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A Jewish Comment on Elder B.H. Roberts' Treatment of Isaiah xxvi:19

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EXPLANATION

An enthusiastic convert to the faith of the Latter-day Saints forwarded the series of the *Redeemed Hebrew* articles published in December, January, and February, 1926-7 respectively, to a Rev. Max Werthheimer, Ph. D. in the state of Ohio, a Jew converted to Christianity. This gentleman, under date of February 9, 1927, wrote a reproofing letter to this young convert of the Latter-day Saint Church, and referring to the Hebrew articles of Mr. Roberts he said:

"I received your bundle of tracts. Have read most of them. In the *Redeemed Hebrew* Mr. Roberts' reply to the Rabbi's objections to Jesus Christ [December Number, 1926] are neither convincing nor scriptural: For instance his quotation from *Isaiah* xxvi:19: 'Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise.'

"In the first place, the Hebrew simply says 'Thy dead'; and in the second place there is no such a meaning in the texts, as 'with my' 'dead body' 'shall arise'. The Hebrew word simply means 'corpse' there is no 'with my' in the text. Poor exposition!"

The Canadian rabbi writing his objections to the acceptance of Jesus Christ in the December number of the *Redeemed Hebrew*, 1926 (Art. I, this book), never made any reply, or offered any criticism to the articles of Mr. Roberts in the *Redeemed Hebrew*. Another Jew of Ohio made the criticism quoted above, and this criticism I have undertaken to answer in the following article, addressing it as if to "Rasha the Jew", and it is to "Rasha the Jew", but not to the "Rasha" who wrote the first article in this controversy and signed the fictitious name, "Rasha". I feel justified in using this fictitious name

"Rasha" in answering this second Christian Jewish critic that I may not break the unity of the articles and since it is a fictitious name I feel that I do the first "Rasha" no injustice.

ON THE INTERPRETATION OF ISAIAH XXVI:19

"Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: For thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

"Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.

"For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain" (*Isa. xxvi:19-21*).

So you think, "Rasha", (the second), that my interpretation and use of *Isaiah xxvi:19* (including as context from verses 16 to 21), published in my articles in the *Redeemed Hebrew* of December, 1926, is unwarranted; not scholarly; and misrepresents the meaning of Israel's great prophet; that the passage is not a prediction of the incarnation of Jehovah. That the passage is not a prophecy that Jehovah will take on a human body, live an earth life with men, (be Immanuel in fact), and die as men die; be resurrected from the dead; and that many of Israel's saints would be raised from the dead with him, when "the earth shall cast out the dead"? All which is an outline of the Christ's life and earth mission and achievement (See the *New Testament*, passim).

After quoting *Isaiah*—"Thy dead *men* shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise", you say: "In the first place, the Hebrew simply says, 'Thy dead';" and in the second place you say, "There is no such a meaning in the [Hebrew] texts, 'with my dead body shall they arise'." "The Hebrew word", you say, simply means "*corpse*"; "there is no '*with my*' in the text." And then "Rasha", you exclaim: "Poor exposition!"

All right, "Rasha", but let us look into this a little:

First, let me say that I was not unaware of, or unmind-

ful of, the fact, when quoting the passage—*Isaiah* xxvi in the *Redeemed Hebrew* articles as a Messianic prophecy, that there were various readings and translations of Isaiah's text—Jewish, Roman Catholic, Protestant. I noted also that the *Revised Version* of 1881-5 differed from the *Authorized Version* of 1611. I quoted from the latter version as the one more commonly in use among Protestant, English-speaking people; and because the scholarship of those who gave the world the *Authorized Version* has been much lauded and so far respected that it seems to hold its own against the *Revised Version*, though the latter has the novelty of newness, the backing of more recent scholarship, and the efforts of those who by example of use affect the latest in learning, catering to the modern spirit. All this to little or no purpose, however, since the *Authorized Version* of 1611 holds its "pride of place"; and so I used it for that reason—it is in more general use and high standing for scholarship. The 19th verse in that version stands thus:

"Thy dead *men* shall live, *together with* my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew *is* as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

King James' translators, when there were omissions, or obscurities in the original passages, inserted words not in the original text in order to make the meaning more clear,—as in the above case; and to indicate these supplied words they printed them in *italics*. Hence in the above passage the "*men*" of the first line—as the passage stands in the *Authorized Version* of the *Bible*—and the "*together with*" in the first and second lines, (not "*together with my*", as put by you, "Rasha"), are written in *italics* to make the meaning clear. Eliminating these supplied words we have the passage thus—and I suppose it is as nearly the Hebrew literal transliteration as English words can represent it:

"Thy dead shall live * * * My dead body [or corpse] shall they arise * * * and the earth shall cast out the dead."

The International Critical Commentary, (Charles Scribner's Sons, N. Y., 1912, Publishers) under the editorship of the Rev. Charles Augustus Briggs, D. D., Professor of Theological Encyclopædia and Symbolics, Union Theological Seminary, New York, the Rev. Samuel Rolles Driver, D. D., Regius Professor of Hebrew, Oxford, and the Rev. Alfred Plummer, M. A., D. D., Late Master of University College Durham,—*Isaiah*, Vol. I, by George Buchanan Gray, D. D., D. Litt., Professor of Hebrew and *Old Testament Exegesis* in Mansfield College, Oxford, commenting on *Isaiah* xxvi:19 says:

“*Thy dead*] Yahweh is still addressed: Yahweh's dead are those who died loyal to him, or even were slain [hence *Catholic Bible's* translation] for his sake.
* * *

“*Their corpses*] [inserting here reference to an ancient Hebrew reading] *my corpses*, i. e. the dead bodies of the writer's fellow countrymen; but the expression would be unnatural. The writer [*Isaiah*] emphasizes the belief that the actual body that died will be revived, that it is no mere ghost that is to arise.”

The *Commentary on the Authorized Version of the Bible*, by Bishops and other Clergy of the Anglican Church, edited by F. C. Cook, M. A., Canon of Exeter, Preacher at Lincoln's Inn, Chaplain in Ordinary to the Queen (Scribner Armstrong & Co. N. Y., 1875, Publishers) in commenting on *Isaiah* xxvi:19 says:

“This verse is taken by some excellent commentators to be **God's address to the church**. Yet the expression ‘thy dew * * *’ leads one to take it rather as a continuation of the church's supplication’. [Why not Jehovah's answer to Israel through *Isaiah*?] (Targ. distinctly took it so; ‘Thou art he who dost quicken the dead.’” Continuing—“Thy dead men shall live—Though dead they are still thine.”

Observation (by author of the *Commentary*):

“If the land was already Immanuel's (viii:8) in a

yet higher degree were the people his; those human children whom by his incarnation he had made to be his brethren; and whom as Redeemer he claimed a right to release by his own death from the power of death."

Dummelow's *Commentary*, using the text of the *Revised Version*, 1909, says:

" 'Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise.' The pronouns 'thy' and 'my' both refer to Israel."

That is to say, Israel's dead, in each case. Yet Dummelow, further commenting on this passage says:

"The passage seems to imply that God's people, as opposed to the heathen, (verse 14, same chapter), the prophet expected a literal resurrection. Some think, however, that a national restoration surpassing all expectation, is set forth under the figure of resurrection from the dead" (See Dummelow's *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, by various writers, edited by Rev. J. R. Dummelow, M. A., Queen's College, Cambridge).

In the *Roman Catholic Bible*—The *Douay Version*—the passage is given as follows:

"Thy dead men shall live, my slain shall rise again; awake, and give praise, ye that dwell in the dust, etc." (*Isa. xxvi:19-21*).

Here there would seem to be a distinction between Israel's "dead men" and the Lord's "slain"—i. e. "his martyrs", as it is suggested in a marginal commentary on the passage.

Another *Commentary* says on the 19th verse:

"In antithesis to verse 14 [same chapter, which see] 'They (Israel's foes) shall not live;' 'thy (Jehovah's) dead men (the Jews) shall live;' i. e. primarily, *be restored, spiritually, civilly and nationally*; whereas thy foes shall not; ultimately, and in the fullest scope of the prophecy, *restored to life literally*."

And here the commentator refers to *Ezekiel xxxvii:1-14*; and *Daniel xii:2*; both passages referring to a literal resurrection. Then continuing comment—

“Together with my dead body—rather, my dead body, or bodies (the Jewish nation personified, which had been spiritually, and civilly dead; or the nation, as a parent speaking of the bodies of her children individually, Note verse 9 [same chapter], ‘I’, ‘My’): Jehovah’s ‘dead’ and ‘my dead’ are one and the same. However, as Jesus is the anti-type to Israel (St. Matt. ii:15) English Version gives a true sense, and one ultimately contemplated in the prophecy: Christ’s dead body being raised again is the source of Jehovah’s people (all, and especially believers, the spiritual Israelites) also being raised (I Cor. xv:20-22)” (A Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown).

Such are the variations in the translations and in the *Commentaries* on the passage. And although these variations and the *Commentaries* may have a seeming tendency contrary to the exposition given in the articles of the *Redeemed Hebrew*, yet I do not hesitate to adhere to that exposition, just as I determined to present it in the first place, notwithstanding my knowledge of these variations both in translations and in *Commentaries*.

My reasons for taking this course arose from the consciousness that I knew the passage as presented by the plain meaning of the translators of the *Authorized Version*, and the text and context taken together, represented the truth in the matter, viz.:

That Jehovah was to become incarnate—tabernacle in the flesh—have a body;

That Jehovah was in a real body to suffer the pains of all men—and to die;

That Jehovah was to be raised from the dead—and with him many of his ancient saints were to be raised from the dead; also “the earth would cast out the dead”.

And knowing these to be the things fundamental to the Christian scheme of salvation, by the whole spirit and letter of the *Bible*, I did not hesitate to place on the passage in *Isaiah* xxvi, the interpretation and exposition given in the text of my *Redeemed Hebrew* articles. First, for the reason that if the whole spirit of the text with its context be taken into account, (from the 16th to the 21st verses inclusive), the exposition that Jehovah answers the prophet Isaiah's presentation of the grievances of Israel to him, there is obtained the reasonable, unstrained message of Jehovah to Israel in the text as given by the King James' translators; albeit, though, perhaps, not so recognized by them.

Certainly there was no occasion for Isaiah to tell the Lord, in the alleged continuation of his communication to the Lord, that his (the Lord's) "dead should live"! That his (the Lord's) "corpses" or "bodies" or his "slain", should arise, as some of the versions would have it; but there was great need of Jehovah saying to Israel for Israel's comfort and encouragement, after Israel's pitiful frame of mind had been presented to Jehovah by Isaiah—their humble acknowledgment of defeat—there was great need of Jehovah saying at that time to Israel—and he was the only one who could say it:

"Thy dead men shall live [i. e. be resurrected]: together with my dead body shall they arise; * * * and the earth shall cast out the dead."

That the Jews should have missed the meaning of their great prophet, and that some Christian translators following them should have missed it, is no more to be marvelled at than that the Jews should have missed the Messianic Prophecy of *Isaiah* ix:6, viz.:

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called, **Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace!**"

Or that they should have failed to grasp the true significance of:

“A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (being interpreted, “God with us”—i. e. God with men).

Equally did Israel's ancient teachers miss the significance of *Isaiah's* fifty-second and fifty-third chapter—the Messianic Prophecy par-excellence, which here I introduce:

In the closing verses of *Isaiah's* fifty-second chapter, occurs the following, which quite generally by Christian commentators refers to the Christ of the *New Testament*: “My Servant”—which I am sure when taken in connection with *Isaiah* fifty-third chapter—refers to the Jewish Messiah, and which in reality is a prophetic history of that Messiah, an outline of his character and earth-mission of his mortal life, a prophetic history, however, in the language of accomplished fact.

“Behold my Servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men; so shall he sprinkle many nations: the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider.”

So far the closing verses of chapter lii. Then chapter liii opens, but continue to hold in mind this “My Servant” of the fifty-second chapter, that is, the same personage of the fifty-third chapter—the Messiah:

“Who hath believed our report [i. e. respecting “My Servant”]? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

The thoughtful reading of this chapter so completely outlining the life, character and mission of the Christ of the *New Testament* will be so convincing that it admits of no doubt. Well might one ask after having read it, "what is prophecy but history reversed?" And also it is in this case, a fine example of prophetic history being recorded in the language of accomplished fact.

If all this could be overlooked or misunderstood by Jewish scholars, it will not be matter of wonderment that they should have missed the true understanding of the forty-ninth chapter of *Genesis* and the 10th verse, viz., that—

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come."

The true meaning of this some of their teachers miss, but when confronted with the stern, historical fact that the sceptre had departed from Judah, and that no more a lawgiver was "between Judah's feet"—and therefore "Shiloh", or the Messiah must have come—then they interpreted "sceptre" to mean "rod", and "rod" to symbolize "suffering" affliction, and therefore made the passage to mean "suffering" shall not depart from Judah until Messiah come. Thus the teachers of a people who would pervert and misinterpret their Scriptures, could just as blindly or as willingly misunderstand or pervert *Isaiah* xxvi:19-21, as the other passages referred to here.

All the above Scriptures, "Rasha", the teachers of your people refused to accept as Messianic Prophecies; and therein made their mistake; for it led them to reject Jesus of Nazareth as "God manifested in the flesh"; the Jehovah incarnate. Yet if a child born in Israel was to be called "the Mighty God", "the Everlasting Father", "the Prince of Peace", he could not be less than Jehovah incarnate—Jehovah within a mortal body! All this Israel's teachers missed or misinterpreted; and evidently, also, they missed the meaning of *Isaiah* xxvi:19-21.

THE ALLEGED LITERAL TRANSLATION

"Thy dead shall live; together my dead body shall they arise * * * and the earth shall cast out the dead."

Thus it stands in the Hebrew as given by you, "Rasha"; and standing thus, the passage is as nearly as may be a literal transliteration of the Hebrew words; and they cry aloud for the inserted words of King James' translators (indicated by *italics*), but with Jehovah—not Isaiah—speaking: Then it would read:

"Thy dead *men* shall live; *together with* my dead body shall they arise; * * * and the earth shall cast out the dead."

Waiting for this, and also for the further comforting word in the verse which follows (the 20th) and which only Jehovah could utter:

“Come, my people, enter thou into my chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast”—clearly Jehovah speaking!

There is also much to encourage me in my exposition of *Isaiah* xxvi:19 from the ancient prophets of America—Israelites all. They had that vision of “the Mighty God”, Jehovah, becoming incarnate in a human body.

For brevity's sake I set forth the essentials of the prophetic statements only.

An American prophet in the fifth century B. C. is represented as saying of the Christ:

“Behold he cometh according to the words of the angel in six hundred years from the time my father left Jerusalem. And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him and he suffereth it. * * * And the God of our fathers, who were led out of Egypt, out of bondage; * * * yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac and the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself * * * as a man into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up, * * * and to be buried in a sepulchre” (*Book of Mormon, I Nephi* xix:8-10, whole chapter as context).

Another American prophet, King Benjamin, in the second century B. C. prophetically said:

“Behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven, among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases; * * * and lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his peo-

ple. And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things, from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary. And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men, even through faith on his name; and even after all this, they shall consider him a man, and say that he hath a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him. And he shall rise the third day from the dead; and behold, he standeth to judge the world; and behold, all these things are done, that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men" (*Book of Mormon, Mosiah iii:5-10*).

Another American prophet, this about a century B. C. when asked the question, discussing the future mission of Messiah as the Son of God—

"Is the Son of God the very Eternal Father?"
 Answered: "Yea, he is the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth, and all things which in them are; he is the beginning and the end, the first and the last; And he shall come into the world to redeem his people; and he shall take upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name; and these are they that shall have eternal life, and salvation cometh to none else" (*Book of Mormon, Alma, xi:38-40*).

There are other passages of similar import from the same source, but let this suffice.

These passages from the *Old Testament* Scriptures, and from the *Book of Mormon*, declare incarnation of the Eternal God in a human body; his death; his resurrection from the dead; and the resurrection of some of earth's dead with him, according to the times appointed; and some of them at the time of his own resurrection. All this was known by the prophets of Israel before the incarnation, or death, or resurrection; small wonder then that it should be known to Isaiah, and that he should proclaim it in more than one passage to Israel.

With this consideration of the King James' translators' version of the *Isaiah* passage (may I say vindicated?) I am prepared to go forward with a larger development of Messianic Prophecies.