

The proved need for God's law will lead men to God. It may be a long time before God brings us to the haven where we would be ; but the sword will not devour for ever, and though the vision of peace tarry, we may confidently wait for it ; because it will surely come.

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*SOME FRESH NOTES ON THE TEXT OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT.*

It was the fate of the present writer for some thirteen years to read with students of Theology the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. When one considers that the Hebrew Bible has been read and studied in its minutest details for over two thousand years, it will be obvious that very little that is fresh or new can be said about it. Hence recent expository work done upon it has too often consisted of the wildest extravagances and conjectures which have no basis in the text itself. Whilst, on the one hand, some scholars have attempted to reconstruct a new text for themselves in keeping with their own ideas of grammar and syntax, as well as of the progress of history, others have conceived schemes of metre into which they would force the poetical portions. In all this one thing alone is beyond doubt, and that is, that, if the Hebrew books were written in prose of a literary and classical standard and in verse of a regular number of syllables or accents, then both prose and poetry are lost to us, and to attempt to recover them at this time of day is wasted labour. In the following notes some possible renderings or readings, which seem to have escaped the notice of scholars are offered for the consideration of students, though to those accustomed to modern methods they may seem insignificant and unimportant.

1 Sam. i. 9 : " So Hannah rose up after they had eaten

in Shiloh ” (אחרי אכל הבשלה בשלה). Read אחרי אכל הבשלה, “ After eating the boiled flesh.” Cf. Wellhausen.

1 Sam. x. 2 : “ Thou shalt find two men . . . at Zelzah ” (בצלצה). Read בצלצלים, “ with cymbals,” or בצריח, “ inside the sepulchral chamber ” (of Rachel’s tomb).

1 Sam. xi. 7 : “ Oxen ” should in many places be “ cows,” used for ploughing.

2 Sam. i. 21 : “ Fields of offerings ” (תרומות). Perhaps תרומה or תרומות, “ fields of silence,” that is, Death.

2 Sam. iii. 12 : (Abner sent to David), “ saying, Whose is the land ? saying *also*, Make thy league with me ” (לאמר . . . למי ארץ לאמר). Render, “ saying, To whom should I be pleased (למי ארץ or למי ארצה) to say, Make,” etc.

2 Sam. xvi. 5 : (when David came to Bahurim), “ Behold, thence came out a man (הנה משם איש יוצא) of the family of the house of Saul.” Render, “ Behold, from thence (came) man sprung from the family,” etc.

Isa. xxi. 16 : “ Within a year, according to the years of an hireling.” Before “ year ” (שנה) a numeral above ten seems to have dropped out as in 1 Sam. xiii. 1, “ As the years of an hireling ” means “ exactly.”

Isa. xxviii. 16 : “ I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone ” : “ in Zion ” means “ consisting of Zion ” : Zion is the stone.

Isa. xxviii. 20 : “ The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it.” Cf. Burckhardt, *Egyptian Proverbs*, No. 411, “ According to the measure of the clothes stretch the legs.”

Isa. xxx. 17 : “ One thousand *shall flee* at the rebuke of one.” Perhaps אלף אחד means “ A thousand and one ” (shall flee, etc.).

Isa. xxxiv. 8 : “ For *it is* the day of the Lord’s vengeance, *and* the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion ” (לרוב ציון). Read לרב ציון, “ for the Lord of Zion,” on

account of the parallelism, רב being later Hebrew or Aramaic for the older אדון.

Jer. xlvi. 9 : The text is probably correct, the construction being the same as in Ps. lxxviii. 9.

Amos. iv. 3 : " And ye shall cast *them* into the palace," והשלכתנה ההרמונה. One of these words is a gloss upon the other. Read either והשלכתן, " And ye shall be cast out," or תרמינה, " ye shall be cast out."

Zech. i. 21 : " These are the horns that have scattered Judah, so that no man (כפי איש לא : cf. Mal. ii. 9) did lift up his head." Instead of כפי איש read כפטיש or כפטיש איש, and render " Judah as with a hammer : one, or he, lifted not up his head."

Zech. xi. 3 : " A voice of the howling of the shepherds, for their glory (אדרתם) is spoiled." Read אדרהם after Jer. xxv. 34 ff., " spoiled are the leaders of the flock."

Zech. xiii. 6 : " What *are* these wounds in thine hands ? " lit. " between thine hands " (בין ידיך), that is, on the front of the body. The expression occurs only here, but is common in Arabic in the sense of standing or appearing *before* a person.

" The house of my friends " (בית מאהבי) might mean " the idol temple " ; מאהב is a metonymy for idol in Hosea ii. 7 ; Ezek. xvi., etc. The wounds are really self-inflicted, mostly on the arms : cf. 1 Kings xviii. 28 and the practices of the modern darwish.

Zech. xiv. 3 : " As when he fought in the day of battle " (ביום קרב). One would expect a proper name, as in " the day of Midian."

Zech. xiv. 19 : The punishment of Egypt is that its horses will perish.

Mal. ii. 16 : " Garment " here means " wife," as in the Korán ii. 183 : " They are a garment unto you, and you are a garment unto them."

Ps. vi. 2: "For I am weak" (אמלל אני). Translate "My strength is withered," אני being for איני. The parallel phrase is "my bones are vexed."

Ps. ix. 12: "When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them." "Them" may be "it," אותם referring to דמים.

Ps. ix. 20: "Put them in fear, O Jehovah." Rather, "Make thyself, O Jehovah, a terror to them." שית is so used reflexively (Ps. iii. 6, etc.).

Ps. xxiii. 5: "In the presence of mine enemies." The enemies might be the beasts of prey. Cf. 1 Sam. xvii. 34. The Arab poet Shanfara speaks of the beasts of prey as his friends in contrast to his tribe.

Ps. xlix. 5: "The iniquity of my heels." For "my heels" (עקבי) read "scorpions" (עקרבים). Cf. Ezek. ii. 6. There is an Arabic proverb, *Al-Aḳārīb humu' l-'aḳārīb*, "Relatives are scorpions."

Ps. li. 2: "Wash me" (כבסני) throughly from mine iniquity." כבס is used of washing clothes. The figure is therefore doubly metaphorical.

Ps. liv. 1: Two Hebrew verbs are translated by the English verb "to judge," שפט and דין. The latter is always used of judging peoples or communities, not individuals, at least in the Psalms.

Ps. lxvi. 7: "He ruleth by his power for ever" (עולם). Translate: "He ruleth the world by His power." Cf. Eccl. iii. 11 and Ps. lxxiii. 12, in which עולם perhaps means world, as in later Hebrew.

Ps. lxxviii. 9: see on Jer. xlvi. 9, above.

Ps. cv. 24: "And made them stronger than their enemies" (מצרייו). Perhaps there is a play on מצרים, Egypt, or read מצרים.

Ps. cx. 4: "Thou art a priest for ever" (לעולם). לעולם only means "for life," or the meaning is that he is the

founder of a line of priests. The chronicler makes David say (1 Chron. xxviii. 4): "The Lord . . . chose me . . . to be king for ever." Otherwise, Heb. vii. 8, etc.

Ps. cxliv. 12: "That our sons may be as plants grown up (מגדלים) in their youth." The LXX *ὡς νεόφυτα ἡδρυσμένα*, as plants full-grown, points to the reading מגמלים.

Prov. xxx. 31: There are four things that march well, a lion, a greyhound, a he-goat, "and a king against whom there is no rising up" (מלך אלקום עמו). Various explanations of אלקום have been given. It may be the earliest instance of אלהים purposely disguised from motives of superstition. Thus in the Hagiographa published at Naples in 1486-7, יהוה and אלהים are printed יהוה and אלדים. In the Talmud (B. Kam. 106a and elsewhere) we have אלקים. The words would then mean "a king on whose side God is."

From the fact that capital letters are not used to mark proper names in the Semitic languages, it is quite possible that there are many of these in the Hebrew Bible which have been read as appellatives. It is especially remarkable that in the Psalms, many of which are so intensely personal, so few proper names occur. Yet this may have been the practice of the times and people. In the book of Job the *dramatis personae* never name one another. The exception that proves the rule is Elihu. Similarly in the Korán only one of Mohammad's disciples is mentioned by name, and that only once. On the other hand, proper names of persons may have been suppressed of set purpose, or mistaken for common nouns.

Perhaps the vocable which is most easily misread and misunderstood is the word אדם. This may stand for Adam (cf. Josh. iii. 16), man, Edom, sometimes for Aram (Syria), and once for אדני (1 Sam. xvii. 32: in xxiv. 9 it is also to be altered: the Greek had אומרים?—"the words of those

who say"). In 2 Sam. xxiv. 14, "Let us not fall into the hand of man," "Edom" would give good sense, being the chief adversary, and there is only one adversary mentioned in ver. 13, where it is necessary to read צַרְדָּא instead of צַרְיָד.

In Ps. lxxvi. 10, "Surely the wrath of man (חַמַּת אָדָם) shall praise thee, the remainder of wrath (שְׂאֵרֵית חַמַּת) shalt thou restrain," we might render, omitting the first חַמַּת and changing תַּחֲנֹךְ into תַּחֲנֹךְ with the LXX, "For (even) Edom (or Syria ?) shall praise thee, the remnant of Hamath shall keep festival to thee."

Similarly in xciv. 10, 11, "He that teacheth man knowledge . . . the thoughts of man," there would be some point in reading "Edom" for "man," Edom being the seat of wisdom (Obad. 8 ; Jer. xlix. 8). Similarly in cxxiv. 2, we might translate "when Edom rose up against us" ; and in xi. 4, xii. 8 and frequently point is gained by rendering "the sons of Edom" instead of "sons of men."

The curious expression in Gen. xvi. 12 (Job xi. 12) פֶּרֶא אָדָם, "wild ass of a man," surely means "wild ass of Edom," especially seeing that it is descriptive of Esau. The last Omeiyad Caliph Merwān was called "The Ass" on account of his endurance. In Isa. xliii. 4, "Therefore will I give men for thee, and peoples for thy life," instead of "men" and "peoples" we expect the names of the nations which are to become the ransom of Israel. So in xxii. 6 Kittel reads "Aram" in the second clause for "men," parallel to Elam and Kir in the first and third. In Ezek. xxxvi. 37, "I will increase them with men like a flock" (כִּצְאֵן אָדָם) should probably be "like the flocks of Edom." Cf. Mic. ii. 12, "as the flock of Bozrah." On the other hand in ver. 38 "flocks of men" is probably right.¹

In Ezek. vii. 14, "They have blown the trumpet" (תִּקְעוּ)

¹ For another example of this ambiguous root cf. Dr. Kennedy's *The Note-Line*, p. 100.

(בתקוע) should be "Blow the trumpet in Tekoa," with a play upon the name, as in Jer. vi. 1. The syntax is otherwise anomalous, and the text of the rest of the verse is probably corrupt also.

There is a number of passages, especially in the poetical books, in which the parallelism seems to require a proper name where now there is none, or in which a proper name would seem to be the natural completion of the sentence. Such passages are the following:—

Ps. xviii. 3 :

מהלל אקרא יהיה
ומן איבי אושע;

The A.V. gives the rendering "I will call upon the Lord, *who is worthy* to be praised; so shall I be saved from mine enemies." מהלל is evidently parallel to מן איבי, and one would expect it to mean "By reason of some one," I call, etc., הלל being all that remains of the enemy's name. In any case the A.V. does not seem to be possible. איבי would be identical with הלל. In the spells and incantations found at Tell Sandahanna the person devoted to destruction is mentioned by name. In ver. 5 of this song, "The sorrows of Hell (חבלי שאול) compassed me about" might equally well and with much point be translated "Saul's bands compassed me about." (For חבל in the sense of a band of men, cf. 1 Sam. x. 5, 10, etc.) One would expect Saul to be named in this poem, but the parallel clause "the snares of death prevented me" shows that here the M.T. is probably right. Again in Ps. xxi. 1 :

יהוה בעוד ישמה מלך
ובישועתך מה יגיל מאד :

"The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice." The last expression is not found elsewhere, and instead of מאד one would expect

the name of the king mentioned in the first member of the parallelism.

It is the fashion of Persian poets to insert their own names in the last quatrain or distich of their *ghazels*. It is believed examples of this are found at the close of the alphabetic Pss. xxv. and xxxiv., where there is an additional verse beginning with the letter *Pē*, and suggesting that the name of the author of these two poems was Pedayah. In other Psalms we find an illegible word in the closing couplets. In xxvii. 13 we have לִוְלֵא marked with dots above and below. The A.V. supplies a phrase to complete the sense, "*I had fainted unless I had believed,*" etc. לִוְלֵא might well be a corruption of the poet's own name. "I, —, believed to see," etc. Again the closing verse of Ps. xxx. runs, "To the end that glory (כְּבוֹד LXX δόξα μου) may sing praise to thee," etc., where the name of the poet in place of כְּבוֹד would make excellent sense. In xxii. 9 we have the untranslatable

גַּל אֵל יְהוָה יַפְלִמֶהוּ

(A.V. "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him.") With גַּלֵּא as the name of the poet, like the Arabic Jelāl, the line would run, "As for Jelāl, the Lord will deliver him." The name, however, would not be Jelāl. Proper names of authors and other persons may be concealed, sometimes through textual corruption, in such places as the following in the Psalms: xxxvi. 1; lii. 1; lv. 3; lvi. title and verses 1 and 2; lviii. 1; lxiii. 9; and elsewhere. That the old Hebrew poets did not object to introduce proper names into their odes is shown by Ps. lx.

It has long been recognised that the name of God is often used in the Semitic languages to denote nothing more than the adjectives "great," "perennial," and the like. Thus in the A.V. we have "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains" (Ps. xxxvi. 6, הַרְרֵי אֵל, *lit.* "mountains of

God”), “the godly cedars” (lxxx. 10, אֲרָזֵי אֱלֹהִים, *lit.* “cedars of God”), “an exceeding great city” (Jon. iii. 3, עִיר גְּדוֹלָה לְאֱלֹהִים, *lit.* “a great city of God”: cf. Wright’s *Arabic Grammar*, ii. 150). But there are many other passages in which this construction is used. Thus in Ps. lxxviii. 15, “the hill of God” of the A.V. should be “a great hill”: in Gen. i. 2 “the spirit of God” (רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים) means “a mighty wind”; and similarly רִוּי יְהוָה, Isa. xl. 7, and נִשְׁמַת אֱלֹהִים, Job iv. 9. The practice, of which a few instances occur in the A.V., might be greatly extended in translating from Hebrew into English. Thus the expression “ark of God” would in English be “the sacred box” or “chest”: a “son of God” means a “good person,” “sons of God” “good people” (Job i. 6); the “hand” or rod “of God” (Job xix. 21; xxi. 9) means “calamity.” A striking example of this difference of idiom is the saying of the centurion at the Cross. In Matt. xxvii. 51, Mark xv. 39 it takes the form “Truly this was a son of God,” in Luke xxiii. 47 we have the Occidental equivalent “Certainly this was a righteous man.” The expressions are identical, but Matthew was thinking in Aramaic, Luke in Greek.

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