THE DEVELOPMENTAL COMPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH: LIGHT FROM 1QIsa\(^a\) ON ADDITIONS IN THE MT

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The double purpose of this essay is first to honor a colleague and friend, Emanuel Tov, who for the last decade has admirably led the international effort to successful publication of the scrolls from the Judaean Desert, and secondly to present a perspective on the text of Isaiah that can hopefully contribute to the understanding of the composition of the Book of Isaiah.

Four commentaries on the book have appeared in the past few years, each written from a quite different perspective.\(^1\) Each is brimming with insights into the book, but at times with conflicting views. Since the Book of Isaiah is so unrelentingly complex, and since the perspective from which one comes to the task partly influences the observations and conclusions, I propose the analyses and conclusions that follow in the spirit of one who hopes to make a partial contribution to a task that promises to continue stretching before us for some time to come. I do not wish to claim too much and thus bring down on my head the prophetic denunciation, that “the haughty eyes of humankind will be brought low and human pride humbled” (Isa. 2:11).

I wish to present, from a perspective of simple textual comparison, ten passages which, or some of which, illuminate the latter stages in the composition of the book. The ten are lengthy passages—roughly a sentence or much of a verse or even several sentences or verses—that occur in one of the major texts, the MT or the LXX or 1QIsa\(^a\), but are not found in one of the others.\(^2\)

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\(^2\) I am not the first, of course, to consider these passages. A few of the early stud-
The focus will be on the presence or absence of the large pluses or minuses; minor variants within will mostly be ignored so that they do not clutter these necessarily constrained pages or distract from our primary focus.

It is probably accurate to say that the majority of scholars view the text encountered in 1QIsa as secondary to that in the mt. This is no doubt in part due to E.Y. Kutscher’s early and exhaustive study of that scroll which concluded:

A comprehensive and thorough examination of all these details will, I am convinced, prove that the 1 Isa reflects a later textual type than the Masoretic Text. Further, it will be seen that the linguistic anomalies of 1 Isa reflect the Hebrew and Aramaic currently spoken in Palestine towards the end of the Second Commonwealth. Hence, it is possible to postulate that 1 Isa (or its predecessors) is descended from a text identical (or at least very similar) to that of the Masoretic Text, but by no means can we assume the converse—i.e. that the Masoretic Text is descended from a text of the type of 1 Isa.

The clarity and force of his conclusion, however, may not be matched by scholars’ attention to his context. His preceding sentence, enumerating “these details” which issued in his conclusion, is: “The orthography, pronunciation, morphology, vocabulary, syntax, and even the proper nouns must all be carefully studied.” That is, his conclusion refers to the philological stratum of the scroll, not the textual character. In fact, when in an Appendix(!) he lists data relevant to the textual character of the scroll and comments on the many instances in which 1QIsa is fuller than the mt, he is careful to state that “It shall be up to the students of Bible to determine the nature of this added portion.” Thus, at the linguistic level the scroll may be dated in the late second temple period, but at the textual level the question is still open regarding its priority vis-à-vis the mt. I would also add that the assumption that 1QIsa was copied at Qumran and/or reflects issues of

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The citations are as follows:

4 Kutscher, Isaiah Scroll, 2.
5 Kutscher, Isaiah Scroll, 545.