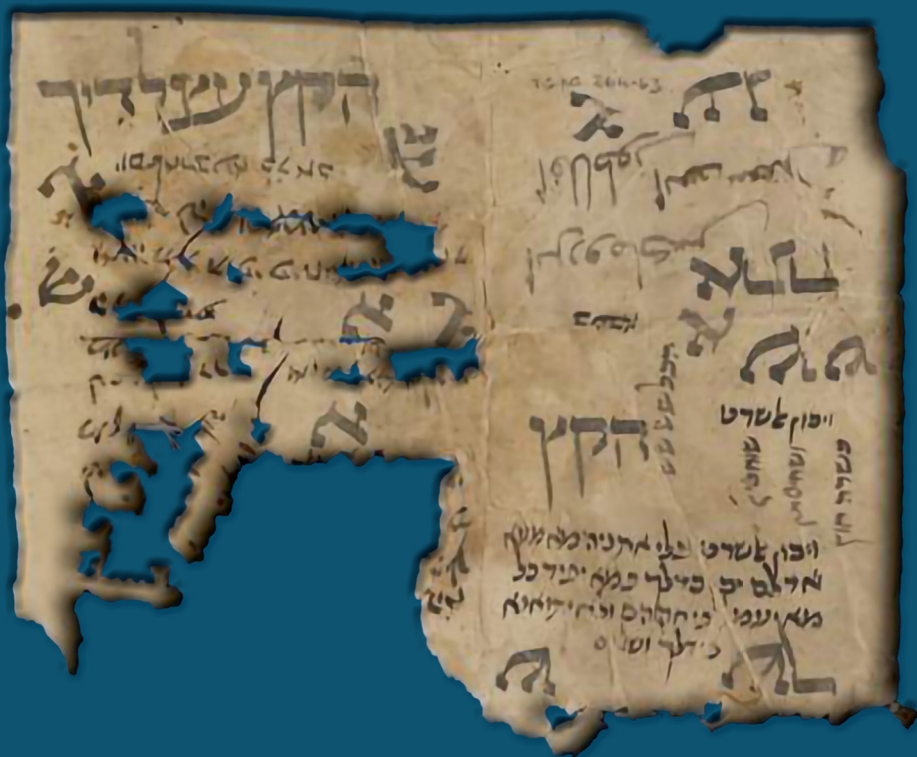# Interconnected Traditions

Semitic Languages, Literatures, and Cultures
A Festschrift for Geoffrey Khan

Volume 1: Hebrew and the Wider Semitic World

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LEXIS-CODING ORTHOGRAPHY IN 4QISAᴹ (4Q66)*

Noam Mizrahi

Five fragments were assigned to 4QIsaᵐ (or 4Q66), dated on pal-aeographic grounds to the first half of the first century ʙᴄᴇ (Skehan and Ulrich 1997, 131–32 and pl. XXII; cf. Lange 2009, 173–274). However, fragments 1–3, which preserve words from six lines (containing Isa. 60.20–61.1), differ in terms of size, col-our, shape, and, perhaps, scribal hand, from fragments 4–5, which contain the ends of five lines (covering Isa. 61.3–6). It re-mains uncertain, therefore, whether the two groups of fragments indeed belong together (as proposed by Eugene Ulrich) or rather represent two different manuscripts (as originally surmised by Patrick Skehan).

The present study focuses on fragments 4–5. They witness two variant readings vis-à-vis the MT in vv. 3 and 5 (lns 2 and 4,

respectively), and this paper is concerned with the first variant,
which entails a scribal correction:

top margin

1 ‏[נקם לאלהינו לנחם כל אבלים 3 לשום לאבלי ציון]לׄתׄת להם פאר תחת אפרׄ‏

2 ‏[שמן ששון תחת אבל מעטה תהלה תחת רוח כהה וק]רׄא להם א'לׄי הצׄדׄק‏

3 ‏[מטע יהוה להתפאר 4 ובנו חרבות עולם שממות ראשני]ׄם יקוׄמׄוׄ וׄׄחׄדשׄוׄ עׄׄרׄׄי‏

4 ‏[חרב שממות דור ודור 5 ועמדו זרים ורעו צאנ..ם ובני]נׄׄכר אׄׄכריׄׄהׄׄם‏

5 ‏[וכרמי..ם 6 ואתם כהני יהוה תקראו משרתי אלהינו י]אׄׄמׄׄר לׄׄ[כם חי]לׄ‏

Figures 1 and 2: 4Q66, fragments 4–5: Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities
Authority

Figure 1
PAM 43.014
Photograph: Najib Anton Albina
(July 1959)
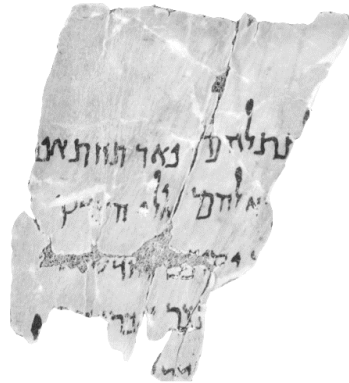
Figure 2
IAA B-362297 (digitally enhanced)
Photograph: Shai Halevi
(June 2012)

At first glance, the added *yod* in ‏א'לי הצדק‏ (ln. 2) seems a rela-
tively small, even insignificant, detail. It is usually construed as

a mere orthographic correction.[1] All the more so, since the scribal hand of the corrector is usually identified as that of the original scribe (Skehan and Ulrich 1997, 131; cf. Lange 2009, 273).

Nonetheless, if one seriously reflects on the question of *why* this variant occurs *where* it does, then even this tiny detail, when contextualised text-critically, may be interpretable as a manifestation of broader late Second Temple exegetical concern regarding interpretation of the phrase אֵילֵי הַצֶּדֶק in Isa. 61.3. This exegetical debate also has implications for Biblical Hebrew (BH) lexicography, as it reveals an ancient debate about the very existence of a rare lexeme.

Isa. 61.3 is a particularly attractive passage for Second Temple scholars, of course, because Isa. 61.1–3 have a well-documented reception history as a messianic prooftext in the Qumran scrolls, especially 4Q521 and 11Q13 (see especially Sanders 1975; Collins 1997; for 11Q13, see Miller 1969; Achenbach 2015), and the New Testament, especially Luke 4 (see, e.g., Flusser 1960; Neirynck 1997; Rosik and Onwukeme 2002). Previous discussions of the reception of v. 3, however, are generally limited to its first part (v. 3a).[2] A study of ancient interpretations

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[1] Such an assessment would explain why this reading was left out of Parry's (2020) comprehensive discussion of the textual variants witnessed by the Isaiah scrolls. Morrow (1973, 161) records the variant, but does not discuss it.

[2] Tellingly, even the comprehensive work of Metzenthin (2010) excludes a discussion of Isa. 61.3b, though the passage Isa. 61.1ff. is referred to several times. Similarly, none of the passages pertinent to the case under investigation are discussed by Koenig (1982) or Pulikottil (2001), who previously explored exegetical trends in 1QIsaᵃ.

of v. 3b, which contains the phrase אֵילֵי הַצֶּדֶק, thus fills a lacuna in our existing knowledge.

1.0. Orthography and Linguistic Marking

Scrutiny of this case should be framed by a preliminary, theoretical consideration of orthography.[3]

The alphabetic writing system of both ancient and Modern Hebrew is quite exceptional among the world's written languages, in permitting the coexistence of a relatively broad spectrum of orthographic representations of speech segments. A random example from Qumran Hebrew is furnished by the feminine singular demonstrative זאת 'this', the rounded middle vowel of which is spelled in 1QIsaᵃ in at least three different ways in addition to the MT's זאת—זאות, זואת, זות—with subsequent corrections that yield even more spellings, e.g., זוֹות:

MT		1QIsaᵃ
Isa. 5.25	בְּכָל־זֹאת לֹא־שָׁב אַפּוֹ 5.13–14	בכול זאות לוא שב אפו
Isa. 9.16	בְּכָל־זֹאת לֹא־שָׁב אַפּוֹ 9.7	בכול זואת לוא שב אפו
זֹאת הָעֵצָה הַיְּעוּצָה עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ Isa. 14.26	זֹאת הָעֵצָה היעוצה על כול הארץ 12.28–29	זואת העצה היעוצה על כול הארץ
וְזֹאת הַיָּד הַנְּטוּיָה עַל־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם:		וזות היד הנטיה על כול הגואים

In the above cases, the orthographic variation occurs in the same recurring formula or within one and the same context, so diverse

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[3] Barr (1989) remains indispensable for any theoretical exploration of BH orthography. Significantly, Khan (2018) demonstrates that the common, unidirectional perception of orthography as mere representation of speech is too simplistic, as orthoepy results in attempts at the phonetic realisation of orthographic and other notational peculiarities. For the notion of "orthographic knowledge" and its complex interaction with psycholinguistic factors, see Berninger (1994; 1995).

functional values are unlikely to underlie the different spellings. Experience shows, however, that, in time, competing spellings of this sort can become functionally differentiated. Illustrations for this phenomenon may be adduced from Modern Hebrew.

An example of sociolinguistic values attached to competing spellings is furnished by the stylistic coding expressed by one's preferred orthography. Generally speaking, defective spellings, e.g., שלש *šaˈloš* 'three', of segolate nouns of the type of פעל ˈ*poˤal* 'verb', and of words traditionally written with *ḥaṭef qamets*, like צהרים *ṣohorˈayim* 'noon', are associated with old-fashioned, archaic, or even archaistic style, because they represent an orthographic standard established on the basis of BH, which was enforced throughout the Israeli educational system until the early 1980s. By contrast, *plene* spellings, e.g., צוהוריים, פועל, שלוש, are considered to represent a 'younger' and more up-to-date style. Tellingly, despite recent approval and even promotion by the Academy of the Hebrew Language,[4] older literati tend to view some of the more modern conventions with contempt as vulgar spellings.

Another example, this time of distinct linguistic values attached to competing spellings, is supplied by the Hebrew word for '(Jewish) priest'. In contemporary, written Israeli Hebrew, the *plene* spelling כוהן is automatically decoded by native speakers as

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[4] See https://hebrew-academy.org.il/topic/hahlatot/missingvocaliza-tionspelling/ (Rule II: The /o/ Vowel), and the accompanying press release at https://hebrew-academy.org.il/2017/06/17/-כללי-הכתיב-המלא הכללים-החדשים-סיוון/, highlighting frequent words whose prescribed spelling was reformed.

marking the common noun and accordingly pronounced with ultimate stress: [koˈhen]. By contrast, the default decoding of the defective spelling כהן is as the proper noun (i.e., surname) 'Cohen', which is accordingly pronounced with penultimate stress: [ˈkohen]. The orthographic variants, encoding a distinction in grammatical category, are given to different phonetic realisations.

A final example illustrates that orthographic variants may be used for distinguishing between contrasting lexemes. Modern Hebrew inherited two words that were originally pronounced differently: מִלָּה *milˈlɔ* 'word' and מִילָה *mīˈlɔ* 'circumcision'. Due to the loss of both vocalic length and consonantal gemination in Israeli Hebrew, however, their pronunciation merged into [miˈla]. Nonetheless, one can discern a strong tendency among authors to retain the defective spelling for 'word', while maintaining the *plene* spelling for 'circumcision', in order to distinguish orthographically between the two lexemes—a tendency that is now eroding due to the equally strong tendency among younger generations to prefer *plene* orthography across the board.[5]

To be sure, I do not argue that such cultural constructs should be retrojected, wholesale, onto ancient Hebrew texts. Moreover, orthographic fluctuation is amply recorded in both the Dead Sea Scrolls and medieval codices of the Hebrew Bible.[6]

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[5] The differentiated spellings of *plene* אישה (= אִישָׁהּ *ʾīšɔh*) 'her man (i.e., husband)' and defective אשה (= אִשָּׁה < *ʾiššɔ*) 'woman', both realised in Modern Hebrew as [ʾiša], are undergoing a comparable process.

[6] Examples pertinent to the word under investigation can be culled from both corpora. Qimron (2018, 66–67) records cases of the *plene* spelling

What I insist on, rather, is that we be aware that competing spellings could have, at least in some cases, signalled differentiated linguistic or sociolinguistic values for ancient readers and scribes. It would be wrong, therefore, to dismiss them out of hand.

The methodological problem that remains is how, in the absence of ancient Hebrew native speakers or literati, to distinguish between variants that are purely orthographic, on the one hand, and those that are functionally differentiated, on the other. In the case of the biblical scrolls from Qumran, however, one may have recourse to an external control, namely, the ancient versions. The very necessity of translating the Bible into other languages carries with it the potential for revealing such functional linguistic differences, and comparative analysis of the various translations into Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Jewish Aramaic enables one to discern at least some cases in which seemingly orthographic variants might have been perceived by ancient readers as marking linguistically distinct values, especially in the realm of lexis. Put differently, if the Hebrew textual witnesses vary with

of 'gods' (e.g., ומי בבני האילים 4Q381 15.6), contrary to the MT's consistent preference for the defective spelling of this word (e.g., בִּבְנֵי אֵלִים MT Ps. 89.7). He also notes examples of the other direction: cases of defective spelling of 'rams' (אלים, especially in 11QTᵃ), whereas the MT shows a clear preference for representing its first vowel with a *yod* (67 occurrences of אֵילִ(י)ם versus only two of אֵלִים). Similarly, the critical editions of Kennicott (1776–1780) and Ginsburg (1908–1913) testify to many orthographic variants in medieval codices with respect to these words, though most of the collated manuscripts are relatively late and otherwise deviate very often from the received orthography underlying the Masoretic notes of the early authorities.

respect to the orthographic representation of a certain word, but all the versions essentially agree on its translation, then the variation may very well be purely orthographic. But if the versions reflect different lexical identifications, or widely disparate understandings of the word, then it is legitimate to explore the possibility that orthographic variation entailed linguistic differentiation.

Another group of potential cases of linguistically functional orthographic variants can be identified in the case of intentional corrections of orthographic variants. Why would a corrector intervene in an existing written text, adding or deleting a vowel letter, if it makes no difference to interpreting the word in question? Theoretically, the scribe may have corrected an error in copying his *Vorlage*, or possibly tried to clarify an original form that was difficult to read or interpret for any number of potential reasons. More specifically, such scribal interventions make sense if the corrected form was thought to be functionally different from the original one, even if this function is not immediately apparent to modern readers. In other words, orthographic corrections might be a means of interpretive explication, thereby injecting what I call 'micro-exegesis' into the textual fabric of a transmitted work.

If a given case satisfies both criteria, namely, exhibiting an explicit correction by a Hebrew scribe, while also corresponding to divergent renderings in the ancient versions, then the consideration of its orthography as a means of marking a linguistically functional distinction becomes plausible.

2.0. Common Interpretation

It is against this background that I propose that the superlinear *yod* in א'לי partially disambiguates the lexical identity of a word given to various interpretations. The exegetical crux with which the scribe was wrestling can be clarified with the help of the ancient versions.

Isa. 61.1–4 describes how the currently miserable state of the Judaean returnees will take a turn for the better; in the future, those who are now "the mourners of Zion" (אֲבֵלֵי צִיּוֹן) will be given a new designation: אֵילֵי הַצֶּדֶק.[7] Modern scholarship, relying on medieval lexicography and exegesis, usually interprets this phrase like the *NRSV*: "the oaks of righteousness."[8] This line of interpretation assumes that the unattested, singular form *ʾayl or *ʾēl is the masculine counterpart of the feminine אֵלָה *ʾēlǝ 'terebinth tree'.[9]

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[7] On thematic and syntactic grounds, vv. 1–4 can be subdivided into an introduction (v. 1a), a list of infinitival clauses (vv. 1b–3a), the new designation (v. 3b), and the restoration of the towns (v. 4). This division can also be supported by colometrical analysis (de Vries 2013), even without adhering to all its strictures. The compositional interaction of these sections with each other, with various passages of Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah, and with additional passages, especially of the Restoration Period, is a complicated matter that cannot be addressed here. See, e.g., Gregory (2007); Stromberg (2009).

[8] See, in addition to the commentaries and lexica, Gignilliat (2011).

[9] In the Hebrew Bible, the terebinth is sometimes associated with sacred or ritual sites (e.g., Gen. 35.4; Judg. 6.11, 19; 1 Kgs 13.14; Ezek. 6.13; Hos. 4.13; 1 Chron. 10.12; notably, Josh. 24.26 testifies to the geminated biform אַלָּה). A few other occurrences, however, demonstrate that

An augmented form of the masculine noun apparently underlies אֵלוֹן *ʾēlôn* 'oak', employed in place names or designations of sacred sites.[10]

3.0. The Versions

This interpretation of the masculine plural אֵ(י)לִים, or construct אֵ(י)לֵי, has been applied to a few other BH passages.[11] Intriguingly,

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it was also typical of the local Palestinian flora (2 Sam. 18.9, 10, 14; Isa. 1.30; 6.13).

[10] The geminated biform אַלּוֹן *ʾallôn*, sometimes mentioned in juxtaposition to אֵלָה (Isa. 6.13; Hos. 4.13), functions as a common name, designating oaks or terebinth trees (Gen. 35.8; Isa. 2.13; 44.14; Ezek. 27.6; Amos 2.9; Zech. 11.2). Historically, it appears that Hebrew אֵלוֹן *ʾēlôn* is cognate of Aramaic אִילָן *ʾîlɔn* 'tree', both being derived from Proto-Northwest Semitic **ʾiylān*. While the specific sense of 'oak' (i.e., a particular kind of tree) was preserved in Hebrew, as demonstrated by the fact that the same sense is witnessed by other Semitic languages (see Ugaritic *aln* and Akkadian *allānu*, from Old Akkadian on), in Aramaic it underwent semantic extension to the broader sense of 'tree'.

[11] For instance, both the BDB and *HALOT* assign the meaning of 'tree' in Isa. 1.29; 57.5; 61.3; Ezek. 31.14, as well as in the place name אֵיל פָּארָן (Gen. 14.6) (BDB 18a, s.v. IV[אַיִל?]; *HALOT* 40a, s.v. II*אַיִל). For our present concern, it is immaterial whether the passages discussed above are—from a literary point of view—independent or intertextually related (as suggested by, e.g., Jüngling 1993, esp. 214–16).

however, the ancient versions very rarely agree with this inter-
pretation, preferring instead a different understanding of the
word.[12] This is best exemplified by Isa. 57.5:

(1)   Isa. 57.5

MT   הַנֵּחָמִים֙ בָּאֵלִ֔ים תַּ֖חַת כָּל־עֵ֥ץ רַעֲנָ֑ן

'You that burn with lust among the oaks, under every green
tree'

1QIsaᵃ   הנחמים באלים תחת כול עץ רענן

LXX   οἱ παρακαλοῦντες ἐπὶ τὰ εἴδωλα ὑπὸ δένδρα δασέα

'You are the ones who call on their idols under thick trees'

Vulg   *qui consolamini in* *diis* *subter omne lignum frondosum*

'Who seek your comfort in idols under every green tree…?'

Pesh   ܘܕܡܬܒܝܐܝܢ ܒܦܬܟܪܐ ܠܬܚܬ ܡܢ ܟܠ ܐܝܠܢ ܕܥܒܝ

'Who are comforted by idols, beneath every forest tree'

TJ   דְּפָלְחִין לְטָעֲוָתָא תְחוֹת כָּל אִילָן עֲבוֹף

'who serve idols under every leafy tree'

Clearly, all the versions take the word in question as the plural
of אֵל 'god' (as explicitly translated by the Vulgate), even if most
of them interpret this term as actually referring to false gods or
'idols' (so the Septuagint, Peshiṭta, and Targum Jonathan).[13] This
is due primarily to the context, which employs the formulaic

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[12] The English translations are taken from the *NRSV* (MT), *NETS* (LXX),
Douay-Rheims-Challoner (Vulgate), Greenberg and Walter (2012; Pe-
shiṭta), Stenning (1949; Targum Jonathan; cf. Chilton 1987).

[13] This translational equivalent is not self-evident. It is not employed by
the versions even in passages that clearly attest אֵל in the sense of 'idol'
(e.g., Isa. 44.10, 15, 17). In the Septuagint, for instance, εἴδωλον trans-
lates אֵל only in the passages discussed above, even though εἴδωλον is
used for translating the related terms אֱלֹהַּ and אֱלִיל.

phrase "under every green tree," commonly denoting an illicit locus of idolatrous worship in Deuteronomistic phraseology.[14]

Arguably, not only the context, but also the defective spelling—which is the rule in the case of the plural form of אֵל in the sense 'god, divine being, angel'[15]—has facilitated this understanding of the word אלים in a passage that most modern lexica take to mean 'terebinth trees'.[16]

If so, one may begin to understand why a Second Temple scribe would consider it essential to distinguish orthographically between the defective and *plene* spellings of אלי/אילי הצדק in Isa. 61.3.[17] If the head noun is read as the plural of אֵל 'god', then the entire phrase could be taken as a pluralised form of the divine epithet אֱלֹהֵי צִדְקִי (Ps. 4.2), implying that the prophet boldly en-

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[14] Deut. 12.2; 1 Kgs 14.23; 2 Kgs 16.4 || 2 Chron. 28.4; 17.10; Jer. 2.20; 3.6, 13; 17.2; Ezek. 6.13.

[15] In Qumran Hebrew, the term אלים (also spelled אילים) can refer to angelic beings, as is evident from its antithetic parallelism with אנשים 'people, humans' (e.g., 1QM 1.10–11; 4Q511 10.11). Similarly, אֵל is translated once in the Septuagint as ἄγγελος (Job 20.15).

[16] Note that in this particular case, the orthography of the word is safeguarded in the Aleppo Codex by a Masoretic note that compares it to the homographic באלים in Exod. 15.11. Accordingly, Ginsburg (1911, 79) records no manuscript exhibiting *plene* orthography. By contrast, Kennicott (1780, 73) records many *plene* spellings, but this only testifies to the inferior quality of his sources, from a Masoretic point of view.

[17] As far as I am aware, the only scholar who previously entertained this line of thinking—albeit hesitantly, and with no recourse to 4Q66, which was as yet unpublished—is Sanders (1975, 84–85 [= 2019, 51]).

dows the Judaean returnees with qualities and titles that are else-
where reserved exclusively for God. Whether or not the passage
makes such a theological assertion is an exegetical matter that
merits scribal explication, especially in light of the messianic ma-
trix in which the entire passage of Isa. 61.1–4 was interpreted in
the late Second Temple Period.

In Isa. 1.29, the versions treat the word אֵלִ(י)ם similarly to
how they do in Isa. 57.5:

(2)   Isa. 1.29

MT   כִּי יֵבֹשׁוּ מֵאֵילִים אֲשֶׁר חֲמַדְתֶּם
'For you shall be ashamed of the oaks in which you de-
lighted'

1QIsaᵃ   כיא יבושו מאלים אשר חמדתם

LXX   διότι αἰσχυνθήσονται ἐπὶ τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν, ἃ αὐτοὶ ἠβούλοντο
'For they shall be ashamed because of their idols, which they
themselves wanted'

Vulg   *confundentur enim ab idolis quibus sacrificaverunt*
'For they shall be confounded for the idols, to which they
have sacrificed'

Pesh   ܡܛܠ ܕܢܒܗܬܘܢ ܡܢ ܦܬܟܪ̈ܐ ܕܪܓܘ.
'For they will be ashamed of the idols that they coveted'

TJ   אֲרֵי תִבַהֲתוּן מֵאִילָנֵי טָעֲוָתָא דְּחַמֵּידְתּוּן
'For ye shall be ashamed of the trees of the idols which ye
have desired'

In this case, too, the ancient translators apparently took the word
as the plural of 'god', interpreting it as a reference to 'idols' in
accordance with the context. It is no coincidence, then, that while

the MT exhibits *plene* spelling (אֵילִים),[18] 1QIsaᵃ uncharacteristi-
cally features here defective spelling (אלים).[19] It stands to reason
that 1QIsaᵃ's form is no mere matter of alternative orthography;
rather, the defective spelling is meant to convey a particular lex-
ical identification of the word in question, interpreting it in line
with the other versions.

Intriguingly, the orthographic disagreement between the
MT and 1QIsaᵃ is matched by a translational debate within the
Greek tradition. While the Septuagint translates "over their idols"
(ἐπὶ τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν), two later revisions offer alternative ren-
ditions. Symmachus translates מאלים as ἀπὸ τῶν δρυμῶν 'from the
forests'. This translation is matched by the double rendition of-
fered by Targum Jonathan: מֵאִילָנֵי טָעֲוָתָא 'from the trees of idols'.
These two are the earliest witnesses to the interpretation of the

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[18] In the Aleppo Codex, however, this word is not safeguarded by a Mas-
oretic note. Kennicott (1780, 3) and Ginsburg (1911b, 7) record some
orthographic fluctuation.

[19] Admittedly, Kutscher (1974, 152–53) highlights inconsistency in the
use of *yod* as a *mater lectionis* in 1QIsaᵃ, but his discussion includes spell-
ings of different vowels (both *i* and *e*) of all sorts of historical origins
(including historical diphthongs). As a matter of fact, 1QIsaᵃ testifies to
only one word in which $*ay > ē$ is spelled defectively, namely, the plu-
ral forms of 'egg': בצים (9.29) || MT בֵּיצִים (10.14), בצי... מבציהמה (48.15–
16, and so also 1QIsaᵇ 25.21–22) || MT בֵּיצֵי... מִבֵּיצֵיהֶם (Isa. 59.5). Cf. MT
הַבֵּיצִים (Deut. 22.6) versus בֹּצִֿים (4QpaleoDeutʳ [4Q45] 27–29.6; *DJD* 9,
143 and pl. XXXV); 11QTᵃ 65.3. The widespread defective spelling
might suggest a variant vocalisation of the word (e.g., *bāṣīm* rather than
bēṣīm from SG *bēṣɔ < *bayṣā*; see Bauer and Leander 1922, 202, §17l).

term אֵ(י)לִים as 'trees' and the only ones among the ancient versions. More important for our concerns is Aquila, who translates ἀπὸ [τῶν] ἰσχυρῶν 'from the mighty ones'.

This term can be compared to the Greek version of 2 Kgs (4 Kgdms) 24.15, in which it renders the phrase אֵילֵי הָאָרֶץ 'the chiefs (or noblemen) of the land':

(3) 2 Kgs (4 Kgdms) 24.15

MT וְאֶת אוּלֵי (אֵילֵי) הָאָרֶץ הוֹלִיךְ גּוֹלָה מִירוּשָׁלַם בָּבֶלָה
'and the elite of the land, he took into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon'

LXX αἰ τοὺς ἰσχυροὺς τῆς γῆς ἀπήγαγεν ἀποικεσίαν ἐξ Ιερουσαλημ εἰς Βαβυλῶνα
'And the strong men of the land he led away as a colony from Ierousalem to Babylon'

Vulg *et iudices terrae duxit in captivitatem de Hierusalem in Babylonem*
'and the judges of the land he carried into captivity, from Jerusalem, into Babylon'

Pesh ܘܠܩܘܪ̈ܒܢܐ ܕܐܪܥܐ. ܘܐܘܒܠ ܐܢܘܢ ܒܫܒܝܬܐ ܡܢ ܐܘܪܫܠܡ ܠܒܒܠ
'and the noblemen of the land: he took them into exile, from Jerusalem, to Babylon'

TJ וְיָת רַברְבֵי אַרעָא אוֹבֵיל בְּגָלוּתָא מִירוּשׁלַם לְבָבֶל
'and the chiefs of the land he took away in exile from Jerusalem to Babylon'

Historically, the social term אֵילֵי הָאָרֶץ appears to be semantically derived from אַיִל in the sense of 'ram', just as the social term אַלּוּף originally denoted 'bull', but subsequently shifted to the sense of 'chief' (e.g., Gen. 36.15–19; Zech. 12.5–6)—semantic changes that betray the socio-economic background of the ancient, seminomadic Israelite society, in which social status and symbolic capital depended on one's possession of herds of sheep

and cattle. At any rate, the term אֵילֵי הָאָרֶץ is correctly understood by all the versions as denoting the high officials of the Judahite kingdom.

The phrase recurs in another passage, Ezek. 17.13, and is similarly translated:

(4)　　　Ezek. 17.13

　MT　　וְאֶת אֵילֵי הָאָרֶץ לָקָח

　　　　　'He had taken away the chief men of the land'

　LXX　καὶ τοὺς ἡγουμένους τῆς γῆς λήμψεται

　　　　　'And he shall take the chief men of the land'

　Vulg　*sed et fortes terrae tollet*

　　　　　'Yea, and he shall take away the mighty men of the land'

　Pesh　ܘܗܒ ܠܥܠܝܟ (ܠܥܠܝܟܐ) ܕܐܪܥܐ

　　　　　'He carried off the rulers of the land'

　TJ　　וְיָת רַבְרְבֵי אַרעָא דְבַר

　　　　　The nobles of the land he carried off (Levey)

The only difference between this and the previous passage is that the Greek and Latin versions switched their lexical preferences: this time, the Septuagint employs a political term (ἡγούμενος), whereas the Vulgate selects an adjective meaning 'mighty one' (*fortis*).

Noteworthy for our concerns is the fact that in both occurrences of אֵילֵי הָאָרֶץ, the governing noun is spelled *plene* (in 2 Kgs 24.15 there is an inter-Masoretic interchange between *waw* and *yod*).[20] This fact suggests that Aquila's *Vorlage* in Isa. 1.29 was similar to the MT, and not to 1QIsaᵃ.

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[20] No defective spellings are recorded by Ginsburg for 2 Kgs 24.15 (1911a, 427) and Ezek. 17.13 (1911b, 250). Kennicott, however, records the defective spelling אלי for Ezek. 17.13 (1780, 194).

Equipped with this evidence, we are now in a position to return to our passage, Isa. 61.3:

(5)   Isa. 61.3

MT   וְקֹרָא לָהֶם אֵילֵי הַצֶּדֶק מַטַּע יְהוָה לְהִתְפָּאֵר:

'They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lᴏʀᴅ, to display his glory'

1QIsaᵃ   וקראו להמה אילי הצדק מטע יהוה להתפאר

4QIsaᵐ   [וק]רֹא להם א'לֹי הצֹדק [מטע יהוה להתפאר]

LXX   καὶ κληθήσονται γενεαὶ δικαιοσύνης, φύτευμα κυρίου εἰς δόξαν.

'They will be called generations of righteousness, a plant of the Lord for glory'

Vulg   *et vocabuntur in ea fortes iustitiae plantatio Domini ad glorificandum*

'and they shall be called in it the mighty ones of justice, the planting of the Lord to glorify him'

Pesh   ܢܬܩܪܘܢ ܕܟܪܐ ܕܙܕܝܩܘܬܐ. ܢܨܒ ܕܡܪܝܐ ܕܫܒܝܚܐ ܡܫܒܚܐ.

'They will be called "The rams of righteousness," the Lord's praiseworthy plant'

TJ   וְיִקְרוֹן לְהוֹן רַבְרְבֵי קֻשְׁטָא עַמֵּיה דַיוי לְאִשְׁתַּבָחָא

'and they shall call them princes of righteousness, the people of the Lord, that he may be glorified'

As we have seen, the two other occurrences of the word that medieval and modern lexica and commentaries take as 'trees' were almost uniformly interpreted by the versions as false 'gods', in accordance with their context. In this case, however, the versions present anything but uniformity, probably because the phrase אֵילֵי הַצֶּדֶק is patently applied to humans, namely, the prophet's addressees.

First, the fact that 1QIsaᵃ exhibits the *plene* spelling, just as the MT does,[21] is likely related to the Vulgate and Targum Jonathan's preference for taking the phrase אֵילֵי הַצֶּדֶק in (5) in much the same way they understand אֵילֵי הָאָרֶץ in (3)–(4), i.e., as referring to the political elite.[22] Next, the Peshiṭta translates ܕܟܐ ܙܕܝܩܘܬܐ, also presupposing the *plene* spelling, but interpreting it literally, as 'rams', rather than figuratively, as 'chiefs'. Finally, the Septuagint anomalously translates "generations of righteousness" (γενεαὶ δικαιοσύνης).[23]

The two Greek components of this phrase recur in Isaiah in only one other place, Isa. 51.8, in which God speaks in the first person: ἡ δὲ δικαιοσύνη μου εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἔσται, τὸ δὲ σωτήριόν μου εἰς γενεὰς γενεῶν 'but my righteousness will be forever, and my salvation for generations of generations', which is an apt translation

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[21] The word is not safeguarded by a Masoretic note in the Aleppo Codex. According to Ginsburg (1911b, 85), most manuscripts and editions of the MT employ the *plene* spelling; the defective spelling is recorded in only very few late sources (cf. Kennicott 1780, 79).

[22] Interestingly, in his commentary on Isaiah, Jerome supplies a transcription of the Hebrew word, *ele*, commenting that "each syllable is lengthened" (Scheck 2015, 787; for the Latin original, *vel iuxta Hebraicum ele, per extensam utramque syllabam*, see Adriaen 1963, 708). This comment explicitly refers only to the pronunciation of the word as [ʔeːleː], but does it also imply that both vowels were spelled *plene* (i.e., אילי) in Jerome's *Vorlage*, as in the MT and 1QIsaᵃ?

[23] Ottley (1904–1906, 2:369) comments that γενεαὶ is "To explain 'oaks,' here as 'an emblem of the life of the righteous' (Skinner)," but this is very forced. Penner (2020, 629) does not comment on the perplexing Greek phrase.

of an MT-like Hebrew text: וְצִדְקָתִי לְעוֹלָם תִּהְיֶה וִישׁוּעָתִי לְדוֹר דּוֹרִים 'but my deliverance (lit. my righteousness) will be forever, and my salvation to all generations'. This verbal similarity suggests that the translator's point is theological, implying that the prophet's words in Isa. 61.3 ("They will be called generations of righteousness, a plant of the Lord for glory") echo God's soteriological promise in Isa. 51.8. The divine righteousness, in other words, will be revealed as being realised in the destiny of his people; the title by which the people will be known among the nations reflects God's essence as a righteous saviour.[24]

One cannot help wondering whether this complicated doctrinal construction is meant to cope with a theologically perplexing assertion that the translator may have found in his *Vorlage*. Is it possible that it indirectly reflects a phrase such as אֵלֵי הַצֶּדֶק, as recorded in the original reading of 4Q66? Such a phrase would literally mean 'gods of righteousness', which is theologically challenging not only because of the plural form, but also due to its application to flesh-and-blood Judaeans. Is it possible that the Greek rendition is an attempt to accommodate what the translator perceived as a baffling application of a divine epithet to the people of Yehud? If so, the Septuagint suggests how the presence

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[24] For alternative explanations, see Baer (2001, 195–96, followed by Spans 2012, 55); Kagan (2018, 21–23, this section was omitted from the published version of his MA thesis). In the latter's view, the Greek rendition reflects a correct interpretation of the Hebrew phrase in the sense of 'rightful heirs', equating אֵילֵי הַצֶּדֶק with צֶמַח צְדָקָה (Jer. 23.5), and taking the *nomen regens* as a reference to offspring (lit. 'plant, tree'), while the *nomen rectum* refers to their right of inheritance.

or absence of even a single *yod* can play a pivotal role in the exegetical reception of the passage. Since the Greek translator's *Vorlage* is not directly accessible, this proposal is regrettably bound to remain hypothetical.

4.0. Conclusion

Regardless of the interpretation of the Greek version, which remains something of a mystery, there is sufficient evidence for the claim that by adding *yod*, the corrector of 4Q66 (possibly identical with the original scribe) was attempting to prevent his readers from construing the word אֵ(יִ)לֵי as 'gods' or 'divine beings', pushing them to whatever other sense this term could have in its present context.[25] Underlying this correction, then, is the idea that the entire theological meaning of a scriptural passage might hinge on the scribal care for a single *yod*. It is thus our scholarly duty not to neglect even this seemingly slight textual variant, as it has the potential to reveal the underlying linguistic motivations and ideological concerns of ancient scribal traditions.

Such a notion should come as no surprise to scholars of Second Temple Judaism and nascent Christianity, since another manifestation of it, albeit in a different context and with greater emphasis on the Law rather than to the Prophets, is found in Jesus's famous words in the Sermon on the Mount: "Do not think

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[25] Unfortunately, the *plene* spelling remains intrinsically ambiguous, so that one cannot be certain which particular homonym was preferred by the scribe: 'rams', 'chiefs', or 'trees', as all these meanings could be assigned to the spelling אילי, and are, indeed, recorded in the versions surveyed above.

that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I say to you: till heaven and earth pass away, not even *one iota or one stroke of a letter* (ἰῶτα ἓν, ἢ μία κεραία) will pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Matt. 5.17–20).[26]

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[26] For the Hebrew terms יוד and קוץ underlying the Greek phrase, see Kister (2021).

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