

Was “Amanuwal ” a name or a characterization?

Was “Amanuwal ” a name or a characterization? To replace the absence of scholarly questioning of this contradiction, there exists the inference that “Amanuwal” was symbolic — a title or characterization, not an original name. This inference could carry some weight if the name or title “Amanuwal” had been first bestowed upon Ha’Mashyach during or after his ministry. Then “Amanuwal” could be called a characterization based upon his actions and teachings.

However, if it had indeed been prophesied (as by Isaiah) that upon birth the special child would be given the name Amanuwal, then that would confirm it was intended to be a name, not a characterization supplied only later.

Further support for the name interpretation comes from the Qumran Great Isaiah Scroll, dated to around 125 BCE — by far the oldest known copy of Isaiah. In it, “Amanuwal” is written as a single separate Hebrew word, which indicates it was intended as a name, and not written as two words: “Amanuw Al” as if to express it by the title “with-us God.” The next most ancient text of Isaiah is the Masoretic text, which dates much later, to 826 CE. In it, “Immanuel” at Isa 7:14 is written as the two words “Immanu El.” The comparison is shown below:

The much older reading of the Scroll (above) is to be preferred. In the Isaiah Scroll, each of its three mentions of “Amanuwal ” (Isa 7:14, 8:8, 8:10) occurs as a single word, unlike in the Masoretic text where all three are as two words, “Amanuw Al”

The Hebrew writing system of separating words by spaces (or by dots or vertical lines) dates way back to Isaiah’s time. A single name was written as one word, while a title often contained two or more separate words. Thus, Isaiah’s intent that “Amanuwal ” would be the name of the prophesied child seems to have been maintained down through the centuries to at least 125 BCE. Besides the writer of Matthew having been one who believed Ha’Mashyach was the fulfillment of the Immanuel prophecy, there is a definite probability that before Sha’ul (Paul) also had believed the same. In his epistles Sha’ul (Paul) very frequently refers to Old Testament passages. In particular, in Rom 15:12 he quotes Isa 11:10, saying... and further Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse shall come, he who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles hope.”

Here the prophecy about the root of Jesse could well refer to the same person prophesied within the preceding four chapters of Isaiah, starting with Isa 7:14, namely Amanuwal, since the Amanuwal prophecy was addressed to the House of David, and not to King Ahaz.

However, most scholars believe the prophecy was just a short-term one to be fulfilled in Isaiah’s own time, because succeeding verses in Isa 7-8 refer to prophecies known to have been fulfilled in the time of King Ahaz or Hezekiah, and supposedly in the time of the prophesied messianic child also. Yet the absence of anyone of importance named Amanuwal then or in the succeeding six centuries leaves the short-range-prophecy hypothesis unconvincing.

Now the fact that Paul knew of Isaiah's messianic prophecies, but did not quote from Isa 7:14 about Amanuwal nor even mention Amanuwal in any epistle, might cause one to assume he thought as do many modern scholars, that the Amanuwal prophecy applied only to the distant past, the 8th century BCE.

The root-of-Jesse Mashyach (Isa 11:1) might then be thought of as applying to someone other than Amanuwal in the indefinite future, as there is no mention of Amanuwal in the rest of Isaiah. If so, however, how does one then account for later followers of Paul, who were fully knowledgeable of Isaiah, believing that Amanuwal was both Ha'Mashyach and the root of Jesse?

Not only the writer of Matthew, but Justin Martyr and Irenaeus believed that the son of Miriam and Yosef was the fulfillment of the Amanuwal prophecy and was the same person as the root of Jesse in Isa 11:1,10.6 So are we assume that Sha'ul didn't believe likewise? This question will be answered later, along with our reason why the name "Amanuwal" was used so sparingly before 200 CE.

John the Baptist can probably also be included as one who, from oral tradition, accepted that J was the fulfillment of Isaiah's long-range messianic prophecy. His question, "Are you he who is to come?" (Mt 11:3), indicates this, and J's reply about his healings of the blind, the deaf, and the lame, evidently in fulfillment of Isa 35:5-6, indicates that Isaiah was the prophetic source in mind. And if J's name had been Immanuel, John would certainly have been convinced!

Our resolution of the short-term versus long-term problem. The present solution to this problem takes account of human nature as well as the above facts. It starts with Isaiah's prophecies about Amanuwal and how he would be glorified by gentiles (Galilee of the nations — Isa 9:1) and even regarded as Mighty God (Isa 9:6). And if Amanuwal were also thought to be the "shoot from the stump of Jesse," the gentiles would be seeking after him (Isa 11:1,10).

We assume that Isaiah made these prophecies, and more, known to the people of his time, and thereafter they were passed on as oral tradition.

On the negative side, certain priests and custodians of the sacred literature must be assumed then to have made alterations in Isaiah's writings that would discredit any long-range Amanuwal prophecies so that the gentiles would not be seen as receiving so much favor, and the Aluhym of Israel would not be eclipsed by a new Mighty One.

The alterations accomplished this by insertions indicating that Amanuwal had already come and gone in the 8th century BCE (in particular, Isa 7:15-16), while at the same time the essence of the oral tradition was upheld. The priests had little or no control over the oral tradition itself, and

dared not simply wipe out its essence from Isaiah's writings. These particular redactions were probably made in the late 7th century BCE, or soon after Isaiah's death.

This is not to imply that other redactions were not also made at this time and later. Thus the undesired prophecies associated with Amanuwal, in Isa 7-11, would be of no concern to those who interpreted the Scriptures literally.

The idea is not at all new that the Book of Isaiah contains many redactions. But it is understandable if most biblical scholars prefer to think that the Amanuwal prophecy was just a short-range prediction, and ignore the above facts and arguments to the contrary; no mechanism that would explain a successful, explicit prophecy centuries into the future is known to science.