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### Worthy of Another Look: The *Great Isaiah Scroll* and the Book of Mormon

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**Title** Worthy of Another Look: The *Great Isaiah Scroll* and the Book of Mormon

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**Abstract** Numerous differences exist between the Isaiah passages in the Book of Mormon and the corresponding passages in the King James Version of the Bible. The *Great Isaiah Scroll* supports several of these differences found in the Book of Mormon. Five parallel passages in the Isaiah scroll, the Book of Mormon, and the King James Version of the Bible are compared to illustrate the Book of Mormon's agreement with the Isaiah scroll.

# THE *GREAT ISAIAH SCROLL* AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

DONALD W. PARRY AND STEPHEN D. RICKS

This material first appeared in Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Questions and Responses for Latter-day Saints* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 44-46 (question 35).

**Does the text of the *Great Isaiah Scroll* support the Isaiah passages in the Book of Mormon that differ from those in the King James Bible?**

The Book of Mormon contains lengthy quotations from Isaiah (see, for example, 2 Nephi 12-24). In many instances the wording of corresponding Isaiah passages in the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) and in the Book of Mormon differs. To date, no one has completed a comprehensive study comparing the Isaiah scroll from Cave 1 with the Isaiah passages in the Book of Mormon. In 1981, however, John Tvedtnes conducted a serviceable preliminary study by comparing the Isaiah passages in the Book of Mormon with those in the KJV, the Hebrew Bible, the scrolls found at Qumran (notably the *Great Isaiah Scroll*,

which contains all sixty-six chapters of Isaiah), and other ancient versions of Isaiah.<sup>1</sup> Several readings of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon are supported by the Isaiah scroll. The following representative examples of these parallels have been adapted from Tvedtnes's work.

1. In many cases passages in the Isaiah scroll and in the Book of Mormon contain the conjunction *and*, which is lacking in the corresponding KJV text. Compare the following:

“and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not” (KJV, Isaiah 3:9)

“and they declare their sin as Sodom, *and* they hide it not” (Isaiah scroll, Isaiah 3:9)

“and doth declare their sin to be even as Sodom, *and* they cannot hide it” (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 13:9 = Isaiah 3:9)

## FROM THE EDITOR:

Since the discovery of the Isaiah scrolls among the Qumran texts, the scholarly world has made extensive studies of the various Isaiah textual families—that is, groups of ancient Isaiah texts that seem to come from a common source. The Isaiah passages in the Book of Mormon on numerous occasions do not line up with the Hebrew text behind the King James translation of Isaiah, as the article by Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks demonstrates on a small scale. Contrary to the gainsayers of the Book of Mormon who claim that Joseph Smith simply copied from the King James Bible, the Book of Mormon version of Isaiah belongs to a different textual family than the Masoretic text of Isaiah behind the King James translation.









Parry with *Great Isaiah Scroll* at Shrine of the Book, Jerusalem, 2009.

2. Second Nephi 24:32 lacks the word *one*, which appears in Isaiah 14:32. The Book of Mormon version thus makes *messengers* the subject of the verb *answer*. The Hebrew Bible uses a singular verb, but the Isaiah scroll uses the plural, in agreement with the Book of Mormon:

“What shall *one* then answer [sing.] the messengers of the nation?” (KJV, Isaiah 14:32)

“What shall then *answer* [pl.] the messengers of the nations?” (Isaiah scroll, Isaiah 14:32)

“What shall then *answer* [pl.] the messengers of the nations?” (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 24:32 = Isaiah 14:32)

3. In the KJV, Isaiah 48:11 reads, “for how should my name be polluted?” while 1 Nephi 20:11 reads, “for I will not suffer my name to be polluted.” The Isaiah scroll supports the Book of Mormon by having the verb in the first person, as follows:

“for how should my name be polluted?” (KJV, Isaiah 48:11)

“for how can *I* be polluted” (Isaiah scroll, Isaiah 48:11)

“for *I will not suffer* my name to be polluted” (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 20:11 = Isaiah 48:11)

4. In the KJV, Isaiah 50:2 reads, “their fish stinketh, because there is no water,” and the Isaiah scroll reads, “their fish dry up because there is no water.” Second Nephi 7:2 essentially preserves the

verb *stinketh* from the KJV and the phrasal verb *dry up* from the Isaiah scroll: “their fish to stink because the waters are dried up.”

5. Often a singular noun in the KJV is represented by a plural noun in the Book of Mormon. One example of this appears in Isaiah 9:9, where the KJV reads “inhabitant” and 2 Nephi 19:9 reads “inhabitants.” The Isaiah scroll supports the reading of the Book of Mormon with its reading of “inhabitants”:

“and the inhabitant of Samaria” (KJV, Isaiah 9:9)

“and the *inhabitants* of Samaria” (Isaiah scroll, Isaiah 9:9)

“and the *inhabitants* of Samaria” (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 19:9 = Isaiah 9:9)

These examples of variant readings in which the Isaiah passages in the Book of Mormon agree with the Isaiah scroll but not with the KJV could be multiplied. ■



**Donald W. Parry**, PhD and professor of the Hebrew Bible, has served since 1994 as a member of the International Team of Translators of the Dead Sea Scrolls. He researches the scrolls in Jerusalem and then publishes his research in books and articles. He has authored or edited more than thirty books, ten of which are on the scrolls and five on Isaiah.



**Stephen D. Ricks** earned his PhD at the University of California at Berkeley and Graduate Theological Union. He is professor of Hebrew and cognate learning at Brigham Young University. At present he is involved in the Book of Mormon proper names project. Other current research interests include the ancient temple in the Near East and South Asia, pre-Islamic Arabia, and Arab-Muslim stories of the Israelite prophets.

## NOTES

1. John A. Tvedtnes, “Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon” (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1981).