## By Dov Chaikin

In the article "After the Order of"? - referring to Ps. 110 (with particular reference to v.4), a pronounced Messianic passage - I pointed out that the presence of the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the ${ }^{7}$ [YOD], made a crucial difference to an understanding of the Massoretic text \{in contrast to the various translations, which draw in this instance on the Septuagint - the LXX\}. In the present article, it is my intention to show that the absence of the a hard sound] in another pronounced Messianic passage, makes for a similar difference in understanding the Massoretic text as opposed to the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, commenced in the 3rd century B.C.E.).


#### Abstract

What is the Massoretic text [MT]? It is the earliest extant complete text of the Tanakh (the so-called "Old Testament" - no less new today than when it was first penned) in the original languages - Hebrew mainly, with a few passages in Aramaic - that has two unique features introduced by a group of men known as the Sages of Tiberias (members of the general body of Massorites), who lived in the second half of the first millenium of the Common Era. These features, which were introduced to the text without tampering with the text itself (there are Massoretic notes in the margins and at the bottom of the pages), are a system of vocalization and of cantillation, making it easier to read the - unvocalized - ancient text correctly.


The text itself had been fixed by the Sophrim [from saphor - to count or number] - the Scribes mentioned in the New Testament - whose work commenced under Ezra and Nehemiah, their task (including the counting of all the letters) being to set the text in order after the return from Babylon. They were the authorised revisers of the sacred text; and, their work being completed, the Massorites [from massor - to deliver (into the custodianship of another)] were the authorised custodians of the text, their task being to preserve it.

The passage under consideration here is Isa. 53:5, which (in most translations) ends with "and by His stripes we are healed". - Often when there is prayer for healing (in English in particular), this passage is invoked - almost as if it were a formula. - [This paper is concerned with the vocalization; the cantillations provide accentuation and punctuation - as well as the melody for synagogue reading.]

The Hebrew original (sans vocalization) of "and by His stripes" is ובחברתו. Considering the other six times that the (root) word, in its various inflections, appears in the Tanakh (without vocalization) Gen. 4:23, Ex. 21:25(x2), Ps. 38:5 (6 in the original), Prov. 20:30, Isa. 1:6 - with the (correct) rendering "stripe" (other versions: "bruise", "wound"), it is conceivably not surprising that the Septuaginists rendered our given text as they did. They no doubt lacked the tradition of 'correct reading' of the Tanakh, a tradition the Massorites will have received handed down from generation to generation possibly from as early as the time of Ezra, certainly from the 2nd century B.C.E. - and on which they based their system of vocalization and cantillation.

The root word in all seven instances is חבר. With the vocalization introduced by them, the Massorites made a clear distinction between the six - חַַבּבּדּרָּ root part of the word is vocalized [UVAHAVURATTO]. For the reader who knows (at least some) Hebrew, the distinction should be quite clear. In all six instances there is a daggesh in the letter $\exists$, whereas in our passage the daggesh is omitted - ב - providing a 'v' sound as opposed to a hard ' b '. Furthermore, while in the six instances the vocal under the letter $\Pi$ is a patah, in our passage it is a hataf-patah - a grammatical requirement in view of what follows, i.e. I sans daggesh.

Let us now turn to Hosea 4:17, where חֲבוּר [HAVUR] is quite correctly translated "joined". Here, the vocalization given by the Massorites is essentially the same as in Isa. 53:5: no daggesh in the - - and the required hataf-patah under the $\Pi$.

Conclusion. I am thus led to the inescapable - and to me, very logical - conclusion, that what the Massorites are telling us in the Isa. 53:5 passage is that "joined to Him" (or "in fellowship with Him" strongly suggested by the root חבבר) are we healed.
[Healing, as well as forgiveness of sin, are thus clearly shown to be bound up in what Yeshua (Jesus) had accomplished on the cross - which He offers to those in fellowship with Him. There are also other passages in the Bible that show the interconnection between healing and forgiveness of sins, such as Psalm 103:3 and Matthew 9:2ff.]

Moreover, just as in the article "After the Order of?", here, too, the parallelism plays its role. Consider the following rendering of verse 5 :

> But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the chastisement for our wellbeing he bore and joined to him are we healed.

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But what about I Peter 2:24-25, where the apostle quotes from Isa. 53:5-"... by whose stripes you were healed" [NKJV]?

The original text had no punctuation nor verse separation. In his translation of the New Testament to Hebrew, done over 100 years ago, Prof. Franz Delitzsch - a German (gentile) theologian, a Hebrew scholar and rabbinic student - appears to disagree with the commonly accepted versification of this passage. I quote - my rendering into English - from the edition in my possession, with the Delitzsch versification:
"... and our sins He bore in His body on the cross [v.23]; that we might live to righteousness having been rid of sins [v.24]; in that were healed, for you were as sheep gone astray but now are returned to the Shepherd (and) Custodian of your souls [v.25]."

* Delitzsch's versification strongly implies his understanding that this word means "joined to Him."
P.S. It is possible that Peter, dictating his letter to Silvanus, tells him to quote from Isa. 53:5-which Silvanus does, quoting from the LXX, with which he is familiar.

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Final note. The word rendered - in English and other translations - "stripes" (or "wounds" or "bruises"), is rendered (correctly) in the singular in the LXX translation!

