Interlinear Transliteration and Reconstruction of Plate 538 in 3 Fragments of Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Nahal Hever Dead Sea Scrolls

Alaric Naudé
Professor of Linguistics, Suwon Science College, University of Suwon, Republic of Korea
Corresponding Author: Alaric Naudé, E-mail: dr.alaricnaude@outlook.com

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1. INTRODUCTION
Plate 538 of the Greek Minor Prophets is part of the collection of Dead Sea Scrolls currently under the masterful care of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The scroll is common of the era being parchment with Greek Uncial script and is a translation of Hebrew Masoretic texts for either personal use or for the sake of proselytising. It is part of a collection of 981 texts which have been excavated in the areas surrounding Khirbet Qumran (xico یسرائیل) from 1946 onward.

Plate 538 is comprised of three fragments containing portions of Zechariah chapters 8 and 9. An interesting feature of these scrolls is the retention of the Tetragrammaton in its Paleo-Hebrew form יְהֹוָה corresponding to the English letters YHWH. The Tetragrammaton will be rendered in its modern equivalent Jehovah as will other terms which may have more archaic equivalents. The reasons for rendering the Tetragrammaton as Jehovah are discussed in great detail in “A study of the translation of the Tetragrammaton יהוה : its phonetics, phonology, semantics and argument for rendering in vernacular languages”.

Another interesting feature is that the Book of Zechariah was completed in 518 (B.C.E/BC) and foretold the coming destruction of Tyre. This was finally accomplished by Alexander the Great in 332 (B.C.E /BC) , about 186 years after the prophecy and hence Christians and Jews alike would have found its fulfilment significant and strengthening.

It is sincerely hoped that this transliteration of Plate 538 will assist in the understanding of ancient Near-East literature and history. Pains-taking work has gone into creating a clear, concise and accurate rendering of the original.
Numbers correspond to modern numbers in Standard Bible Translations and letters appearing in brackets are reconstructed from other texts so as to complete the text and provide a definition, the original being too fragmented.

The basic method of reconstruction followed a direct technique for firstly ascertaining the original root text in a three stage process. In this case, the original text from which it was translated was Hebrew which allowed for a semantic cross comparison (the Hebrew Aleppo Codex). After this cross comparison to validate the authenticity and accuracy of the translation, a second cross comparison was done, in this instance a cross comparison of existing Greek codices/manuscripts (Apostolic Bible Polyglot).

For clarity of readings Strong’s Concordance was consulted in correspondence with trusted English translations in order to affirm usage (American Standard Version, New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, Young’s Literal Translation).
This fragment contains too few letters to locate within the rest of the verses. Possibly lines 2,3 of Zechariah 8:20 & 1st line of verse 21 based on relative position of letters.

ελ

ον

Line 3 Indecipherable due to damage.

ε-

Plate 538, Frag 1 B-370936 Photo By Shai Halevi, 2013

Zech 8:19 line 4 start

(νησ)τει fasting
(ο)ικω House
(ευφροσυνη)ν και gladness and
και την α(ληθειαν) and the truth
ειρηνην α(γαπησατε) peace love

(20) Πολεις πο(λ) The cities city/village
(ελ)θωσιν λαοι και There shall come people and
(πολεις) πο(λ) will come inhabit/settle

Towards/ with one
(πορευθω)μεν Travel/journey move along/go
(πο(ρευομενοι)

Plate 538, Frag 3 B-365058 Photo By Shai Halevi, 2013

Zech 8:23
(ημερ)αις εκει(ναις) Day (day time) yonder

(επιλαβω)νται δε(κα)
Take hold of ten

(πασ)ων των
Whole/ all the
(εθ)νων και
Races (ethnic groups) even

Plate 538, Frag 1 B-370936

Photo By Shai Halevi, 2013

(πορ)ευσομεθα μεθ υμ(ων)
will go with you

(ακ)ηκοαμεν θεος μεθ (υμων)
Listen to God with you

9:1 Λημμα λογου ἐν
Assuming word of Jehovah in
και δαμασκου καταπαυ(σις)
also Damascus rest/dwell
οτι τω οφθαλ(μος αν)
Because the Jehovah’s eyes on
θρωπων και πασων φ(υλων)
beings/mankind(?) and every tribe
ισραηλ (2). και γε εμαθ(οριζει)
Israel (2) and which borders
υν τυρος και σειδ(ων)
the Tyre also Sidon
Φρονησεν (σ)φοδρ
wise exceedingly
(3) (ωκοδο)μησεν τυρος σχ(οιματα)
built Tyre a fortress
και εβουνισεν αρ(γυριον)
also/and having silver
χουν και χρυσιον(ως)
Dust even gold that

Continuing from Zechariah 9:3

εξοδων (4) ιδου .AFH
Street (4) Look! Jehovah
(κληρονο)μησει αυτη και π(αταξει)
Will inherit Her (referring to Tyre) even smite
θαλασσαν δυναμι(v)
Sea/lake forcefully
αυτη εν πυρι κ(α)ταν(αλωθησε)ται.
her in fire consume-utterly
2. CONCLUSION
The Dead Sea Scroll provide a treasure trove of linguistic and spiritual value, Plate 538 is no exception. It provides historical, linguistic and archaeological evidence of Christian worship in the 1st and 2nd Centuries and is an irrefutable testament to the use of the Tetragrammaton. By implementing the three step textual reconstruction as utilized for the transliteration and reconstruction of this plate, high quality and authentic translations can be produced which increase Biblical understanding and that of Koine Greek.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Alaric Naudé PhD is a scholar and professor of Linguistics at Suwon Science College, University of Suwon and formerly at Seoul National University of Education in South Korea. He is a member of the Heterodox Academy, Belgium-Netherlands Cognitive Linguistics Association, Global Listening Centre, National Research Foundation of Korea and many others.

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