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Abstract Review of *The Book of Isaiah: A New Translation with Interpretive Keys from the Book of Mormon* (1988), by Avraham Gileadi.

Avraham Gileadi, *The Book of Isaiah: A New Translation with Interpretive Keys from the Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988. xviii + 250 pp., selected bibliography and index of terms. Hard cover \$19.95, paperback \$9.95.

Reviewed by Donald W. Parry

The Book of Isaiah: A New Translation with Interpretive Keys from the Book of Mormon contains a five-page foreword by Ellis T. Rasmussen, Dean Emeritus, Religious Instruction, Brigham Young University; a four-page preface, wherein the author is introduced; and a 93-page introduction, followed by a new translation of the book of Isaiah. This review will examine two aspects of the book: (1) the author's interpretive keys for understanding Isaiah, and (2) the author's new translation of the book of Isaiah.

Gileadi's Interpretive Keys

In his introduction, the author establishes four interpretive keys for understanding Isaiah. The four keys are the (1) "spirit of prophecy," (2) the "letter of prophecy," (3) "searching," and (4) "types" (p. 1). The four keys, which have been extracted from the Book of Mormon, are powerful and profitable keys, and Gileadi should be credited for reminding the book's readers that the keys exist, as other authors who have preceded Gileadi have also done.¹ It is my opinion, however, that Gileadi's comments regarding his interpretive keys lack completeness.

For instance, in his identification of the "letter of prophecy," Gileadi identifies a number of prophetic literary types which are extant in Isaiah (pp. 18-20). These include the prophetic lawsuit, messenger speech, woe oracle, prophetic lament, priestly sermon, parable (or, more correctly, allegory), and the song of salvation. I am in agreement with Gileadi that one who attempts to understand the mechanical structure of Isaiah must have a knowledge of these forms of speech. In fact,

¹ A number of authors have written concerning keys for the understanding of Isaiah. See, for instance, Bruce R. McConkie, "Ten Keys to Understanding Isaiah," *Ensign* 3 (1973): 78-83. Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, Poet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 7-18; Monte S. Nyman, *Great Are the Words of Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 8-14.

any careful examination of Isaiah will be greatly enhanced if the type of literature being read is both identified and understood. Gileadi's list of prophetic literary forms, however, is far from complete. He fails to mention a number of equally valid prophetic speech patterns which are found in Isaiah. Gileadi's list lacks the commission formula (see, for instance, Isaiah 6:9), the proclamation formula (Isaiah 28:23; 49:1), the oath formula (Isaiah 14:24; 62:8; 45:23), the revelation formula (Isaiah 7:3; 8:3; 21:16), the judgment oracle (Isaiah 3:12; 29:13-14), the recognition formula (Isaiah 45:3; 49:23), the prophetic call narrative (Isaiah 6:1-13), prophetic symbolic actions (Isaiah 20:1-6), prophetic lawsuit (Isaiah 1:2-3, 18-20), and the prophetic vision (Isaiah 6).²

In an analogous area Gileadi is quite correct in explaining a mechanical poetic device called parallelism employed by many of the Hebrew prophets. Certainly no one can become well versed in Isaianic materials without first understanding parallelistic structure. Gileadi details information concerning synonymous parallelism, antithetical parallelism, and chiasmus, all prominent poetic forms in the book of Isaiah (pp. 20-23). He ignores other less well known but equally relevant poetic devices and structures, such as *anabasis* (a staircase parallelism where the sense increases in successive sentences; see, for example, Isaiah 1:4), *catabasis* (a staircase parallelism where the sense decreases in successive sentences; see Isaiah 40:31), and extended alternate parallelism (see Isaiah 8:14; 7:1; 2:5).³

To understand Isaiah it is essential to have a grasp of scriptural symbolism. Gileadi introduces the idea of symbolism in his section on Isaianic metaphors (pp. 23-33). Apparently, the author has denominated all symbolic forms as "metaphor"—an unfortunate, misleading, and inaccurate classification. "Metaphor" is but one of a number of symbolic figures of speech belonging under the large umbrella called "symbolism," and the work could have been strengthened by detailing the various essential symbolic forms found in Isaiah. In an introduction to the book of Isaiah, why not include the following symbolic forms—simile (Latin, *similis*, "like" or "similar," a

² For a treatment of these prophetic forms and others, see David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 81-101.

³ For expository remarks concerning parallel structures in the biblical writings see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1987), 349-56.

declaration that one thing resembles another), simple metaphor (a brief statement, by way of comparison, that one thing represents another), metonymy ("calling a thing by the name of something typically associated with it, e.g., the Bench the stage, the turf, the bottle may stand for magistrates, the theatrical profession, horseracing, and alcoholic liquor"),⁴ synecdoche ("figure of speech in which a part is used for a whole, an individual for a class, a material for a thing, or the reverse of any of these"),⁵ implication (a statement that contains an implied resemblance), personification (the ascription of intelligence or other human qualities to nonhuman objects and things), idiom (an expression or set of words which is unique to a specific group or people), and esoterica (words intended to be understood by the initiated, the inner group of a religious persuasion)? The book of Isaiah is literally replete with examples of each of these forms.

Perhaps if the author had used these symbolic forms in his study of Isaiah, he would not have misinterpreted some very important scriptural symbols such as "mountain" (p. 44), "ensign," "staff," "hand of the Lord," "arm of the Lord," and "righteousness" (pp. 24-33).

Gileadi's work includes a category entitled "Scriptural Links" (pp. 54-65). Scriptural links, according to the author, are verses or sections from the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants which "draw substantially on the language and concepts of Isaiah" (p. 54). The reader can benefit greatly through the study of scriptural links, and enhance his/her understanding of Isaiah. Gileadi cites D&C 113 as an example of a scriptural link, a scripture which provides elaborate commentary on parts of Isaiah 11. Other examples provided by the author prove to be equally helpful.

What proves puzzling, however, is why Gileadi fails to mention the Book of Mormon text of Isaiah in his twelve-page section on scriptural links. Several Book of Mormon chapters (see especially 1 Nephi 20-21, 2 Nephi 12-24), drawn from the brass plates of Laban, represent the earliest known extant chapters of Isaiah. The chapters predate by centuries other known texts of Isaiah, including the Masoretic Text, the Septuagint, the Dead Sea Scroll editions of Isaiah, and the

⁴ G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 136.

⁵ *Webster's New World Dictionary*, 1444.

Aquila, Symmachus, Theodosian, Syriac, Targums, Vulgate, Old Latin, Sahidic, Coptic, Ethiopic, Arabic, and Armenian texts of the Bible. This fact in and of itself should lend heavy significance to all scholars from the schools of biblical criticism, for, were they to pay attention to the Isaianic chapters of the Book of Mormon, they would alter their historical critical views of the Hebrew Bible (i.e., who authored Isaiah, etc.). In my opinion, the Isaianic chapters represented in the Book of Mormon are the most accurate and exact sections of Isaiah in existence. This opinion is formed due to the fact that the Isaiah text of the Book of Mormon provides a number of elucidatory additions, deletions, and changes to the Isaiah text of the Hebrew Bible. It should be stated that the well-known expression of Joseph Smith that the Book of Mormon is "the most correct of any book on earth"⁶ is equally applicable to the Isaiah chapters found within the covers of the Book of Mormon. The following chart demonstrates some of the significant changes found in the Book of Mormon Isaiah, when juxtaposed with the King James Version.⁷ See Table 1 for examples illustrative of scores of changes which could be cited.⁸

Inasmuch as Gileadi's book was written for a Latter-day Saint audience, it should have included representations from the Book of Mormon Isaiah. At the very least the Book of Mormon Isaiah could have been represented in Gileadi's new translation in the form of a separate column juxtaposed by the Gileadi translation, or perhaps represented in parentheses, footnotes, or endnotes. The title chosen by the author—*The Book of Isaiah: A New Translation with Interpretive Keys from the Book of Mormon*—suggests incorporation of the Book of Mormon Isaiah, but it is nowhere to be found.

A comparable notable oversight in Gileadi's work pertains to the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST). The JST represents Joseph Smith's inspired deletions and changes to the

⁶ DHC 4:461; also TPJS, 194.

⁷ I utilize the King James Version of the Bible here so that the reader can easily and readily ascertain the additions, deletions, and changes found in the Book of Mormon text of Isaiah.

⁸ For a scholarly treatment of the Book of Mormon Isaiah text, see John A. Tvedtnes, "The Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon," F.A.R.M.S. paper, 1981.

Chapter	King James Version	Book of Mormon	Significant Alterations
Isa 6:8 2 Ne 16:8	"but understand not"	"they understood not"	Clarifies that the people did not understand, <i>not</i> Isaiah
Isa 2:2 2 Ne 12:2	"that the mountain of the Lord's house"	"when the mountain of the Lord's house"	the change infers a time
Isa 2:12 2 Ne 12:12	"day of the Lord of Hosts"	"day of the Lord of Hosts soon cometh"	indicates day will come soon
Isa 13:4 2 Ne 23:4	"a multitude"	"the multitude"	a definite rather than indefinite multitude
Isa 14:2 2 Ne 24:2	nonexistent	"yea, from far unto the ends of the earth; and they shall return to their lands of promise"	significant explanatory addition not found in the KJV
Isa 14:25 2 Ne 24:25	"That I will break the Assyrian"	"That I will bring the Assyrian"	Lord will bring Assyrian into his land, <i>not</i> break the Assyrian
Isa 29:7 2 Ne 27:3	"nations that fight against Ariel"	"nations that fight against Zion"	Ariel is referred to as Zion
Isa 48:1 1 Ne 20:1	"or out of waters of Judah"	"out of waters of Judah, or out of the waters of baptism"	the addition completes an extended synonymous parallelism in this verse. Also explains the meaning of "waters of Judah"
Isa 48:2 1 Ne 20:2	"stay themselves upon the God of Israel"	"they do not stay themselves upon the God of Israel"	presents the opposite meaning with the negation "not"

Table 1. Book of Mormon Isaiah Compared with the King James Version

biblical text.⁹ Again, at the very least, the JST deserves mention in a Latter-day Saint scholarly work that pertains to the Bible. The JST adds a wealth of information to the book of Isaiah (see, for example, the contributory changes recorded in JST Isaiah 2:5-6, 11-15; 14:2-4; 29:1-32; 42:19-23; 50:1-8; and elsewhere). The JST should be considered of inestimable value to students of the biblical writings—never ignored and never overlooked.

While reviewing Gileadi's introduction, it was impossible not to notice that the author holds a hobbyist approach to the book of Isaiah. One specific topic that is perhaps unduly emphasized pertains to the "Davidic king." For example, Gileadi writes about the Davidic king within the section entitled "Governing Structures," again under the section "Metaphors," yet again under the section entitled "Rhetorical Connections," again within the section called "Zion and Babylon," again under the heading "Scriptural Links," yet again under the title "Assyria and Egypt," again within the category "Applying the Interpretive Keys," and once again in his "Conclusion." In fact, the expression "Davidic king" is mentioned some 137 times in his introduction, and pseudonyms (as set forth by Gileadi) for the Davidic king—*ensign, staff, hand of the Lord, arm of the Lord, and righteousness* (pp. 24-33)—are attested on several additional occasions. This faddish approach to the book of Isaiah raises an important question: Why does Gileadi emphasize the Davidic king to the neglect of other Isaianic sections of great import, such as the pericopes dealing with Jesus the Messiah, the role of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon in the latter days, the restoration of the gospel, the scattering and gathering of Israel, the signs of the Second Coming, or the millennium? Unfortunately, this question remains unanswered.

Another item comes to mind when one reads Gileadi's introduction. Gileadi's theology is heavily influenced by his rabbinic training (see, for example, pp. xiv-vxi, 2, 5). Gileadi himself points out that, before his conversion to Mormonism, "my studies took me to an orthodox religious kibbutz, at which time I was formally received into the Jewish faith" (p. xiv). The

⁹ Regarding the subject of the JST, one should note Robert J. Matthews, *A Plainer Translation: Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible, A History and Commentary* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975).

author's rabbinic training holds great sway in his thinking, as can be demonstrated by his frequent mention of his "rabbinic schools" (p. 4), "the Jewish method," and the "Jewish manner" (p. 5). The author claims that it was "from the time I was in rabbinic school, when I began to understand Isaiah" (p. 2). That Gileadi was indeed influenced by the rabbinical methods of biblical exegesis and hermeneutics is apparent throughout his introductory commentary. For instance, one can discern the influence of rabbinics on page 7, where Gileadi employs a rabbinic numerical tool called *gematria*. Gematria is a cryptographic term referring to numerical values and hidden meanings. Although gematria is attested as early as Sargon II (727-707 B.C.), where an inscription states that the wall of Khorsabad was built 16,283 cubits long, corresponding to the name of the king, gematria did not appear among the Jews until the second century A.D.¹⁰ There is absolutely no evidence that Isaiah or any of the Israelite prophets utilized gematria. While some early rabbinic sages worked with gematria, mainstream Jewry has never considered gematria to be a valid scholarly tool, and the concept is even criticized by such notable Jewish scholars as Abraham ibn Ezra and Nachmanides.¹¹ Saul Lieberman, for example, writing concerning the thirty-two hermeneutic rules of the Aggadah (of which gematria is one of the thirty-two), makes reference to their being "very artificial and far-fetched."¹² Further, while studying at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem during the years 1986-87, I did not find ready acceptance of the concept of gematria among my Jewish professors.

Gileadi's Translation

The following represents my approach to comprehending Gileadi's new translation of the book of Isaiah: I juxtaposed the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) and the *Biblia Hebraica Kittel* (BHK) editions of the Masoretic Text (Hebrew Bible) next to Gileadi's translation of Isaiah and carefully compared, contrasted, and noted the similarities and differences between the two works. Strict attention was paid to the so-called critical apparatus of the Hebrew Bible, which in the case of the BHS book of Isaiah was prepared by D. Winton Thomas in 1968, and

¹⁰ Gershom Scholem, "Gematria," in *Encyclopedia Judaica* 7:369.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), 68.

in the case of the BHK book of Isaiah was prepared by Rudolf Kittel. The critical apparatus offers variant readings from a variety of ancient manuscripts, including the Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, and a number of others. When appropriate, I referred to Brown, Driver, and Briggs's *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* and Koehler and Baumgartner's *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*,¹³ two estimable lexicons of the Hebrew Bible. While I arbitrarily examined a number of chapters from Gileadi's new translation, lack of space will not allow for more than a brief look at my findings. Table 2 represents a comparison of Gileadi's translation of Isaiah 54 with the equivalent text of the Hebrew Bible.¹⁴

Isa	Hebrew	Preferred reading	Gileadi's translation	Comments
54:1	ḥālāh	"you did not become weak"	"you were not in labor"	interpretive
54:1	kî	"because," "for," "since"	omitted	important motive clause
54:1	wāw	"and"	omitted	see below
54:2	yaṭtû	"let them extend"	"extend"	verb is a jussive, not second person imperative
54:2	wāw	"and"	omitted	see below
54:3	wāw	"and"	omitted	see below
54:4	wāw	"neither"	omitted	see below
54:4	taḥppîrî	"display shame"	"be disgraced"	Translates active verb as a passive
54:4	kî	"because," "for," "since"	omitted	important motive clause
54:5	wāw	"and"	omitted	see below
54:5	yiqqārē ²	"will be called"	"who is called"	translates imperfect into present tense.
54:6	kî	"because," "for," "since"	omitted	important motive clause

¹³ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. Edward Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977); Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: Brill, 1953).

¹⁴ My thanks to Andrew L. Fike for his research conducted on chapter 54 of Isaiah.

Isa	Hebrew	Preferred reading	Gileadi's translation	Comments
54:6	non-existent		"back"	adds word "back"; misleading
54:6	wāw	"and"	omitted	see below
54:7	qātôn	"small"	"indeed"	inaccurate
54:8	rihamtî	"I have compassion"	"I will have mercy"	perfect verbal form, habitual, not imperfect
54:9	kî	"because," "for," "since"	omitted	important motive clause
54:9	nišbba'î	"I have sworn"	"I swear"	perfect verbal form, not participle
54:11	'anîyāh	"afflicted"	"poor wretch"	inaccurate
54:11	hinnēh	"behold, here"	omitted	deictic interjection
54:12	wāw	"and"	omitted	see below
54:12	wāw	"and"	omitted	see below
54:13	wāw	"and"	omitted	see below
54:14	kî	"because," "for," "since"	omitted	important motive clause
54:14	tūrā'î	"you will not fear"	"have no cause to fear"	verbal form is imperfect, not imperative
54:15	hēn	"behold"	omitted	deictic interjection
54:15	yāgûr	"he shall gather"	"those who gather"	makes a singular into a plural
54:15	gôr	"certainly," "surely," "indeed"	omitted	see below
54:16	hēn	"behold"	omitted	deictic interjection
54:16	wāw	"and"	omitted	see below
54:16	klî	"weapon," "instrument," "vessel"	"weapons"	places a plural for a singular noun
54:16	wāw	"and"	omitted	see below
54:17	wāw	"and"	omitted	see below
54:17	taršî'î	"condemn"	"refute"	inaccurate

Table 2. Comparison of Gileadi's translation with the Hebrew Bible

In addition to the notes in column five in the chart above, a few general comments are appropriate.

1. In Isaiah 54, Gileadi omits the conjunction *wāw*, on twelve occasions, from his English translation. This Hebrew word possesses both conjunctive and disjunctive qualities and therefore functions in a variety of ways. As a conjunction, the *wāw* is usually translated as "and." One of the central functions of "and" is to conjoin or bind a sentence, passage, or verse together into a central thought or unified idea. As a disjunction, the *wāw* may be translated as a contrastive element (i.e., "but"; see Genesis 40:21), as a parenthetical element (see 1 Samuel 1:9), as a circumstantial element (i.e., "while"; see Genesis 37:15), and a terminative element (i.e., "now"; see Genesis 3:1). The role of the *wāw* in the Hebrew clause is significant and should not be ignored.

2. Gileadi omits the conjunction *kī* five times in Isaiah 54. Normally translated into English as "because," "for," "since," or "that," *kī* plays a significant role in any text. In the Hebrew Bible, *kī* often introduces a motive clause, or explains the "why" of a given phrase.¹⁵ Similar to the *wāw*, the conjunction *kī* plays an important role in Hebrew writings.

3. The translator also omits the translation of the terms *hēn*, *hinnēh*, and *gôr* each once. *Hēn* and *hinnēh* are deictic interjections which call attention to or add emphasis to the word or words which succeed them. They are commonly translated as "behold" or "here."¹⁶ The term *gôr* is an infinitive absolute form. The Hebrew infinitive absolute is a uninflected verbal form that functions primarily as an adverb. In the instance of Isaiah 54:15, *gôr* functions to emphasize the finite verb that immediately succeeds it. It should be translated as "indeed," "surely," "certainly," or the like.

4. Gileadi's translation of the word *ʿanîyāh* in Isaiah 54:11 as "poor wretch" is misleading. The dictionary translates "wretch" as a "very unfortunate or miserable person," or a "despicable person."¹⁷ In my opinion, Isaiah is not attempting to portray a miserable or despicable person, but an afflicted

¹⁵ On the importance of the motive clause see B. Gemser, "The Importance of the Motive Clause in Old Testament Law," in *Congress Volume* (Leiden: Brill, 1953), 50-66.

¹⁶ Koehler and Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, 238-39.

¹⁷ *Oxford American Dictionary*, 1080.

person. The translation "O you afflicted" better fits the context of Isaiah 54.

5. On a number of occasions, Gileadi chose the wrong verbal tense. Admittedly, some flexibility exists in translating Hebrew verbs, but caution should be maintained.

Does Gileadi's new translation of Isaiah represent a contribution to our understanding of the book of Isaiah? Does the quality and integrity of his translation surpass other notable English translations of Isaiah, such as the King James Version, the Jerusalem Bible, the New International Version, or others? In my opinion, Gileadi's translation does not represent a better translation. While Gileadi should be extended great credit for his interest in the Hebrew language, his love of the writings of Isaiah, and his attentiveness to the scriptures, students of Isaiah would gain more by studying the Isaianic sections of the Book of Mormon, the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, and the King James Version than by studying Gileadi's new translation of Isaiah.