

II. ISAIAH 53:2

In an essay entitled '“Roots Below and Fruit Above” and Related Matters', H. L. Ginsberg has argued cogently that שֹׁרֵשׁ is not to be understood solely as the 'root' of a plant or tree, but also as its stock or stem.¹ The purpose of this note is to apply Ginsberg's insight to Isaiah 53:2 where the word is commonly rendered 'root' in English translations. Many commentators accept this without question (*e.g.* Lindblom, Torrey, Westermann), others prefer 'root-sprout' (*e.g.* Delitzsch, Dillmann, Minn, Wolff), while C. R. North has recently offered 'For he shot up like a sapling, as from a root in an arid soil'.² Although 'root-sprout', conveying the idea of a new growth from the ground, gives a better sense than 'root', avoiding so forced an explanation as 'the root from the dry ground is the scrub growth of the desert' (J. L. McKenzie, *cf.* R. Levy), 'stock' or 'stem' would seem to improve upon that. The picture, then, is of a weak plant, 'a stem from dry soil' parallel with 'tender plant, sapling'. Isaiah 11:1, 10, may be translated conformably, as Ginsberg has partly shown.

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¹ D. Winton Thomas, W. D. McHardy, eds, *Hebrew and Semitic Studies Presented to G. R. Driver*, Clarendon Press, Oxford (1963) 72-76.

² *The Second Isaiah*, Clarendon Press, Oxford (1964) 64; *cf.* N. H. Snaith, *VT* Supplement 14 (1967) 194; North followed the common translation in *The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah*², Oxford University Press (1956) 121.