



The Great Isaiah Scroll

Analyzing the Qumran Isaiah Scroll
in comparison with the Masoretic Text,
spanning Isaiah 1:16-31

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Introduction

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls fifty-odd years ago in the Qumran caves was arguably the greatest Hebrew textual find ever made, and definitely the one that has gained the most fame and aroused the most controversy. Among sectarian writings were also found brittle scrolls with the books of the Bible, complete or in part, a discovery that in one stride reduced the distance between the original manuscripts and our oldest extant copies by a thousand years. The most famous of these is the Great Isaiah Scroll.



The Qumran caves

Linguistic differences

The Qumran manuscripts, however, are not identical in every detail to the official Masoretic text that our Bibles are based upon. These differences have the character of a careful “modernization” of the ancient text, in order to assist Aramaic-speaking readers in their understanding of the prophet’s timeless God-given message.

The modernization affects several fields such as spelling, grammar and vocabulary. The Qumran text utilizes plene spelling in a more consistent manner than we are used to from the Masoretic text, more reminiscent of Modern Hebrew. Letters (א, ה) are also added to short words, perhaps in order to bestow a fancier feel upon the sacred text. However, there are also more than a few examples of what in linguistic circles is called “phonetic spelling” and in grammar school “spelling errors”, mainly consisting in confusion between the laryngals (א and ה) and the pharyngals (א and ה) whose characteristic Middle Eastern pronunciation had started to wear away by the time of Christ.



A jar having held scrolls

The changes in grammar and vocabulary are made in an effort to simply the compact and sometimes obscure language of the prophet and render it more understandable to the ears of a later generation. Copulas and relative pronouns are sometimes added where left out, and passive forms are replaced by more straightforward impersonal ones (third person plural). Also, where the Masoretic text shows a passage that does not seem to fit together, the Qumran edition has sometimes ironed out the difficulties and ambiguities in order to present the reader with a unified account.

A question that arises from observing these differences is whether the Qumran sect (or whoever wrote the Great Isaiah Scroll) started out with a version identical to the Masoretic text that we have today (of which the earliest manuscript evidence is about one thousand years later than the Dead Sea Scrolls), then editing it (either gradually or consciously) until they arrived at the slightly simplified version that was found at Qumran, or if the two texts represent different reading traditions. Answering this question of course falls outside of the

scope of this humble paper, but it is an interesting question to keep in mind during our quest to arrive at the most original text that came from the pen of the prophet and his disciples.

About the structure of this analysis

This paper will examine the Qumran version of the Book of Isaiah (The Great Isaiah Scroll, 1QIsa^a), as published in two editions by Miller (1950) and Parry (1998). The photographed text is of course identical, but their transcriptions and interpretations differ slightly, with the former being less confident to assign a positive identification to damaged letters, but yet more prone to interpret ambiguous characters in line with the Masoretic text.

The scope of the paper is the second half of the first chapter in the Book of Isaiah (1:16-31), where any anomalies of the kinds described above will be analyzed and commented upon. Every verse is first given in translation (New International Version), and then analyzed in a table that lists all verbs, nouns and adjectives, plus any other words in which anomalies occur in the Qumran text. The Masoretic text is given in the left column, and the deviant Qumran reading, if any, appears in the middle column. Missing words or letters are marked with [].



A page of the Great Isaiah Scroll

The rightmost column gives an analysis of the word as written in the Masoretic text, including gender-number (for nouns and adjectives), or root, stem type, tense, mood (if other than indicative) and person-gender-number (for verbs). Finally a translation is given, and for words that deviate in the Qumran text a comment is adduced in brackets.

These comments are expanded and explained in greater depth in a paragraph following the table. However, every type of phenomenon is commented upon only once, at its first occurrence.

The Text

Verse 16

Wash and make yourselves clean.

Take your evil deeds out of my sight!

Stop doing wrong,

Masoretic	Qumran	Analysis
רְחֹצוּ		רחצ Qal imp 2mp, wash
הִזְכּוּ	והזכו	זכה Hitp imp 2mp, make yourselves clean (and)
הִסִּירוּ	והסירו	סור Hif imp 2mp, remove (and)
רַע	רוע	ms const, evil (plene ם)
מַעֲלֵיכֶם		mp with 2mp suffix, your deeds
עֵינַי		fp with 1cs suffix, my eyes
חָדְלוּ		חדל Hif imp 2mp, cease
הָרַע		רעע Hif inf const, to work evil

We here see an example of the plene spelling that is so prevalent in the Qumran text – there is hardly a verse that lacks at least one added ם or ם. More interesting, though, is the addition of two ם in order to break up the original's asyndetic connection of the imperatives. Editing of this type, which is quite widespread in the Qumran text, rendered the text more processable to readers in a pre-commatic society.

Verse 17

learn to do right!

Seek justice,

encourage the oppressed.

Defend the cause of the fatherless,

plead the case of the widow.

Masoretic	Qumran	Analysis
לִמְדוּ		למד Qal imp 2mp, learn
הִיטֵב	היטיב	טוב Hif inf const, to do good (plene ם)
דְּרֹשׁוּ	דרושו	דרש Qal imp 2mp, seek (pausal-like form)
מִשְׁפָּט		ms, justice
אֲשֶׁר		אשר Pi imp 2mp, correct/confirm?
חֲמוּץ	חמוצ	ms, oppression (no sufit ץ)
שֹׁפֵט		שפט Qal imp 2mp, judge/defend rights of
יְתוֹם	יאתום	ms, orphan/fatherless (plene ם)
רִיבוּ		ריב Qal imp 2mp, strive for/with
אֵלְמָנָה		Fs, widow

Here are examples of the other two kinds of plene writing: the extra ם in היטיב and an ם to specify the a-sound in יאתום, like when writing out foreign names in Modern Hebrew. Using ם as a vowel sign is not unheard of in Biblical Hebrew, though it occurs only a few times in late books like Nehemiah. Extrabiblical occurrences include the Genesis Apocryphon and ostraca found in Elephantine.

We also see the צ i מו צ written without a special final form – such are common only for the letters מ and ן .

On the grammatical side, there is a deviant longer imperative form (דרוש), reminiscent of a pausal form even though the words does not occur in a pausal context. Could this have been the normal way of expressing the imperative in spoken Hebrew around the time of Christ? But if so, why does the next Qal imperative (שפטו) lack a corresponding inserted ו ? After the first few sentences, though, the reader stops raising his eyebrows at the multitude of irregularities like these, simply accepting them in faith.



The desert of Judea,
overlooking the Dead Sea

Verse 18

*Come now, let us reason together,
says the LORD.*

*Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool.*

Masoretic	Qumran	Analysis
לְכוּ-נָא וְנִוְכַחְהָ יֹאמֶר	יֹאמֶר	הלך Qal imp 2mp, come (on)!
אִם-יְהִיוּ חַטָּאֵיכֶם כְּשָׁנִים	אִם יִהְיוּ כְּשָׁנִי	יכח Nif ipf cohort 1cp, let's reason together
כְּשֶׁלֶג לְבִינוּ		אמר Qal ipf 3ms, saith (plene ו)
אִם-יִאָדְמוּ כְּצֹמֶר	אִם יִדְמוּ	היה Qal ipf 3mp, are (no sufit ס)
יְהִיוּ		mp with 2mp suffix, your sins
		mp def+prep, as scarlet cloths (Qumran singular)
		ms def+prep, as snow
		לבן Hif ipf 3mp, will whiten
		אדם Hif ipf 3mp, are red (no sufit ס, drop unpronounced א, waw or yod?)
		ms def+prep, as scarlet stuff
		ms def+prep, as wool
		היה Qal ipf 3mp, will be

This famous and oft-quoted verse sports an entry (אם ידמו) with three anomalies packed into it: the scribe accidentally left out the silent א and substituted the Hiphil-marking י for a ו – or did he? In the script employed by the Qumran scribes there is precious little difference between ו and י, which is often lengthened all the way down to the line. Parry (1998), who in accordance with the principle of lectio difficilior usually assumes that the Qumran scribe is guilty until proven innocent, interprets the letter here as a ו, an interpretation which I consider probable but by no means certain (which few things usually are when dealing with the Dead Sea Scrolls).



The Prophet Isaiah,
by Michelangelo

Additionally, the **אמ** is written without a final **א**, as is usual in the Isaiah Scroll (other occurrences in verses 18, 19 and 20). In the light of the fact that the scribe uses the final **א** form everywhere except for the word **אמ**, we may perhaps surmise that this little word was considered part of the following word, just as the Masoretic reading tradition indicates with a maqqaf?

There is but one more anomaly left to comment, namely the change of the prophet's mysterious plural form of "scarlets" (**שנים**) to an easier and unambiguous **שני**.

Verse 19

*If you are willing and obedient,
you will eat the best from the land;*

Masoretic	Qumran	Analysis
אם תאבו ושמעתם טוב הארץ תאכלו	אמ תאבו	אבה Qal ipf 2mp, are willing (no sufit א) שמע Qal perf conv 2mp, and will hear/obey ms const, the good/best cs def, the land אכל Qal ipf 2mp pausal, will eat

For this (and the next) verse, it is fitting to comment upon changes that were *not* made: why did the scribe pass on the opportunity to insert plene **א** in order to simplify reading of the **אמ** verbal forms – both the two Qals in this verse and the even harder Pual in the next? Especially the latter must have been hard to make out when reading without vowels, so why didn't he change this while he was at editing the text?



Aerial view of the ruined Qumran community buildings

Verse 20

*but if you resist and rebel,
you will be devoured by the sword."
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*

Masoretic	Qumran	Analysis
וְאִם תִּמְאָנוּ וּמְרִיתֶם חֶרֶב תֹּאכְלוּ כִּי פִּי דִּבֶּר	[ו]אמ תמאנו בחרב כיא	מאן Pi ipf 2mp, refuse (no sufit ס) מרה Qal perf conv 2mp, and rebel fs, sword (added ב = by the sword) אכל Pu ipf 2mp, will be eaten conj (added א) ms const, mouth Pi perf 3ms, has spoken

In addition to the lack of plene spelling mentioned in the discussion of the last verse, there is an instance of decorative spelling where כִּי is lengthened by addition of an א (but the following פִּי has no corresponding א, probably since it appears in construct form). Also, the scribe expanded upon חרב standing in splendid isolation by adding a ב, which seemed more logical to him and his contemporaries as the sword did not fill the role of subject in the sentence. However, the original expression can be read as perfectly grammatical by placing the sword in the position of accusative agent, a construction that seems to have fallen out of use by the time of Christ.

Verse 21

*See how the faithful city
has become a harlot!
She once was full of justice;
righteousness used to dwell in her –
but now murderers!*

Masoretic	Qumran	Analysis
אֵיכָה הִיְתָה לְזוֹנָה קְרִיָּה נְאֻמָּנָה מְלֵאֲתֵי מִשְׁפָּט צְדָק יָלוּן מְרַצְחִים	היכה הייתה לזונה	conj (confused א and ה) היה Qal perf 3fs, was/became (consonantal doubled יי) fs + prep, whore (forgot plene ו, later inserted) fs, city אמן Nif part fs, faithful adj fs constr, full ms, justice ms, righteousness לין Qal ipf 3ms, used to lodge רצח Pi part mp, murderers

The first word perhaps exemplifies the confusion between א and ה that was prevalent in the late spoken Hebrew that bordered on the Mishnaic period – one could almost say it was starting to draw near to French, with a silenced h-sound and nasalized endings (the confusion between ים and ין that appears in the Mishna). However, another interpretation explains the word as a mix between the late form היך (that appears in 1 Chronicles and Daniel) and the standard איכה.

We also come upon an interesting result of the consistent plene spelling: the scribe felt that he had to mark the consonantal use of ם by writing it twice, like in Modern Hebrew. This is not the usual spelling employed throughout Isaiah (occurs only a few times, and then only in perfect forms of היה plus one infinitive), and one would feel that the second ם would need to indicate a vowel sound – but this is not the case. Another plene-related detail can be seen in the following word, where a ם that is written plene in the Masoretic text was accidentally left out. It has been inserted above the word at a later time.

Verse 22

*Your silver has become dross,
your choice wine is diluted with water.*

Masoretic	Qumran	Analysis
כֶּסֶפְךָ		ms with 2fs suffix, your silver
הָיָה	הָיוּ	היה Qal perf 3ms, has become (3mp in Qumran)
לְסִיגִים	לְסוּגִים (?)	mp, dross (possible interchange ם-ו)
סְבִיבֶיךָ		ms with 2fs suffix, your (fine imported) wine
מֵהוּל		הל Qal pass part ms, mixed/diluted
בְּמַיִם		mp def + prep, with (the) water

The changes made in the Qumran version usually give a smoother reading where the original is rough, but that can hardly be said about the inexplicable change to plural for הָיוּ. Later in the verse, the ה in מֵהוּל was possibly first written as a ח and afterwards corrected to ה (according to Parry's interpretation) – this would fit into the general trend of laryngal confusion.

Another place that arouses the accusative Parry's suspicions is לְסִיגִים, where he interprets the almost illegible first ם as a ם. He makes the same interpretation when the word appears again later in verse 25, where the letter is visible but the identification ambiguous. Since the reading לְסוּגִים does not give any good meaning, it would not be reckless to go with Miller's more conservative reading that conforms to the Masoretic text.



The desert of Qumran

Verse 23

*Your rulers are rebels,
 companions of thieves;
 they all love bribes
 and chase after gifts.
 They do not defend the cause of the fatherless;
 the widow's case does not come before them.*

Masoretic	Qumran	Analysis
שְׂרִיךְ	שְׂרִיכִי (?)	mp with 2fs suffix, your princes
סוֹרְרִים	[-]	mp, rebels
וְחֻבְרֵי	[-]	mp const, friends of
גְּנָבִים		mp, thieves
כָּלֹ	כֹּלִם	pronoun 3ms (3mp), all of them
אֹהֵב	אֹהֵבִי	אהב Qal act part ms const, lover of (mp with plene ו)
שֹׁחַד	שׁוּחַד	ms, bribe (plene ו)
וְרוֹדְף	רוֹדְפִי	רדף Qal act part ms const, chaser of (mp with plene ו, dropped conjunction)
שְׁלֵמוֹנִים	שְׁלֵמוֹנִים	mp, gifts (plene ו)
יָתוֹם	יָתוֹם	ms, orphan/fatherless (plene א)
לֹא יִשְׁפֹּטוּ	לֹא יִשְׁפּוּ (וטו)	שפט Qal ipf 3mp, judge/defend rights of (plene ו in negation)
וְרֵיב	[-]	ms const, the case/cause/complaint of
אֶלְמָנָה		fs, widow
לֹא־יָבוֹא	לֹא יָבוֹא	בוא Qal ipf 3ms, comes (plene ו in negation)

A verse where almost every word is edited in one way or another! Furthermore, from here and downwards the left corner of the manuscript is missing, which means that each of the following verses lacks one or more words.

Most of the changes consist of simple plene spelling (including the perennial לוא, which even occurs a few times in the Masoretic text – in Qumran the waw is added in order to emphasize to the Aramaic-speaking reader that the negation should not be pronounced “la”), but there are several other noteworthy anomalies. The first word (שְׂרִיךְ) has an enigmatic added ם that also seems to be positioned a little bit after the word – it has been added for seemingly no reason at all. Also, the identification of the letter before the ם is not completely certain, having similarities to both ן and ך, but the most probably reading follows the Masoretic text and assumes that the top left curve of the כ has been left out or faded away.



Among the ruins of Qumran

Isaiah's masculine singular (כָּלֹ) when referring to the princes, which is quite unexpected (a feminine singular would connect better to קריה, the city), is ironed out to a more logical plural (plene spelling כֹּלִם), which also required adding ם to the participles for the plural construct form.

Finally, the copula connecting the participles was dropped, quite surprisingly in view of the general trend of the Dead Sea Scrolls dialect to avoid asyndetic connections. However, such dropped copulas are not uncommon in the Great Isaiah Scroll, which sees 70 occurrences of this phenomenon.

Verse 24

*Therefore the Lord, the LORD Almighty,
the Mighty One of Israel, declares:
Ah, I will get relief from my foes
and avenge myself on my enemies.*

Masoretic	Qumran	Analysis
נָאֵם	נאום	ms const, message (plene ו)
הַאֲדֹנָי		ms def, lord
צְבָאוֹת		fp, armies
אֲבִיר	[-]	ms (adj), mighty
הוּי	הוה?	interjection, Ah! (replaced י with ה)
אֲנַחֵם		נחם Nif ipf 1cs, will be comforted
מִצָּרַי	מצריו (?)	mp + prep with 1cs suffix, from my enemies (3 ms suffix?)
וְאֶנְקַמָּה	ואנקם ^ה	נקם Nif ipf cohort 1cs, will avenge myself (cohortative ה later added as superscript, misplaced)
מֵאוֹיְבָי	מאובו	mp + prep with 1cs suffix pausal, from my enemies (ms with 3ms suffix, missing ו)

This verse sees quite a few mistakes from the side of the Qumran scribe. First, the classic הוּי of the prophets is spelt הוה, which Kutscher interprets as a “mechanical error” (slip of the pen). In וְאֶנְקַמָּה, the cohortative ה was left out and added later only as an afterthought (even then being misplaced above the next word instead) – this may indicate that the cohortative forms had fallen out of use in the dialect spoken by the scribe. Finally, he by mistake omits the י in the last word – probably more from being hungry and working late at night than from any linguistic reasons.

There is also a grammatical change of person from first to third, resulting in something like “Ah, I will get relief from his foes and avenge myself on his enemies”. This “his” in all probability refers to the just-mentioned “Israel”, modifying the concept of God to be more involved with his people (though the redaction does not fit altogether well with אֲנַחֵם and אֶנְקַמָּה). In the last word, we probably see another mechanical error, with one or two י being left out of מאוּבו, for which the form מאוּיְבוּ would have been expected (as a parallel to מצריו).



Inkwell found at Qumran

Verse 25

*I will turn my hand against you;
I will thoroughly purge away your dross
and remove all your impurities.*

Masoretic	Qumran	Analysis
וְאֶשִׁיבָה יָדִי	והשיב	שוב Hif ipf cohort 1cs, will/want to turn (Hif perf 3ms?) fs with 1cs suffix, my hand
וְאֶצְרֹף כַּבֵּר	וּאֶצְרֹף (?) [-]	צָרַף Qal ipf 1cs, will smelt ms def + prep, as (with) lye
סִיגִיךָ וְאֶסִיכָה	סוגיך (?) ואסיר	mp with 2fs suffix pausal, your dross (possible confusion וי) סִיר Hif ipf cohort 1cs, will/want to remove (without cohortative ה)
בְּדִלְיָךְ		mp with 2fs suffix pausal, your alloys

This verse would seem to confirm the suspicion that the cohortative form had fallen out of active usage, since it sees the loss of two cohortative ה. In addition, the first word is yet another instance of the laryngeal confusion prevalent in the last centuries BC, with the א being exchanged for ה, resulting in another form altogether which does not fit the context.

This is all the more strange when we compare to the next verse, where the וְאֶשִׁיבָה is flawlessly mirrored by the Qumran scribe! Did his reading tradition present two different forms for the sake of variation? Yet another question whose answer lies buried beneath the sands of Judea.

Verse 26

*I will restore your judges as in days of old,
your counselors as at the beginning.
Afterward you will be called
the City of Righteousness,
the Faithful City.*

Masoretic	Qumran	Analysis
וְאֶשִׁיבָה שׁוֹפְטֶיךָ כַּבְּרֵי אֲשֶׁנָּה וְיַעֲצִיךָ כַּבְּתְּחִלָּה	שופטיך כבראישונה [-]	שוב Hif ipf cohort 1cs, will/want to return mp with 2fs suffix, your judges (plene ו) fs (adj) def + preps, as at the first (plene י and ו) יעץ Qal act part mp with 2fs suffix, your counselors fs def + preps, as in the beginning
יְקָרָא עִיר הַצְּדִקָּה קְרִיָּה נְאֻמָּנָה	יְקָרָאוּ	קָרָא Nif ipf 3ms (Qal ipf 3mp) fs const, city ms def, righteousness fs, city נְאֻמָּן Nif part fs, faithful

The passive Niphal form יְקָרָא is simplified to an active impersonal form יְקָרָאוּ, in order to simplify the reading of the prophet's ancient oracles for a "modern" audience. Also, a note on plene spelling: participles like שׁוֹפְטֶיךָ are always spelt with scriptio plene in the Great Isaiah Scroll, with no exceptions. However, the scribe missed an expected opportunity to add a י to כַּבְּתְּחִלָּה, instead following the Masoretic text.

Verse 27

*Zion will be redeemed with justice,
her penitent ones with righteousness.*

Masoretic	Qumran	Analysis
בְּמִשְׁפָּט תִּפְדָּה וְשׁוֹבֵיהָ בְּצִדְקָה		ms + prep, by justice פדה Nif ipf 3fs, will be redeemed שוב Qal act part mp with 3fs suffix, her returners fs + prep, by righteousness

A rare verse with no changes, thus not meriting any further comment.

Verse 28

*But rebels and sinners will both be broken,
and those who forsake the LORD will perish.*

Masoretic	Qumran	Analysis
וְשֹׁבֵר פְּשָׁעִים וְחֹטְאִים וְעֹזְבֵי יְכֻלוּ	פושעים ועוזבי	ms const, destruction פשע Qal act part mp, transgressors (plene ו) mp, sinners עזב Qal act part mp const, forsakers כלה Qal ipf 3mp, will be finished

Another verse that will be left uncommented, since the only changes consist in additions of plene ו to active Qal participles.



Textual fragment found at Qumran

Verse 29

*You will be ashamed because of the sacred oaks
in which you have delighted;
you will be disgraced because of the gardens
that you have chosen.*

Masoretic	Qumran	Analysis
כִּי	כִּי־א	conj (added א)
יִבְשׁוּ	יִבְשׁוּ	Qal ipf 3mp, will be ashamed (plene ו)
מֵאֵילִים	מֵאֵלִים (!)	mp + prep, of oaks (<i>dropped</i> plene י)
חֲמַדְתֶּם		Qal perf 2mp, delighted
וְתַחְפְּרוּ	וְתַחְפְּרוּ	Qal ipf 2mp, will blush (pausal-like form)
מֵהַגְּנוֹת		fp def + prep, from the gardens
בְּחָרְתֶּם		Qal perf 2mp, chosen

Here the words of God as reported by the prophet Isaiah shift persons in a way that is hard to understand: *they* (the transgressors of the previous verse) will be ashamed of the אֵלִים that *you* have delighted in. It would not have been surprising if the Qumran edition had ironed out this difficulty (as the NIV indeed does), but it has chosen to let the text remain in its Masoretic form.

Then a word about the אֵלִים, where we seemingly have two genuinely different reading traditions: the Masoretic text reading אֵילִים (oaks), while the Qumran edition and the Septuagint instead read אֵלִים (gods). Both of these fit the context of adulterous idolatry, though the first option of course presents a better match for the following parallelism of גִּנוֹת (gardens). It is of course also possible that this would be one of the rare occurrences where a Masoretic plene letter is dropped, but the existence of the Septuagint reading tradition renders this possibility unlikely.

Verse 30

*You will be like an oak with fading leaves,
like a garden without water.*

Masoretic	Qumran	Analysis
תְּהִי־ו		Qal ipf 2mp, will be
כְּאֵלֶּה		fs + prep, like an oak
נִבְּלֶת	נִבְּלֶת	Qal act part fs, drooping/withering (plene ו)
עֲלֶהָ		ms (possibly p) with 3fs suffix, its leaf/leaves
וְכַגְּנָה		fs + prep, like a garden
אֲשֶׁר־מִים אֵין	אֲשֶׁר אֵין מִים	mp, water (shift word order)

This verse begins with a כִּי to which the customary א for once has not been added. In the last words (אֲשֶׁר מִים אֵין בו) the word order has been shifted to the more normal and expected version, with אֵין in the first position of the relative clause.

Verse 31

*The mighty man will become tinder
and his work a spark;
both will burn together,
with no one to quench the fire.*

Masoretic	Qumran	Analysis
וְהָיָה הַחֲסוֹן לְנֵעוֹרֹת וּפְעֻלוֹ לְנִיצוֹץ וּבְעֻרוֹ שְׁנֵיהֶם מִכְבֵּה	הַחֲסוֹנְכֶם (!) לְנֵעוֹרֹת וּפְעֻלְכֶם לְנִיצוֹץ	הייה Qal perf conv 3ms, will be ms (adj) def, the strong (with 2mp suffix, ה superfluous) fs + prep, tinder (plene ו) ms with 3ms suffix (2mp suffix) ms + prep, spark בער Qal perf conv 3mp, will burn mp with 3mp suffix, the two of them כבה Pi part ms, quencher

The words of the this verse reveal additions that clearly show conscious editing from the side of the Qumran scribe: when he changed the sentence from third to second person (to communicate more directly with the reader and also to bring it in line with the previous verse), he forgot to remove the definite article from החסון after adding the possessive suffix, ending up with the somewhat clumsy form החסונכם, “your strong one”.

The parallel subject פעלו is likewise dramatized in an accusative manner to פעלכם, and in both words the scribe passes on a splendid opportunity to add a plene ו to the word for greater clarity and consistency. Thus the Great Isaiah Scroll remains an inconsistent specimen of a half-finished standardization in progress – but this fact does render it all the more interesting for present-day researchers delving into the depths of the history and development of the Hebrew language in Biblical times.



**The Shrine of the Book –
the final resting-place of the Scrolls
at Israel Museum, Jerusalem**

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