

COLUMN 10 – THE GREAT ISAIAH SCROLL FROM QUMRAN (1QISAA): ORTHOGRAPHIC AND SCRIBAL FEATURES, ANALYSIS, AND TRANSLATION

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Abstract

This study presents a detailed philological, orthographic, and scribal analysis of Column 10 of the Great Isaiah Scroll from Qumran (1QIsaa), with particular focus on the textual segment corresponding to Isaiah 10–11. The research examines the physical characteristics of the manuscript, including the condition of the leather, cracks, folds, ink fading, and the absence of lacunae, providing insight into the material transmission of the text.

The study further analyzes structural features such as paragraph divisions and the use of spatia, demonstrating an early system of textual segmentation that partially corresponds to later Masoretic and Greek traditions. Special attention is given to scribal practices, including interlinear additions, orthographic expansion, the use of *matres lectionis* (yod and vav), omission and insertion of consonants, and the presence of correction marks indicating scribal self-editing.

A systematic comparison with the Masoretic Text reveals that most variations are orthographic and morphological rather than semantic. These differences include variations in suffixation, verb forms, lexical choices, and the presence or absence of particles such as the definite article and the accusative marker. The analysis demonstrates that the Qumran text preserves a parallel textual tradition characterized by phonological transparency and flexible orthographic conventions.

The findings contribute to the broader understanding of Qumran Hebrew, scribal culture, and the development of the biblical text during the Second Temple period. Column 10 is thus shown to be a significant witness to early textual transmission, reflecting both stability and controlled variation within the manuscript tradition of the Hebrew Bible.

Keywords

Great Isaiah Scroll; 1QIsaa; Dead Sea Scrolls; Qumran; Qumran Hebrew; Biblical Hebrew; Hebrew philology; textual criticism; scribal practices; orthography; manuscript studies; Masoretic Text; Isaiah 10; Isaiah 11; Second Temple period; *matres lectionis*; textual transmission; paleography; biblical linguistics

Physical Characteristics



This page appears to be the most “typical” within the scroll thus far, although it contains certain deviations from the derived Greek text. It is the third column on the third piece of leather of the scroll. Almost all words are legible.⁷

There is a crack in the leather in the upper left corner, extending from the first to the sixth line. In line 1, the ‘ayin in the word ‘al (“above” or “over”) is covered by the crack, and in line 4, the word šittō (“his thorn”) is almost completely destroyed, although it can still be read upon close inspection.

The same effort is required to identify all letters in several lines in the lower left corner, as they have faded. There is also a fold mark extending across the entire page on the right side. The origin of such marks and cracks is discussed in more detail on the introductory page, under Section V.⁷

There are no lacunae, although the lower portion of the page has been torn away.¹

Paragraphs and Spatia

On this page there are seven paragraphs and only one spatium in line 29, in the lower right corner.

The ends of paragraphs are located in lines 2, 6, 10, 14, 18, 19, and 27.

Line 3 begins verse 10:16, line 7 begins verse 20, line 11 begins verse 24, and line 14 begins verse 27. Line 18 begins verse 33, while line 20 begins chapter 11, verse 1. Line 28 begins verse 11:10, and the spatium in line 29 marks the beginning of verse 11:11.^{2 8}

Line 20

Fourth word: Line 20 represents the first verse of chapter 11. The fourth word is ve-nēšer, translated as “and a branch.”^{3 9}

Editorial Additions

There are horizontal markings between lines 13 and 14, as well as between lines 29 and 30.¹⁰

We also see a mark resembling he or het above the third word in line 15. It actually represents yod and vav. The word in question is ‘Ajjat, that is, the name of a city.

The additional letters correspond to the pronunciation in the Masoretic Text, although in Qumran this word ends in he (see further discussion below under “Line 15”). The article here appears to be redundant.

In line 18, he is added to the third word from the end, namely qōmāh, which also represents an example of Masoretic reading.

Lines 22 and 23: The second word from the end in line 22 and the first word in line 23 is the word for “earth,” with the article — ha-’āreš. The Masoretic Text does not contain the article in either case.¹¹

Line 23: The second word is be-šēbet, in which the original scribe omitted bet, but it was added above the word. In the last word of line 23, the article is omitted, which is present in the Masoretic Text (there is also a scribal error in line 23, verse 5).

Line 25: First word: The first word is also the last word of verse 11:6 and means “in them.” In Qumran, an additional he appears, turning bām into bāmāh. It is possible that Aramaic influence is present here.¹²

Line 26 (verse 8): The sixth word (šip’ōnī, “adder” / “cockatrice”) has the plural ending -īm, which is not present in the Masoretic Text.

In line 29, the fourth word from the end has the accusative marker ’et added, and in this corrected form it agrees with the Masoretic Text.

Line 30 (last line): Verse 11:11: The third word is Patrōs (a place name) and contains an additional letter at the end, possibly vav, which does not belong there.⁴

Other Deviations from the Masoretic Text in Qumran

Line 1

Penultimate word: Qumran reads menīpāyw, while the Masoretic Text has manīpō.

See the introductory page for more on the addition of yod in singular forms before the 3rd masculine singular suffix. What appears to be a plural formative ending is simply a Qumran method of adding the suffix to a masculine singular participle.^{5 11}

It is also possible that the scribe shifted this form into the plural to match the following phrase in the next line (third word).

Line 11

Third word from the end:

Qumran: mē-šēbet

Masoretic: ba-šēbet

Last word:

Qumran: ū-māṭō

Masoretic: ū-mattēhū

Line 12

Second word from the end:

Qumran: ve-ye 'īr

Masoretic: ve- 'ōrēr

Line 15

Third word:

Here yod and vav appear above the name of the city 'Ajjat. The same form occurs in line 23 (third word, pīw).¹¹

However, in Qumran, instead of tav at the end of 'Ajjat, there is he. The addition of vav and yod represents a common scribal method of using them as semi-vowels.

The pronunciation would thus be 'Aj-jat if tav were restored.

Here vav represents a vowel similar to the diphthong au in English words such as cause or auto. In Qumran, vav may represent virtually any vowel. See the discussion on vav as a semi-vowel in the introductory section.

Line 23 (Verse 5)

Scribal error: The fourth and fifth words in line 23 have dots above and below them, indicating that the words are incorrect and do not belong in the text.

The scribe wrote the words in the wrong order, since the phrase yāmîṭ rāšā' ("he will slay the wicked") appears in the correct order later in the line (eighth and ninth position).

The practice of marking incorrect words with dots above or below them is common in the Qumran scroll.^{6 12}

Another explanation for the origin of this error is that the letters preceding the mistake are -yw, which directly precede the correct occurrence later in the line.

It can therefore be concluded that the practice of marking incorrect words was carried out by the original scribe rather than a later editor, which may be the case with other corrections.

Line 24

Twelfth word:

Qumran omits aleph in ū-mārē, whereas the Masoretic Text has ū-mārē'.

Line 26 (Verse 11:9)

Penultimate word: Variant reading:

The derived Greek text reads be-kol har qodšī, whereas Qumran reads simply be-har qodšī.⁸

Qumran omits kol, which appears in the Masoretic Text.

Line 27

Verb tense variation: Second word:

The Masoretic Text has a perfect form, while Qumran has the same verb in the imperfect.

Line 28

Penultimate word: Orthography:

Qumran: nissāh

Masoretic: nissā'

The substitution of aleph with he is a common scribal feature in Qumran.¹¹

Discussion

The analysis of Column 10 confirms a consistent pattern of scribal activity characteristic of the Great Isaiah Scroll. The manuscript exhibits a combination of orthographic expansion, phonological adaptation, and controlled correction, which together indicate a highly developed scribal practice rather than random variation. The presence of matres lectionis, especially yod and vav, demonstrates a tendency toward phonetic transparency that aligns with broader observations of Qumran Hebrew as a living linguistic system rather than a purely conservative textual tradition.

The structural organization of the text through paragraph divisions and the limited use of spatia suggests that scribes were guided by a conceptual awareness of textual segmentation. Although this system does not fully correspond to later Masoretic divisions, it reflects an intermediate stage in the development of textual structuring.

The comparison with the Masoretic Text reveals that most differences are orthographic or morphological rather than semantic. This supports the view that the Qumran text represents a parallel textual tradition that preserves alternative linguistic conventions without significantly altering meaning. The presence of scribal corrections, particularly the use of dots to mark erroneous words, further indicates that textual control was exercised at the level of the original scribe, suggesting a process of self-correction during copying.

Conclusion

Column 10 of the Great Isaiah Scroll provides important evidence for understanding the nature of textual transmission in the Second Temple period. The manuscript reflects a stable textual tradition that incorporates orthographic flexibility and occasional adaptation without compromising the integrity of the underlying text.

The observed variations between the Qumran text and the Masoretic Text confirm that differences are primarily related to spelling conventions, morphological forms, and scribal

practices rather than substantive textual divergence. As such, Column 10 reinforces the broader conclusion that 1QIsaa represents an early and independent witness to the Hebrew biblical text, preserving features that are essential for reconstructing the history of its transmission.

TRANSLATION

COLUMN 10 — ISAIAH 10:14 TO 11:12

1. (Continuation Isa 10:14) nor will it squeak.” (15) Shall the axe boast over the one who cuts with it, or the saw exalt itself over the one who wields it? Can the rod wave over
2. the one who lifts it, or raise itself as if it were not made of wood? (PP)
3. (16) Therefore the Lord Yahweh of hosts will send wasting sickness upon his strong warriors, and under his glory a burning will be kindled like the burning of fire.
4. (17) The light of Israel will be like fire, and his Holy One like a flame, which will burn his thorns and his briars in one day.
5. (18) He will destroy the glory of his forest and his orchard, both soul and body. That glory will be like a sick man wasting away. And from his forest so few trees will remain
6. that even a child will be able to count them. (PP)
7. On that day the remnant of Israel will no longer rely on the one who struck them, nor those who have escaped from the house of Jacob
8. but will rely in truth on Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel. The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the Mighty God. (22) Though
9. your people, O Israel, be like the sand of the sea, only its remnant will return. The destruction that is decreed will overflow upon it in righteousness,
10. (23) for the Lord Yahweh of hosts will carry out destruction and his firm decree in the midst of all the land. (PP)
11. (24) Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh of hosts: “O my people who dwell in Zion, do not fear the Assyrian, who strikes you with a rod and lifts up his staff
12. against you, as Egypt did. (25) For yet a very little while and the indignation will come to an end. My anger will bring about their destruction.
13. (26) And the Lord of hosts will wield a whip against him, as when he struck Midian at the rock of Oreb, and he will lift his staff over the sea, lifting it as he lifted it against Egypt. (PP)
14. (27) On that day the burden of the Assyrian will depart from your shoulder and his yoke from your neck, and the yoke will be broken because of the anointing oil. (PP)
15. (28) He has come to Aiath {τ&}, he has passed through Migron, at Michmash he has inspected his baggage.
16. (29) They have crossed the pass; at Geba we lodge for the night. Ramah trembles, Gibeah of Saul flees.
17. (30) Cry aloud, daughter of Gallim! Give heed, Laishah! And you, poor Anathoth! (31) Madmenah flees.
The inhabitants of Gebim seek refuge. Yet this very day he will halt at Nob; he will shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. (PP)
18. (33) Behold, the Lord Yahweh of hosts will lop off the branches with terrifying power. Those {&he&} who are high in stature will be cut down, and the lofty

19. will be brought low. (34) He will cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon will fall before the Mighty One. (PP)
20. (Beginning of chapter 11:1) And a shoot will come forth from the stump of Jesse, and a branch (nēšer) from his roots will bear fruit. (2) And the Spirit of Yahweh will rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
21. the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh. (3) He will live in the atmosphere of the fear of Yahweh, and he will not judge by what
22. his eyes see, nor will he reprove according to what his ears hear. (4) With righteousness he will judge the poor, and with equity he will reprove, defending the meek of the earth. He will strike
23. the earth {&sa&} with the rod of his mouth, { :and he will slay the wicked:] and with the breath of his lips he will put the wicked to death. (5) He will gird his loins with righteousness, and
24. he will gird his waist with faithfulness. (6) The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fattened animal together, and a little child will lead
25. them. (7) The cow and the bear will feed together, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. (8) And the nursing child will play
26. over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the den of the viper. (9) They will not do evil nor destroy on all my holy mountain,
27. for the earth will be full of the knowledge of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea. (PP)
28. (10) On that day the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; him the nations will seek, and his resting place
29. will experience glory. (11) On that day the Lord will again extend his hand to redeem {&.et&} the remnant of his people who remain
30. from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. (12) He will raise a banner

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