

## A QUESTIONABLE PLURAL IN HEBREW.

IN Hebrew, as is well known<sup>1</sup>, a plural noun is often used to express 'the idea of something composed of parts,' which would in English be expressed by a singular: e. g. פָּנִים, the face. It is thus used of spaces regarded, so it would seem, as wholes made up of innumerable parts or points: e. g. עֲמֻקִּים, the deep; אֶרֶץ רְחֹקִים, the far land. It is obviously far more difficult to account for a plural expressing a *single point*; and grammars, dictionaries, and commentaries alike appear to have passed over unnoticed an instance—probably the only instance—of such a plural in the Massoretic text.

This is the word תּוֹצְאוֹת, which is rendered very awkwardly in the E. V. by 'goings out.' It really means, as the contexts prove, the point at which a (boundary) line terminates, an extremity.

The word has other meanings in Ezek. xlvi 30; 1 Chron. v 16; Prov. iv 33, Ps. lxxviii 21. With these usages we are not concerned, nor is the plural in these cases open to question.

In the sense of 'extremity' or 'point of termination,' תּוֹצְאוֹת is used nineteen times (in Num. xxxiv and Joshua xv-xix). In these cases, had the original text a singular or a plural?

The facts are as follows:

1. In every case, the noun occurs as the subject of an expressed verb (היה).

2. In the present Hebrew text, (a) the noun as pointed is always plural. The consonantal text would admit of a singular punctuation in Num. xxxiv 8 (תּוֹצְאוֹת) and Joshua xvi 3 (תּוֹצְאוֹתוֹ). Otherwise the consonantal text of the noun is also decisively plural.

(b) The verb is plural in Num. xxxiv 5, 8, 9, 12; Joshua xv 7, 11, xvi 3, 8, xix 14, 22, 29; it is singular in Joshua xvii 18, xix 33. It is singular in the K'tib, plural in the K'ri in Num. xxxiv 4; Joshua xv 4, xviii 12, 14, 19.

3. In the Samaritan text of Num. xxxiv both verb and noun are in all five cases *singular*—v. 4 והיה תּוֹצְאוֹתוֹ; vv. 5, 8, 9, 12, והיה תּוֹצְאוֹתוֹ.

4. The LXX always translate by a singular verb and noun (δείξοντες), except in Joshua xvii 18, where the text varies and the noun is omitted, and in Joshua xix 33, where verb and noun are plural (against the Syriac and, so far as the verb is concerned, the Hebrew text).

5. The Syriac version (texts of Walton's *Polyglott*, and Lee) always translates by a plural noun and verb, except in Joshua xix 22, 33.

The verb always *precedes* the noun, and, therefore, the singular predicate in certain cases in the Hebrew text (above 2 b) does not necessarily point to an originally singular subject.

<sup>1</sup> Gesenius-Kautzsch<sup>26</sup>, § 124; Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax*, § 16.

But in view of the unparalleled use of a plural noun to denote a single point, I am inclined to conclude

(1) That the Samaritan text in Num. xxxiv is the original.

(2) That the LXX, except in Joshua xix 33, is a literal rendering of its Hebrew original and not an idiomatic rendering of our present Hebrew text.

(3) That the singular verbs of the K'tib are older than the plurals of the K'ri, and are a survival of the original text allowed to remain after the noun had become plural as standing *before* the subject and therefore excusable. In any case, the singular verb of the K'tib is more probably original than the plural of the K'ri. The K'tib should therefore have been retained by Paterson and Bennett in the Polychrome text of Numbers and Joshua.

(4) That subsequent to the date of the LXX, the plural noun in almost every case and the plural verb in most cases were substituted in the Hebrew text for original singulars. Sporadic traces of the earlier text are perhaps to be found in the Syriac of Joshua xix 22, 33.

The reason of the change to the plural is not clear; and the unique plural rendering by the LXX in Joshua xix 33 is more interesting than easy of explanation.

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### SARBÔG, SHURUPPAK.

THE *Hymn of the Soul* in the Acts of Thomas, edited first in Wright's *Apocryphal Acts*, pp. 274-279, and then again by Bevan in *Texts and Studies*, v 3, tells the story of the Soul's incarnation and subsequent return to its heavenly home under the figure of a Prince, who left his father's palace in the highlands of Persia to bring back with him the Pearl which was guarded in Egypt by the 'hissing Serpent that is in the midst of the Sea.' The geographical details are suggested with great skill, and modern names like Ctesiphon and Seleucia are generally avoided. A journey which ends by an encampment in Egypt near the Serpent-guardian of a magical Pearl is necessarily a fairy voyage, and the places on the route are more likely to be found in myth and legend than in the pages of a gazetteer. Although the ordinary road to the prosaic Egypt of actual fact passes through the towns and districts of the Upper Euphrates where the author of the Hymn may be supposed to have lived, it is noticeable that these places are never alluded to in the Hymn. For aught that appears the Prince may have been wafted from Babylonia straight through the great and mysterious Syrian Desert.

Three places are mentioned on the way. At *Maishân*, 'the mart of