

NOTES AND COMMUNICATIONS

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1. THE TEXT OF ISA. xlix,17 IN THE DSS.

The *Epistle of Barnabas* was probably written at the time when Hadrian intended to rebuild the City of Jerusalem.¹ The project of the Emperor presumably aroused some hopes among the Jews, and there may be an allusion to these hopes in Barnabas' words: "it is said, see, they who destroyed this Temple, they themselves will build it" (Barn. xvi,3).² The quotation is indubitably a paraphrase of the Septuagint translation of Isa. xlix,17: "And quickly thou wilt be built by them that destroyed thee and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee."³ What was the Hebrew text upon which the Greek translation is based? The massoretic vocalization of מהרו בניך מהרסיך ומחריביך ממך יצאו is based on the supposition that בניך is to be read as meaning "thy children" and מהרסיך as "thy destroyers". But there was also a very good old tradition, as reflected by V,T, an Arabic version and the variant of a Hebrew manuscript⁴, that בניך is to be read as בוניך "thy builders", and this was surely also the tradition of the Greek translator (*οἰκοδομηθήσῃ*, "thou wilt be built"). The rest of the versions are in agreement against the Septuagint: they understand Isa. xlix,17 as saying: "Thy builders (or: children) shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee," whereas the Septuagint speaks about a quick rebuilding of the city by its destroyers. The prophet certainly did not mean that. This notion seems to be based on the historical fact that Jerusalem was destroyed by heathens in the time of Nebuchadnezzar and rebuilt by heathens in the Persian period. It is clear that this interpretation of Isa. xlix,17 could not be developed on the basis of our M.T. What was, therefore, the text of Isa. that could be wrongly understood by the Greek translator as referring to the rebuilding of Jerusalem by its destroyers? The solution of the problem was found by Hans Windisch in his commentary to the Epistle of Barnabas⁵: he says that the literal translation of the Hebrew text should be: "Thy builders shall be quicker than

1. See, c.g., E. Schürer *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes* I (1901), pp. 672-3.
2. *πέρας γέ τοι πάλιν λέγει Ἰδοὺ, οἱ καθέλόντες τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον, αὐτοὶ αὐτὸν οἰκοδομήσουσιν.*
3. *καὶ ταχὺ οἰκοδομηθήσῃ ὑφ' ὧν καθηρέθης, καὶ οἱ ἐρημώσαντές σε ἐκ σοῦ ἐξελεύσονται.*
4. See BH ad. loc.
5. H. Windisch, *Der Barnabasbrief* (Tübingen 1920), p. 387.

they that destroyed thee".⁶ This ingenious hypothesis is now confirmed by the reading of DS1a⁷: מהרו בניך מהורסיך ומחריביך ממך יצאו "Thy builders shall be quicker than thy destroyers, and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee."

It is clear that the reading in the Septuagint is based on the vocalization reflected in the Scroll: the Greek translator read בניך as בוניך ("thy builders") and understood מהורסיך wrongly, not as "than thy destroyers" but as "by thy destroyers". This interpretation is not against the spirit of the Hebrew language, but it does not render the correct meaning of the Hebrew text from which he translated and which is also preserved in DS1a where it is written plene. The meaning of מהרו בניך מהורסיך is that the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the return from the Babylonian captivity will be miraculous: it will be accomplished even more quickly than the destruction of the city.

It is not our task to solve the question as to whether the text of Isa. xlix,17 as preserved in DS1a, which was also the Hebrew text of the Greek translator, conforms to the utterance of the prophet himself. All the interpretations being clearly based upon the same consonant text, we have to try to fix our choice upon the authentic tradition. The reading of the Greek translator and of the Dead Sea Sect fits very well the tendency of Deutero-Isaiah to introduce miraculous traits into his description of the return from captivity. From the purely philological point of view, the reading of DS1a and G is a classic example of a *lectio difficilior*: we can easily explain how the massoretic text developed from the text preserved in DS1a, but it is practically impossible to imagine how a change in the opposite direction could have taken place. We have already seen that numerous sources attest the reading of בניך as בוניך. We can also suppose that, because of the attraction of the following מחריביך, the word מהרסיך was taken to be a Pi'el of הרס, and not understood as מהורסיך ("than thy destroyers"). Thus the phrase "thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee" came into existence. At this point the word בניך (read: בוניך) "thy builders" became more or less incomprehensible and it could be read as meaning "thy children", especially when verse 20 of the same chapter speaks about "the children which thou shalt have after thou hast lost the others" (the fluctuation between בנים and בונים is a well-known feature in the various traditions of the Hebrew text of the Bible). By this last change the verse took on a new meaning: the Children of the devastated City of Jerusalem will hasten to enter the city, whereas its destroyers and devastators

6. "eine wörtliche Uebersetzung des hebr. Textes würde etwa gelautet haben: οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντές σε ταχύτεροι ἢ οἱ καθελόντες σε."

7. *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery I* (New Haven 1950), The Isaiah Manuscript, plate XLI.

will leave it. The rebuilding of Jerusalem in a miraculously short time was transformed into the happy return of the Children of Israel from the Babylonian captivity. It is therefore easy to trace a development from the DS1a text to our massoretic version, and consequently it seems to me to be highly probable that the DS1a text, which was also the text of the Greek translator, is the original one. We can find an additional support for our supposition in the fact that a Pi'el form of the root **הרס** can be found in the Hebrew Bible only in the massoretic reading of our verse.

The reading **מהירו בניך מהורסוך**, which holds out the promise that Jerusalem will be built more quickly than it was destroyed, *i.e.* in a miraculously short time, appears to account for the rabbinical expression voicing the wish that the Temple shall be built quickly (**מהרה**)⁸; the meaning of this wish is identical with the meaning of Isa. xlix,17 in DS1a, namely that the Temple shall be built suddenly, overnight. This notion was current in some Jewish circles even before the destruction of the Second Temple, and the opinion that the eschatological Temple will be built in three days seems to be reflected in Mark xiv,58.⁹ It is therefore possible that the notion that the Temple shall be built quickly (**מהרה**) is based upon the tradition reading Isa xlix,17 **מהירו בניך מהורסוך**. This would account for the use in the rabbinical saying of the word **מהרה**, the primary meaning of which is not "soon" but "quickly".

Additional Note: On the Epistle of Barnabas, see now also S. Lowy, JJS. 11 (1960), 1—33 (publ. Dec. 1961).

8. Cf. B.T. Sukk. 41a, Taan. 17b, Beṣ. 5b, R. Sh. 30a, Sanh. 22b, Bekh. 53b, Men. 68b.
9. See D. Flusser "Two notes on the Midrash on 2. Sam vii", IEJ 9 (1959), 99-104.