The words hinnēh hinnām in Isa. xli 27 have long puzzled translators and exegetes. If they were simply omitted, the rest of the verse could be rendered: “I first will give a messenger of good tidings to Zion and to Jerusalem”. This would make good sense, both in itself and in the immediate context. How then are the additional words to be understood, and how, if at all, do they fit into the sentence?

The traditional pointing indicates a rendering: “behold, behold them”. This might conceivably make sense in a different context, but can hardly be construed within this particular verse. Apart from the difficulty of fitting the phrase into the syntax of the rest of the sentence it is not clear what is the antecedent of the suffix denoting “them” in the second word hinnām.

None of the ancient versions offers a satisfactory rendering of the traditional text. Literal renderings of the words hinnēh hinnām are reflected in the paraphrase of the Vulgate and Targum Jonathan. The Vulgate renders: “behold, they are here”, but has to intro-

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5 This phenomenon exists in some modern Hebrew-speaking communities: for instance, ḥwup pronounced for ḥwub (“drainage”), and ḥswp for ḥswb (“important”).

6 ḫm ḫmp ḫm ḫw ḫm (“‘The waters of Dimon are desolate indeed’, Isa. xv 9); ḫm ḫm ḫm ḫm ḫh ḫm ḫm ḫh ḫh (“For Gilgal shall be swept away”, Amos. v 5); ḫh ḫm ḫh ḫh (“And Ekron will be uprooted”, Zeph. ii 4). The paronomastic word-play is lost in translation.

7 Read with BHK ‘nyh, second person feminine singular imperative of the qal of ‘ny, ‘answer’, with the suffix of the third-person feminine singular.

8 The picture of a waving hand is denoted also by the same root in the hiph’īl ḫn p ḫd (Isa. xiii 2, xix 16) and, more commonly, by ḫḥ ḫd (Josh. viii 18; Isa. xxii 11; Ezek. xvi 27, xxv 7; Job xv 25). That means that the extralinguistic symbol was expressed by more than one verb.

9 It is possible that the process was complicated, and that the author looked for two matching words, and chose the place name nb because it fitted the verb ḥm ḥm ḥm ḥm ḥm which he wished to use in order to signify the symbolic meaning.


11 One should pay attention to the significant chain n-b/n-p in the words ḥm ḥm and nb/ynb.

**“BEHOLD THE SPEAKER”**: A NOTE ON ISAIAH XLI 27

The words hinnēh hinnām in Isa. xli 27 have long puzzled translators and exegetes. If they were simply omitted, the rest of the verse could be rendered: “I first will give a messenger of good tidings to Zion and to Jerusalem”. This would make good sense, both in itself and in the immediate context. How then are the additional words to be understood, and how, if at all, do they fit into the sentence?

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None of the ancient versions offers a satisfactory rendering of the traditional text. Literal renderings of the words hinnēh hinnām are reflected in the paraphrase of the Vulgate and Targum Jonathan. The Vulgate renders: “behold, they are here”, but has to intro-

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duce a prefatory 'will say'. Targum Jonathan renders even more expansively: 'The words of comfort that the prophets prophesied aforetime concerning Zion, behold, they have come to pass'. It is impossible, however, to incorporate such a rendering within the verse as a whole without resorting to either paraphrase or emendation. A glance at the apparatus of BHS indicates the variety of conjectural emendations to which the difficulty of the phrase has given rise. K. Elliger gives a critical survey of these proposals, and adds a new one of his own. There is neither space nor need to consider these hypothetical emendations here, since the purpose of this note is to re-examine the reading of 1Q1sa and its bearing on the interpretation of the traditional text.

The reading of 1Q1sa, which was recorded in the apparatus of BHK, but strangely not in that of BHS, is hnh hnwmh. The first of the two words is identical with the traditional reading, but the second contains two additional vocalic consonants. C. R. North vocalized this word hannōmeh, which seems to consist of the article with the qal participle of a verb nāmā. North explained it as presumably the qal participle of nwm, which occurs in post-biblical Hebrew with the meaning 'speak', with the participle nōmeh as if from nāmā. He then referred to GK §72p for two examples of participles of hollow verbs with middle  handset being found in the form of hollow verbs with middle  but this is irrelevant to the assimilation of a hollow verb with middle  to a verb of the l"h type. He concludes his discussion: 'The Scroll will then mean something like 'Here is one who will be spokesman for Zion'. But the Hebrew is clumsy and it is not clear who the spokesman is. It looks as if there was deep-seated corruption even before the Scroll was written.' Accordingly, North rejects the reading of the Scroll in favour of one of the conjectural emendations. Elliger too points out that 'See, there is the speaker' in its present position fits badly into the syntax of the verse.

An alternative explanation of the reading of 1Q1sa should be mentioned. A. Guillaume derived the participle from a verb nmh, which is not found elsewhere in Hebrew, but which he claimed was cognate with the Arabic nāmā, meaning 'he brought tidings'. This identification of the root was accepted by G. R. Driver but the weakness of its philological basis was exposed by J. Barr, and it is unnecessary to give it further consideration here.

The purpose of this note is to suggest that the reading of 1Q1sa