ZECHARIAH 8:20-22 & ISAIAH 2:2-4//MICAH 4:2-3:

A STUDY IN INTERTEXTUALITY

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I. Translation

20. Thus says Yahweh of Hosts:		
"Peoples shall yet come, the	Many nations	Many peoples
inhabitants of many cities,		
21. The inhabitants of one		
shall go to the other, saying	shall go and say,	shall go and say,
'Come let us entreat the	"Come let us go up to the	"Come let us go up to the
favour of Yahweh and seek	mountain of Jacob and to	mountain of Jacob, to
Yahweh of Hosts.	the house of the God of Jacob	the house of the God of Jacob
I myself am going.'"	that he may teach us of his	that he may teach us of his
	ways and that we may walk in	ways and that we may walk in
	his paths, for the law shall go	his paths, for the law shall go
	forth from Zion and the word	forth from Zion and the word
	of Yahweh from Jerusalem."	of Yahweh from Jerusalem."
	He shall judge between	He shall judge between
22. Many peoples and	many peoples and rebuke	nations and rebuke
strong nations shall come	strong nations far off	many peoples
to seek Yahweh of Hosts	(Mic 4:2-3)	(Isa 2:3-4a)
in Jerusalem to entreat		
the favour of Yahweh.		
(Zech 8:20-22)		

II. Introduction

The promise contained in Zech 8:20-22 has long been seen as a classic example of the "pilgrimage of the nations" tradition in the OT.[1] Here, as in several other texts dating from the postexilic period, the view is expressed that one day the nations will acknowledge Yahweh's sovereignty; an acknowledgement that would involve the gentiles or their representatives making a journey to the Jerusalem temple. This occurrence was conceived of in different ways: some texts envision the nations bringing tribute to Israel or serving her (cf. Psalm 68; Isa 45:14; 49:22-23; 60:1-6, 10-18). Others adopt a more inclusive view in which the nations become Yahweh's people alongside Israel (Isa 2:2-4 [=Mic 4:1-4]; Jer 3:17 cf. Zech 2:11). It is to this latter type that Zech 8:20-22 appears to belong.[2]

Although some commentators have discussed specific similarities of thought and language between Zech 8:20-22 and one of these pilgrimage texts (Isa 2:2-4/Mic 4:1-4), they have hitherto tended to downplay the idea of a close relationship between the two. Tollington, for example, claims that lexical links are limited to the terms עמים ("peoples") and גוים ("nations"), both terms that are far from rare.[3] Petersen goes somewhat further in noting correspondences in their use of the verb הלך ("go"), but also stops short of suggesting that Zechariah has borrowed from either Isaiah 2 or Micah 4.[4] Petitjean actively considers the possibility that Zech 8:20-22 is based on Mic 4:1-3 (rather than Isa 2:2-4) but likewise concludes negatively.[5] Thus, there exists a consensus that any lexical or thematic correspondences between Zechariah and Isaiah-Micah are coincidental, or the reflection of a general tradition rather than of active borrowing or citation.

III. Zechariah 8 & Isaiah 2/Micah 4
(i) Background and Context

When assessing the likelihood of borrowing between texts, it is frequently helpful to examine the material surrounding the texts in question. Such an examination may yield further evidence that supports a claim for intertextuality. In the present instance, it is noteworthy that, despite minor differences in detail between Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 (of which more will be said later), both texts speak of the temple's role in the eschaton (באחרית הימים - Isa 2:2; Mic 4:1). Such is also the case in Zech 8:9-13, where the writer alludes to Haggai's earlier statements about the escahtological consequences of rebuilding the temple (Hag 2:10-23).[6]

Significantly, the Zecharian author claims that in the past "there was no safety from the enemy for those who went to and fro, and I set them all against each other" (Zech 8:10)

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[1] W. A. M. Beuken, <u>Haggai-Sacharja 1-8 - Studien zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der frühnachexilischen Prophetie</u> (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1967), p. 179; W. Rudolph, <u>Haggai; Sacharja 1-8; Sacharja 9-14; Maleachi</u> (KAT 13, 4; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1976), p. 152.

[2] J. E. Tollington, <u>Tradition & Innovation in Haggai & Zechariah 1-8</u> (JSOTS 150; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), p. 236. By contrast, H. G. Mitchell (<u>Haggai Zechariah</u> [ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1912], p. 216) sees Isa 45:14ff. as the ultimate source for the present passage.

[3] Tollington, <u>ibid</u>.

[4] D. L. Petersen, <u>Haggai & Zechariah 1-8</u> (OTL; London: SCM, 1984), p. 317.

[5] A. Petitjean, <u>Les oracles du Proto-Zacharie</u> (EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1969), p. 432.

[6] C. L. Meyers & E. M. Meyers, <u>Haggai & Zechariah 1-8</u> (AB 25B; Garden City: Doubleday, 1987), pp. 420-21.

but that in the future "the vine shall yield its fruit, the land its produce" (8:12).[7] The claim made in Zech 8:10 contains an implicit contrast between a past of insecurity and violence in which travel was rendered impossible by the threat of attack, with the present or future enjoyment of peace and security by travellers. The unspoken promise in Zech 8:10 is actually a very specific one: it presupposes a state of affairs very similar to that in Isa 2:4//Mic 4:3 in which different peoples travel to and fro between cities, all engaged in the same project of making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. All three texts, Zechariah 8, Isaiah 2 and Micah 4, express the desire for an end to an anarchic world in which all men are hostile to each other and its replacement by one in which all men are brothers.

A second parallel exists in this wide context. Although apparently minor, it may also be significant. Micah 4 (but not Isaiah 2) predicts that the eschaton will be a time not just of peace and security, but of agricultural plenty, in which swords are made into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks, and all enjoy the shade and produce of their own vines and fig trees. Although Zechariah 8 does not quote this promise, it too envisions a future of agricultural plenty, in which "the vine shall give its fruit, the ground its produce and the heavens their dew" (v. 12). Perhaps one may suggests on this basis that the thought of Micah 4 is somewhat closer to Zechariah 8 that is the thought of Isaiah 2.

(ii) Lexical Correspondences
"People shall yet come, the inhabitants of many cities" (Zech 8:20)

In lexical terms, the correspondences between the Zechariah and the Isaiah/Micah texts are closer than has hitherto been noted. Yet they are also more intriguing, for the Zechariah text seems to be based on a text incorporating elements of both Isa 2:3-4 and Mic 4:2-3. Before we discuss this phenomenon further, however, those elements common to all three texts ought to be considered. The most important shared factor between all three texts, Zechariah, Isaiah and Micah, is the phrase linking verbs of "going" and "saying" (והלכו...לאמר - Zech 8:21; והלכו...ויאמרו - Isa 2:3; Mic 4:2). The action of the gentiles is strikingly similar in the Zechariah and Isaiah-Micah texts in that they are depicted as simultaneously engaged in movement and expressing the desire to visit Jerusalem. However, the text in Isaiah-Micah is more concise than that in Zechariah, which appears to be an interpretative expansion of the Isaiah-Micah text.

Let us examine more closely: the Isaiah text states "Many peoples shall go and say..." and follows this up with a reference to the gentiles' aim of visiting Jerusalem and the temple. A reader, faced with this text for the first time might be justified in asking "what does 'many peoples' mean?" and "what does 'shall go' mean? If the peoples have not gone to Jerusalem yet, where have they gone?" The fact that the Zecharian author clarifies these two point argues strongly for its dependence on the Isaiah-Micah texts: the author of Zechariah 8 explains "many peoples" as "peoples...the inhabitants of many cities",[8] and "shall go" as "shall go to each other" (i.e. to each other's cities). This is not merely allusion or quotation, but exegesis: the author of Zechariah is taking this older prophecy and reapplying it to his own day.

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[7] Commentators generally see the disturbance and enmity described in Zech 8:10 as referring to strife between elements of the Judean community rather than warfare between nations as in Isa 2:4//Mic 4:3 (e.g. Meyers & Meyers, ibid., pp. 421-22).

[8] Kennicott 150 and 2 LXX Mss presuppose a text עמים רבים ("many peoples") for the MT's עמים ("people/peoples"). This, however, is most likely an addition dependent on the same phrase in v. 22.

At this particular location, it should be noted that it is the text as it is found in MT Isaiah that is being used as a source by the Zecharian author. However, this need not necessarily mean that MT Isaiah itself is the source for the Zecharian text. It is possible that MT Micah has, for whatever reason (whether through a scribal error or for reasons of style) substituted גוים רבים ("many nations") for the original reading עמים רבים ("many peoples"). Indeed, it is noteworthy that MT Micah is otherwise the closer of the texts to Zechariah 8 in terms of lexical and contextual overlap.

"The inhabitants of one shall go to the other, saying..." (Zech 8:21a)

The next significant point linking the texts is the use of the phrase נלכה הלך ("come"), which combines the Qal cohortative plural and Qal infinitive absolute of the same verb הלך ("go") in order to intensify the force of the first person command. Interestingly, this forms another point of contrast with the depiction of the pilgrimage of the nations in Isa 2:2-4, where the gentiles say to each other לכו ונעלה ("come, let us go up" [using the Qal imperative plural of הלך and the Qal cohortative plural of עלה {"go up"}]). The Zechariah text's use of the cohortative form נלכה also echoes the use of the same form in Isa 2:3; Mic 4:2 ("let us walk [ונלכה] [in his paths]"). Zechariah, however, emphasises the individual resolve of the gentiles and makes the conversation more dramatic by using a singular form (אלכה גם אני ["I am going myself"]). Again, we see not just allusion to or quotation of Isaiah-Micah by the author of Zechariah 8, but an interpretative expansion of the source text intended to clarify its inner meaning fo his contemporary audience.

"Many peoples and strong nations" (Zech 8:22)

The final phrase to be considered in this note, "many peoples and strong nations" (עמים רבים וגוים עצומים), is common to both Zech 8:22 and Mic 4:3. Indeed, these are the only two occurrences of the phrase in the whole of the OT, for Isa 2:4a lacks the adjective עצומים applied to גוים and the phrase as it stands in MT Micah is reversed in MT Isaiah to give "nations...and many peoples." In conjunction with other similarities noted earlier between the texts, this again argues for the dependence of this part of Zechariah 8 on a form of the oracle found in Isa 2:2-4//Mic 4:1-4, specifically one closer to, if not identical with, the latter.

IV. Synthesis and Conclusion

The parallel texts in Isa 2:2-4 and Mic 4:1-4 have engendered much debate among scholars over the years, although this debate has mostly focussed on the priority of one or the other text. Two main views have, to my knowledge, been advanced concerning the authorship of the oracle concerned, although there are in fact four possible explanation for the appearance of the oracle in both Isaiah and Micah: (1) The passage is original to Isaiah and was added to Micah. (2) It is original to Micah and was added to Isaiah.[9] (3) It is an older oracle borrowed

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[9] F. Delitzsch, Isaiah (Commentary on the Old Testament 7; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 112; C. F. Keil, Minor Prophets (Commentary on the Old Testament 10; Grand rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 456.

from another (unknown) source by the original compilers of both Isaiah and Micah. (4) It is a later addition to both Isaiah and Micah.[10]

Of the four options, the final one seems to have attracted something approaching a consensus in scholarly circles. However, assuming that the same oracle in the same form was added to both books, it is far from clear which of the versions of the oracle represents the more conservative tradition, and therefore reflects a more "original" form of the oracle. If I am correct in my suggestion that the same oracle serves as a source for Zech 8:20-22, however, then it would appear that the Zecharian author used something closer to the text as it is preserved in Micah, but with the reading עמים רבים for גוים רבים in Mic 4:2, the reading that has been preserved in Isa 2:3.

This in turn may bear witness to a more conservative tradition of transmission for the book of Micah than that of Isaiah. However, it is, unfortunately, impossible to say whether Zechariah was using this oracle as part of the book of Micah or of some other work. If the former were the case, however, then the substitution noted in Mic 4:2 would have to have occurred after the writing of Zechariah 1-8. This would also suggest an ongoing redactional process within Micah which continued well into the postexilic period.

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[10] J. M. P. Smith, W. H. Ward & J. A. Bewer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1911), p. 84; O. Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12 (2nd ed.; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox, 1983), pp. 51-52; R. Mason, Micah, Nahum, Obadiah (OTG; Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), p. 49.