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**WILL THE SERVANT “SEE LIGHT”?:
A REXAMINATION OF THE *’ôr* VARIANT IN ISAIAH 53:11**

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Prolegomena

How does the famous “he will see light,” or “to show him light” (נִרְאֶה and φῶς), textual variant in Isaiah 53:11 of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Septuagint expound upon and further explain the Servant’s suffering?

It will be argued that this variant is the most probable *Urtext* for three reasons:

1. The overwhelming external evidence
2. The internal evidence: the structure of the poetic canticle in Isaiah 52:13–53:12
3. The literary evidence: the passage already contains a reference to resurrection

The Text(s) Under Examination

A New Translation of the Masoretic Text¹

11 From *the* trouble of his soul he will see <he shall see from *the* trouble of his soul>. He will be satisfied by his knowledge. My righteous servant² shall make many righteous and he will bear their iniquities.

A New Translation of the Septuagint Text³

And *the* Lord **wishes** to **take away** 11 from the **toil**⁴ of his life⁵, to show him **light** and **form**⁶ the understanding⁷, to justify a righteous one *who is* **servicing** many **well**, and he **himself** shall carry their sins.

A New Translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls Text⁸

11 From *the* trouble⁹ of his soul he will see **light**¹⁰ **and**¹¹ he will be satisfied¹². **And**¹³ in his knowledge, **his**¹⁴ righteous servant¹⁵ shall make many righteous and he will bear their iniquities.

¹ This translation is my own. *Italics* in any translation indicate a word that I have inserted.

² May also be translated as “the righteous one, my servant.”

³ This translation is my own. Words in **bold** represent a variant from the MT.

⁴ May also be translated as “toil” or “business.”

⁵ May also be translated as “soul.”

⁶ May also be translated as “mold” or “fill.”

⁷ May also be translated as “faculty of comprehension” or “intelligence.”

⁸ This translation is my own. The words in **bold** represent a textual variant from the MT.

⁹ May be translated as “suffering”.

¹⁰ This variant is supported by 1QIsa^a, 1QIsa^b and 4QIsa^d (Questionable).

¹¹ This variant is supported by 1QIsa^a and 4QIsa^d (Questionable).

¹² May be translated as “find satisfaction.”

¹³ This variant is supported by 1QIsa^a.

¹⁴ This variant is supported by 1QIsa^a. 4QIsa^d reads “my servant.”

¹⁵ May also be translated as “the righteous one, my servant.”

Discourse Structure and Parallelism of Isaiah 53:10-11
(the *emphasis* of the parallelism is **bold** and underlined)

Discourse Type/Parallelism Structure	Translation	Hebrew	End of Line Emphasis
Sentence (a)	Yet Yahweh was pleased to <u>crush him</u>	וַיִּהְיֶה חֶפְזָן דָּכְאוֹ	Object
<i>Elaboration (b)</i>	he made <i>him</i> <u>sick</u> .	הַחֲלִי	<i>Verb</i>
Sentence (a)	When she makes <u>his life</u> a guilt offering	אִם־תָּשִׂים אֱשֶׁם נַפְשׁוֹ	Object
<i>Elaboration (b1)</i>	he will see <u>offspring</u>	וַיֵּרְאֶה זָרַע	<i>Object</i>
<i>Elaboration (b2)</i>	he will prolong <u>days</u>	וַיֵּאֲרִיד יָמִים	<i>Object</i>
Sentence (a)	And the will of Yahweh <i>is</i> in his hand	וְחֶפְזָן יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ	Object
<i>Elaboration (b)</i>	<i>It</i> will <u>succeed</u>	יִצְלַח	<i>Verb</i>
Sentence (a)	From <i>the</i> trouble of <u>his soul</u>	מֵעַמְל נַפְשׁוֹ	Object
<i>Elaboration (b1)</i>	he will see <u>?</u>	וַיֵּרְאֶה ?	<u>Object?</u>
<i>Elaboration (b2)</i>	he will be satisfied by <u>his knowledge</u> .	יִשְׂבַּע בְּדַעְתּוֹ	<i>Object</i>
Sentence (a)	My righteous servant shall make <u>many</u> righteous	יִצְדִּיק צְדִיק עַבְדֵי לְרַבִּים	Object
<i>Elaboration (b)</i>	and he <u>will bear</u> their iniquities.	וְעֹנֹתָם הוּא יִסְבֵּל	<i>Verb</i>

Notes About the Structure:

1. The parallel structure of the passage is as follows: *ab, abb, ab, abb, ab*.
2. The “a” lines of the single-single group (ab) end in an object and the “b” lines end in a verb.
4. In the single-double group (abb) all lines *should* end in an object.
5. The parallelism of the poem requires this pattern.

The Two Single-Double (abb) Groups Paralleled
(the *emphasis* of the parallelism is **bold** and underlined)

Discourse Type/Parallelism Structure	Translation	Hebrew	End of Line Emphasis
Sentence (a)	When she makes <u>his life</u> a guilt offering	אִם־תָּשִׂים אֱשֶׁם נַפְשׁוֹ	Object
<i>Elaboration (b1)</i>	he will see <u>offspring</u>	וַיֵּרְאֶה זָרַע	<i>Object</i>
<i>Elaboration (b2)</i>	he will prolong <u>days</u>	וַיֵּאֲרִיד יָמִים	<i>Object</i>
Sentence (a)	From <i>the</i> trouble of <u>his soul</u>	מֵעַמְל נַפְשׁוֹ	Object
<i>Elaboration (b1)</i>	he will see <u>?</u>	וַיֵּרְאֶה ?	<u>Object?</u>
<i>Elaboration (b2)</i>	he will be satisfied by <u>his knowledge</u> .	יִשְׂבַּע בְּדַעְתּוֹ	<i>Object</i>