DEUTERO-ISAIAH’S INTERPRETATION OF ŠEDEQ

BY

C. F. WHITLEY

Bangor

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The root šdq is common in western Semitic languages 1). Thus we find it in a letter which Abdi-Hepa, governor of Jerusalem, sent to his Egyptian overlords in the fourteenth century B.C. 2). Although writing in Akkadian, Abdi-Hepa uses the term ša-du-tuq, cognate with the Canaanite šaduq 3), claiming that he is ‘right’ about a certain people 4). The noun šdq appears in Ugaritic with the meaning ‘right’ or ‘uprightness’, while the adjective occurs with the force of ‘lawful’ or ‘rightful’ 5). Likewise in Phoenician inscriptions such as the Panam-mu (8th cent. B.C.) šdq has the meaning of ‘legitimacy’ in the sense of ‘hereditary right’, as well as ‘righteousness’ 6). The Aramaic šdqāb similarly means ‘righteousness’ 7), with the adjective saddiq(a) meaning ‘righteous’ or ‘just’ 8). The Arabic šadqun again signifies ‘hard’ or ‘straight’, but when applied to persons has the meaning ‘true in hardness and strength and goodness’ 9).

Such citations show that the root šdq basically denotes ‘what is right’, ‘righteousness’, ‘what is true’. So the Hebrew ṣēdeq (or the

3) Cf. The Assyrian Dictionary 16, p. 59 (Chicago 1967), where šaduq is referred to as a west Semitic word.
8) E.g., Abiqar 126, 128, 167 (COWLEY, op. cit., pp. 216, 218).
feminine form נושד) ¹), although a comprehensive and complex term ²), is similarly thought to have a basic signification of ‘rightness’, ‘righteousness’ ³), ‘what is normal or customary’ ⁴), and again ‘that which is in accord with its being’ ⁵).

It is thus not surprising that a concept of this nature should be personified; and indeed that there was a west Semitic god Šedeq is suggested by more than one consideration. Ša-du-ga appears as a theophorous element in Ammi-Šādaqa, the Amorite name of a king who ruled in Babylon during the seventeenth B.C. ⁶). So we have the Akkadian deity Kešu, meaning ‘Right’ ⁷), who with Mešaru, meaning ‘Uprightness’ ⁸), attended the Akkadian god Šamaš. Again in one of the Amarna letters deriving from Jerusalem we find the name Rab-Šiḏqu (great is Šiḏqu) in which the second element is the name of a god ⁹). In a mythological text discovered at Ugarit in 1961 we find mention of the divine pair Šdq Msr ¹⁰), to be identified

¹) There appears to be no difference in meaning between the masculine and feminine form. Cf. N. H. SNAITH, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (London 1944), p. 72. A. JEPSEN, however, thinks that šdqa has a more abstract signification (Hertzberg Festschrift, Göttingen 1965, 78-89).


³) Cf. e.g., RDB, pp. 841, 843.


⁸) From ashâr ‘to be straight’, Hebrew yāshar, RINGGREN, ibid.

⁹) RINGGREN, op. cit., p. 85; text as MERCER, op. cit., II, 170:37 (p. 540).