

MORE ON SPRINKLE AND RELATED THINGS

Specific words may be important, but may be “difficult,” may appear to make no sense. In our view, they should be kept, for with further study they may make sense and be very significant. One such word is “sprinkle” in Isa 52:15. Only a few Bibles translate thus; most follow the LXX and have “startle, or astonish.” The verb (*naza*) means “sprinkle,” and it is the one used in Lev 16:16 for the Yom Kippur sprinkling of the cover of the Ark of the Covenant, resulting in the forgiveness of all the sins of the Israelites.¹ This might be how the complete Qumran scroll of Isaiah (1QIsa^a) understood it. **From Chávez’s Intro to Bible Notes 183-184**

The Servant was seen, at least in Qumran, as having cultic, expiatory functions. In fact, the word *yazzeḥ* in Isa 52:15 is probably simply the Hebrew verb meaning “to sprinkle,” the same as in Lev 16:14-15 and many other places (see also Isa 63:3, regarding the “grapes of wrath” which sprinkle [or here, more likely “spatter”] Yahweh’s vestments); cf. Heb 9:13-14; 12:24. The presence of this verb in Isa 52:15 caused perplexity, and the LXX translated “startle,” and was followed by almost all modern versions (but the Vulgate and other versions do have “sprinkled;” the Nova Vulgata has “disperse” — or “spread,” a sense used by Catherine of Siena in regards to fire and Jesus’ blood). The good Qumranites understood it ritually. According to one of the first great scholars of the Dead Sea Scrolls, William H. Brownlee, at 1QIsa^a 52:15, in the great scroll of Isaiah found in Qumran, we should understand that the Servant will sprinkle

¹ Cf. WILLIAM H. BROWNLEE, “The Servant of the Lord in the Qumran Scrolls, I,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 132 (1953), 10 (indicates sprinkling with the Spirit). The Servant is anointed by the Spirit, and Brownlee and F.F. BRUCE, in *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (den Haag: Uitgeverij van Keulen, 1959), 50-58, agree that this indicates his consecration for priestly office. We have seen that eschatological expiation on Yom Kippur was expected in Qumran, and this is the theme of the Letter to the Hebrews (with Christ as high priest). Allusions to Yom Kippur “expiation” by Christ are found in Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10. Cf. R.E. CLEMENTS, “Isaiah 53 and the Restoration of Israel,” in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant*, 51-52. He refers to Ezek 36:25, which he translates as “sprinkle with clean water.” But this is not the same verb as in Lev 16:16 or Isa 52:15 (which should be translated “sprinkle;” the verb in Ezek might be translated “splash,” perhaps more abundant than “sprinkle”). See the discussion regarding messianic atonement, the Servant of Isaiah and the eschatological high priest in BAUMGARTEN, “Messianic Forgiveness,” 537-544.

many nations, perhaps because of his own anointing (= sprinkling) by the Spirit.² The “anointed of the Spirit,” in 11QMelchizedek (unless there are various redemptive figures in this document), would make atonement on Yom Kippur, in the tenth Jubilee. After stating that Melchizedek, in this document, is a “divine hypostasis,” the great Qumran scholar, Rabbi Joseph M. Baumgarten says that we find another figure with a similar expiatory role in 4Q541, an Aramaic fragment regarding the “eschatological priest” we already know from the Testament of Levi. The good rabbi tells us that

Despite this glorification, he is depicted as the object of rejection and calumny on the part of his antagonists, much like the Suffering Servant in Isaiah. Yet, he is to atone for all the children of his generation [I omit the Hebrew quotation].

Here, too, scholars have been inclined to limit the eschatological priest’s atonement function to expiation through sacrifice, although neither 4Q541 frg. 9, nor its parallel, *Testament of Levi* 18 make mention of any priestly sacrifice. The claim that [“atone for,” in Hebrew] always refers to ritual expiation is contradicted by the occasional usage in both biblical and Qumran Hebrew of this phrase for divine forgiveness (Jeremiah 18:23; CD 4:10; 4Q221 4:4). Moreover, even if we take [*kipper*] in the sense of expiation, the allusion to the hostile disparagement suffered by the priest suggests that like the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (Isaiah 53:10) his humiliation was itself considered to constitute an [*ašam*], a guilt offering for the sins of his generation.³

If, on the one hand, the Qumranites, in their Isaiah scroll, at Isa 52:15, understood “sprinkle” ritually, on the other, in their famous Temple Scroll, they could leave out “sprinkle” when describing the Yom Kippur ritual. Concerning their shortened version of Lev 16:15 in 11QTemple 26:3-7 (the “Temple Scroll”), the great Jewish scholar Lawrence H. Schiffman tells us that the Qumran version omits the words

“and he shall sprinkle it (the blood) on the (ark) cover and before the (ark) cover.” This is because the author of our scroll views the meaning of the biblical root [*kipper*] in ritual context as a technical term for the sprinkling of blood, in accord with usage later found in rabbinic literature; hence, it was enough to use this verb even without specifying the further details of the practice.⁴

² See “The Servant of the Lord in the Qumran Scrolls, I,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 132 (1953), 10.

³ “Messianic Forgiveness of Sin in CD 14:19 (4Q266 10 I 12-13),” in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Technological Innovations, New Texts & Reformulated Issues* (D.W. Parry – E.W. Ulrich, eds.; Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill Academic, 1999), 540.

⁴ “The Case of the Day of Atonement Ritual,” in *Biblical Perspectives: Early Use & Interpretation of the Bible in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Proceedings of the First International Symposium of the Orion Center, 12-14 May 1986* (M.E. STONE - E.G. CHAZON, eds.; Leiden – Boston – Köln; Brill: 1998), 187.

We have arguments here for understanding the “fourth song” of the Suffering Servant in a ritualistic-expiatory sense. That is, we can understand the enigmatic “thus he shall sprinkle many nations,” Isa 52:15, in the sense of atonement (expiation) as on Yom Kippur, Lev 16:14-15, 19, when blood is sprinkled. This is how Heb 9 seems to understand it.⁵ But there is more. The Servant “shall lift up” the sins of many, Isa 53:12. This Hebrew verb *nasa* has the meaning “to remove sins,” for example, in Lev 10:17, and in the passage which is so important for us, Lev 16:22 (regarding the scapegoat on Yom Kippur). In Isa 53:4, the Servant “lifted up” (= “removed”) our infirmities; this is how Matt 8:17 understands it, applying it to Jesus.⁶ **From Chávez’s Mark Notes 29-30**

⁵ Regarding “sprinkle, spatter,” some (like Brownlee, regarding Qumran; see footnote 46 above) see a reference to Ezek 36:25; thus also Heb 10:22. But the Hebrew verb in Ezek 36:25 (same as in Exod 24:8) is different from that of Lev 16:14-15, 19, and Isa 52:15, although the meaning is similar.

⁶ See the similar use of the Greek verb *lambanō* (“take”) in Matt 5:40; 15:26. Interestingly, in Aramaic, “to be lifted up” as the double meaning “to be exalted” (like the Servant in Isa 52:13) and “to be crucified;” this is how Jesus uses it in John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32; cf. Ezra 6:11 (an Old Testament passage in Aramaic).