WHO IS THE SADDIQ OF ISAIAH 57:1-2?

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THE TEXT AND ITS CONTEXT

The opening verse of Isaiah 57 can be translated more or less literally as follows:

The righteous one perished,¹
and no one took it to heart;²
the devout are taken away,³
and no one gives it a thought.⁴
It was on account of evildoing⁵
that the righteous one was taken away.

Isa 57:1-2 is one of several brief passages in the third section of the book (chapters 56–66) which sound a more personal and intense note. Mention of the fate of the righteous and the devout is ostensibly out of keeping with the context in which it occurs, though several commentators have not been content to leave it at that. Some have found a deliberate contrast with the corrupt leaders of 56:9-12 and the practitio-

¹ The LXX adds ἴδε τε ὡς (“see how”) at the beginning of the verse, cf. Syriac ha (“behold”).
² Both verbs רבד and ℚא are in the past tense, as is בֵּית, all three understood here as referring to the death of הקדש as a past event. 1QIsaᵃ has the participial form רבוד but the MT is supported by 1QIsaᵇ and LXX ἄπωλε το.
³ "By death" understood; literally "gathered" (בָּכָא, i.e. “to their ancestors”), as in Gen 25:8,17; 35:29, etc., but the verb is often used by itself, as in Num 20:26; Jer 8:2; 25:33; Ezek 29:5.
⁴ יָבֵן מֵת should not be emended to יָבֵן מֵת following Dan 8:27, where the phrase is idiomatically different.
⁵ The initial י could introduce a noun clause governed by ר יב (“No one understands that it was on account of evildoing ...”), but a perusal of Isaiah 56–66 will show how often sentences beginning with י serve no specific syntactic function; I therefore omit it here. The compound preposition מְבָט can be translated simply “from”, “away from” as in Gen 7:7; Isa 20:6; 30:11. It is so translated in the Targum (“The righteous perish from before the prospect of the evil that is to come”) and Vulgate (a facie malitiae); and is so understood by the author of Wisdom of Solomon (Wis 4:11-15). But it can also be translated “on account of,” “as a result of,” the choice depending on the context (GKC §119c).
ners of heterodox cults in 57:3-13. More ambitiously, Koenen reads 56:2-57:21 as one unit held together by three "clamps" (Klammer-texte) of a discursive, didactic ("wisdom") origin, i.e. 56:2, 57:1-2 and 57:20-21. While the contrasting fate of the devout and the reprobate is by no means foreign to the didactic and scribal tradition, it has often been pointed out that affinity with psalms of lament or complaint is rather more in evidence.

A strong and perhaps decisive argument for linking 57:1-2 with 56:9-12 as originally one literary unit is the dependence of both segments on Jer 12:7-13. The Jeremiah passage presents a people abandoned by their God, their leaders ("shepherds") are denounced, their land is devastated, and their enemies ("wild animals") are invited to come and devour the survivors ("sheep"). Isa 56:9-12 is clearly a re-

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7 Klaus Koenen, *Ethik und Eschatologie im Tritojesajabuch* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990) 15-17. Extending the range to 57:21 brings into play the contrast between the שפ全て granted to the כהן (57:2) and the כהן denied to the כהן (57:21).

8 The echoes of Isa 57:1-2 heard in *Wisdom of Solomon* (Wis 4:7-15) are clear enough to suggest that the author has drawn on the Isaianic text; on which see Pancratius C. Beentjes, "Wisdom of Solomon 3, 1-4, 19 and the Book of Isaiah," in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah. Fst. Willem A. M. Beukens*, ed. J. van Ruiten and M. Vervenne (Leuven: University Press & Peeters, 1997) 417-18. Passing allusions to the eunuch who is guaranteed a place in the temple (Wis 3:14) and the children of adulterers (Wis 3:16) suggest that the author had a larger section of Isaianic text (Isaiah 56-57) in mind (cf. 56:3-5 and 57:3).