
Praha

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**THE TEXT OF ISAIAH VI 13 IN THE LIGHT OF DSIa**

The St. Mark's Isaiah of the Dead Sea Scrolls presents us with two new readings in the admittedly corrupt thirteenth verse of chapter six, the effect of which is to produce the meaning: "And if there be yet a tenth in it, it in turn shall be for burning, as the oak and the terebinth when the sacred column of a high place is overthrown. The holy seed is its stump."

The last clause is a late insertion absent from the ancient Greek version of Isaiah, and hence it has been omitted by many critics of the text of Isaiah. It was introduced to relieve the severity of the oracle of doom and was inserted on the basis of the catch word מזבח (stump) which is identical in spelling with the construct of the word מזבח (sacred column), which latter word may also have an absolute form ending in *Taw* (Gen. xxxv 14, 20; 2 Sam. xviii 18). But even with the omission of the last clause, the Massoretic Hebrew of the words immediately preceding has its grammatical difficulties, which are resolved only by the text of DSIa. Instead of מזבח (a hap. leg.), DSIa reads מזבח—most naturally read as the Hoph’al participle (cf. Ez. xix 12, Jer. xxxvi 30). Instead of ב it reads ב. The latter reading one might pass over lightly, assuming that the *He* represent only the retention of the *He* in the pronominal suffix as in the words כבש דועה of xli 17. But the combination מזבח נמה (sacred column of a high place) is too striking to dismiss, and it affords an important clue for the recovery of the original text of the verse. The *He* is in fact, it seems to me, supported by the 100 Hebrew manuscripts which read ב. Perhaps an original נמה suffered in transmission the loss of one letter; in one line of transmission the *He* was omitted (pos-
sibly through failure to perceive the cultic reference), in the other the Mem (for the same reason) \(^1\). Since the participle is feminine in form, it can only take נֵבְרִית as its subject in the present text of DSla, the noun terebinth which immediately precedes being masculine.

The first effect of the new text of Is. vi 13 is to introduce a cultic reference where one had not been sensed before. Oaks and terebinths occur frequently in the Old Testament as cult objects in association with high places\(^2\). Hostility toward the high places was characteristic of much prophetic preaching, and may be reasonably ascribed to the Prophet Isaiah (cf. i 29). The words here, however, seem to refer to a historical destruction of high places as illustrative of the forthcoming destruction of the nation. Both Kings and Chronicles ascribe to King Hezekiah (during whose reign Isaiah prophesied) the destruction of high places (2 Kings xviii 4; 2 Chron. xxx 14; xxxi 1); and the political and military capital which the agent of Sennacherib was able to make of Hezekiah’s destruction of the high places (2 K. xviii 22 = 2 Chron. xxxii 12) might be cited as evidence that such occurred. Isa. vi is dated, however, in the year that King Uzziah died, i.e., perhaps in the first year of King Ahaz, the predecessor of Hezekiah. Since there is almost no evidence of any destruction of high places in Judah before the reign of Hezekiah\(^3\), any one desiring to retain the iconoclastic passage for Isaiah will probably feel impelled to date the passage late in the prophet’s ministry, after the execution of Hezekiah’s reforms, a dating which may be supported by the suggestion made by many scholars in the past that perhaps vi 9 ff. was written in retrospect near the close of the prophet’s ministry, when it appeared that his preaching had only served to confirm the nation in its obstinate rebellion against God. vi 13 b, if genuine, would indicate that Isaiah did not regard the reforms of Hezekiah as far-reaching enough to avert further national calamity; for he used the destruction of cult

\(^1\) Though one might conceive of some other explanation of the variant, such as the misreading of a final Mem or He (or vice versa), this seems to me to be a likely explanation. As we may urge נָבְרִית (variant in DSla of v 8) in support of נֵבְרִית as against the Massoretic נְבָרִית; so here we may urge support for the reading נֵבְרִית by the variant נָבְרִית.

\(^2\) For הָאָק (oak), cf. Gen. xxxv 4; Jud. vi 11, 19; 1 K. xiii 14; 1 Ch. x 12; Ezek. vi 13. See other words for oak also: Josh. xxiv 26; and Isa. i 29. For הָאָק (terebinth), cf. Gen. xii 6; xiii 18; xiv 13; xviii 1; xxxv 8; Deut. xi 30; Jud. iv 11; ix 6; ix 37; 1 Sam. x 3; Hos. iv 13.

\(^3\) 2 Chron. xiv 3 attributes to Asa the destruction of high places, but the earlier document 1 Kings xv 14 categorically denies that he engaged in such activity.