonantal letters for "im. These two extra letters are resh and nun, but the letter resh is placed above the horizontal line of the letters. Both the photostatic copy and the transliteration of Burrows, Trever and Brownlee have the letter resh, r, thus placed above the line. Now what did the diligent Professors or the frisky students of old Qumran intend with this combination of letters? Let us inquire about the possibilities with the professors first. Did one of them absentmindedly scribble an r, a resh, for a d, for a dalet, and intend the longer prepositional form of "im, namely "i-ma-di, with a final n, nun, thrown in for good measure? It might well be argued that absent-minded professors have often done worse things than that. But what might be the possibilities, if the professors are not now responsible, but the students of old Qumran? What does Qum mean, especially after the Romans came to rule the country? Well, Qum could then mean with. And the Hebrew preposition "im also means with. "Imran may be a playful pun on Qumran, by a student as frisky as some of our own. More serious theories, however, are in order. Who has one?

53:10 For the Masoretic form, he-cheli, he bath put (him) to grief, there is a variant in the present Dead Sea scroll: way-yi-chelee-hu, as a qal, meaning: and they pierced him, from the first root cha-lal, in Brown Driver, Briggs Hebrew Lexicon. Or the same consonantal form may be vocalized as a piel, way-yechal-le-hu, and they profaned him, from the third root cha-lal, in the same Hebrew Lexicon. For the rest of the verse, the present Dead Sea scroll presents no significant variant from the Masoretic consonantal text. The present variant, whether we

translate: and they pierced him; or whether we translate: and they profaned him, does not have the support of the Septuagint, and is in fact much nearer to the sense of the Masoretic consonantal text than is the Septuagint, which is represented in the first textual critical apparatus of the present Kittel Hebrew Bible. The present variant in the Dead Sea scroll,

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pierced or profaned, looks like a slip of memory, in the copyist, without any serious change of idea, when compared with the Masoretic: he hath put him to grief.

53:11 We now come to one of the most famous, if not the most famous variant in the Dead Sea scrolls, where the present manuscript has the word 'or, light, as does also the Septuagint, substantially, and giving the reading: of the travail of his soul He shall see light. The reading with which we are familiar does not have the word, light, He shall see of the travail of his soul, meaning that he shall see results or fruits of the travail of his soul. The Hebrew is brief in many constructions, while the Greek idiom is sometimes a bit more elaborate, to give the same sense. Even the word, light, in the present Dead Sea scroll, does not substantially change the meaning. Light in the Septuagint, here, may have had a very general meaning, but in the Qumran atmosphere we are at once reminded of the antithesis between the children of light and the children of darkness, an antithesis that is also found in the Gospel of John. Meanwhile, we do not need the help of the rationalists to date this Gospel in the first century, A.D. on this account, and we can use the extra Biblical data, such as this antithesis and the early date of the Dead Sea scrolls, in general, from our own non-rationalistic basis.

53:12 Where the Masoretic text has: he made intercession for the transgressors, the present Dead Sea scroll adds a suffix, their, and it could be vocalized as their transgressors or their transgressions. The Greek can be understood thus: he was delivered because of their iniquities. This alters the sense, but it does have the suffix: their. By way of conclusion, one cannot make the general rule that when the Septuagint and the present Dead Sea scroll agree, one has always a better reading, only sometimes, and not even necessarily in Isaiah 53:11 and 12.

PART II

Having dealt with Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12, we now take up the other three major servant poems, as indicated by the article on "The Servant of Jehovah," in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*.

Isaiah 42:1-9 In 42:1 the LXX adds Jacob and Israel, but Qumran's Isaiah A does not. The Masoretic Text has: the isles shall wait for his law, in verse 4. The word for wait is yeya(ch)-chee-lu, from the root ya-chal, in the pi-el. But the Isaiah Scroll that increased the fame of St. Mark's Monastery has the word, yan-chi-lu, from the denominative root na-chal, in the hiphil, meaning to cause to inherit. Hence the reading of the present Dead Sea scroll would be: they shall cause the isles to possess his laws. This does not have the support of the Septuagint, which is substantially as follows: and in his name shall the Gentiles trust. Even if we translate the reading of the present Dead Sea scroll very literally (they shall cause the isles to inherit, with respect to his laws), this reading does not agree with the Septuagint. The more difficult reading is that of the Masoretes, and it seems to be the best here.

52:5 The Masoretes have ha-'eel Jah-wah (with the vowels of Adhonai). The Septuagint has substantially the same: Kurios Ho Theos. The American Standard Version translates: God Jehovah. But the present Dead Sea scroll has ha-'eel ha-'elo-him, God Elohim. This reading not only lacks Septuagintal support, but probably no one would care to argue in favor of it.

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Isaiah 49:1 to 9a. Verse 2 Who is responsible for this, the professors at Qumran, or the students? sword, che-rev, with the word like, K, added above, instead of the Masoretic: like a sword; like an arrow, with the word unto, L, added above, instead of unto an arrow. Whoever made the corrections, added above the line, (kaph and lamedh,) the uncorrected form might possibly be attributed to the students.

49:5 The Masoretic text has yo-tseri, my deviser (that formed me). The suffix: my has Septuagintal support. But the present Dead Sea scroll has to-taer-eka, thy deviser.

49:6 Israel... Jacob is the reading of the present Dead Sea scroll, while Jacob...Israel is that of the Masoretes, with Septuagintal support, for the latter.

49:7 The Masoretic text has: Thus saith Jehovah, the Redeemer of Israel, his (Israel's) Holy One. The present Dead Sea scroll has: Thus saith Adhonai Jehovah, the Redeemer of thee, O Israel, his (Israel's) Holy One. The Septuagint is not adduced by Kittel..., as having any variant from the Masoretic text that would support this Dead Sea reading, however both Swete and Rahlfs give the Septuagint as follows: Houtoos legei Kurios ho rusarnenos se, thus says the Lord that delivered thee, and this might be regarded as favoring go-eel-eka the Redeemer of thee, in the present Dead Sea scroll, although the Septuagint is none too literal in this verse farther along.

49:7 The Masoretic text has active verbal forms, which may be translated thus: to him whom (man's) soul despiseth and to him whom a nation abhorreth. But the present Dead Sea scroll has a passive form for despiseth and so the form for abhorreth may also be pointed as a passive. Now the Kittel Bible's footnotes had conjectured such a reading: liv-zui and limetho-"av, the former being a passive participle qal and the latter a passive participle pual. The pual is also favored here by the Oxford Lexicon of Brown, Driver and Briggs. The word for abhorred is also pluralized in the present Dead Sea scroll, which may be translated as follows: to the despised ones of (men's) souls and to the abhorred ones of a nation. The Septuagint is not consistent here, despise is made active and abhor is made passive. Now what shall we favor, the active or the passive forms here? I favor the passive forms, and on this score I favor this particular variant, despised and abhorred, in the present Dead Sea scroll. Now the Jewish translation of 1917, revised in 1955 claims to translate the Masoretic text, but in Isa. 49:7, it did not follow the active participles of the Masoretic text, but the conjectural emendations represented by the Kittel Bible footnotes: "To him who is despised of men, To him who is abhorred of nations." That reading is now more than a conjecture, it has the support of the present Dead Sea scroll. This is also the thrust of the Revised Standard Version: "To one

Martin J. Wyngaarten, "The Servant of Jehovah in Isaiah and the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 1.3 (Summer 1958): 20-23.

deeply despised, abhorred by the nations." However the Revised Standard Version translators don't show where they get it either.

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Prepared for the Web in March 2008 by Robert I. Bradshaw

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