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Some Ancient Variants in Hosea with Scribe's or Corrector's Mark

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THERE are some interesting variant readings in the book of Hosea, which are all accompanied by the mark or note of the scribe who copied the text or of the corrector who put them in the margin, whence they later came into the text. They are all the more interesting because as a rule glosses and variant readings are without the scribe's or corrector's statement, except the frequent $\text{היא} = i.e.$

The first example is in 9 13:

אפרים כאשר ראיתי לצור שתולה בנה
אפרים להוציא אל הרג בניו

The text of the first line is notoriously difficult, and the emendations and proposals of transpositions are numerous. And there is much justification for this feeling of perplexity, for the ancient Hebrew copyist who wrote down this line could not quite make it out himself, and so he wrote after אפרים, which he could plainly read, the note כאשר ראיתי, as far as I see (it is as follows) לצור שתולה בנה. That these three words are senseless in this connection everybody knows. Fortunately, however, a reader or another copyist put the correct text in the margin, whence it found its way into the text להוציא אל הרג בניו. Most likely this reading was taken from some better manuscript. According to common usage the corrupt reading with the scribe's statement כאשר ראיתי was left in the text side by side with the correct reading. It should have been removed, but apparently the text had already been invested with sanctity. This

should not be overlooked in connection with the history of the canon.¹

Another somewhat different note is found in 12 11 :

דברתי על הנביאים ואנכי חזן הרביתי
וביד הנביאים אדמה

Of all the proposed translations and emendations, most of which may be found in Harper's *Commentary on Amos and Hosea* (1905), not one seems to show that its author felt the awkwardness of the double הנביאים in such close conjunction. Everybody, however, feels that על הנביאים in the first line is impossible, and it is therefore usually and rightly changed to אל הנביאים in accordance with many other passages in which אל and על are confounded. Now, an ancient reader noticed this difficulty also, Yahveh could not mean here that he had spoken *against* or *concerning* the prophets, and so he put in the margin the note ביד הנביאים אָדְמָה, *I regard this as equivalent to ביד הנביאים*. This is his interpretation, and that he interprets the phrase correctly is beyond doubt. His marginal comment got into the text, was joined on to the first line by the copula, and has ever since created difficulties. Note again the reverence for the text.

There seems to be a third example of such corrections with a corrector's mark in 10 9. The case is not quite so clear here on account of certain corruptions in the context which must first be removed. It is quite clear to me that v. 8 is not correctly preserved. Not indeed that the genuineness of אֵין הַסֵּאת need be doubted with Wellhausen, Nowack, and Marti, for it is almost certainly genuine (van Hoonacker, Duhm), but the middle part of the verse, *thorns and thistles shall grow up on their altars*, is corrupt. This has so far escaped detection, simply because the text as it stands is

¹ The כֹּאשֵׁי רֵאיוֹי of the copyist will remind Assyriologists of the familiar *ul idi, I do not know*, of the copyists of the cuneiform inscriptions. Professor Paul Haupt has made use of this in his *Biblische Liebeslieder*, p. 27, where he suggests that לֹא יִדְשֵׁי in Cant. 6 12 was probably put in by a copyist who could not make out the first line in the manuscript from which he copied. Professor Haupt restores the reading conjecturally, *Erfüllt ist der Wunsch*. In Hos. 9 12 we do not need to resort to conjecture, because the correct text is preserved in the doublet which is given directly after it.

smooth, and sensible too if the preceding sentence alone is considered, for it carries on the thought of the destruction of the high places in the first part of the verse. But the wonderful sentence that follows with its striking portrayal of the despair of the Israelites, *and they shall say to the mountains cover us, and to the hills fall upon us*, is left unconnected with the preceding. It does not carry on the thought of v. 8 a. b. Indeed, the prediction that thorns and thistles will grow on the altars has carried us too far for this expression of despair which cannot immediately follow v. 8 b. Instead of the conventional sentence that we read there now, the text must have read originally somewhat as follows:

וְקָצוּ וְחָרְדוּ וְתָקְדוּ קַרְמֵי־מִזְבְּחֵיהֶם

for

קֶץ וְדָרְדָר יֵעָלוּ עַל־מִזְבְּחֵיהֶם

and horrified and trembling and full of anguish will be all who used to sacrifice on them (on the high places, lit. all their sacrificers), and they shall say to the mountains cover us, and to the hills fall upon us!

The changes in the proposed text are slight and graphically easily accounted for. And the accumulation of the terms of fear and horror is quite what we should expect immediately before that tragic sentence of v. 8 b.

Now follows our verse

מִיּוֹם הַנִּבְעָה חֲסֵאת יִשְׂרָאֵל

שֶׁם עָמַד לֹא תִשִּׁיב בְּנִבְעָה וְגוֹ'

The long list of translations and emendations in Harper's *Commentary* witnesses again to the difficulty and apparent hopelessness of the text. In the light of our first two examples of variants with scribal marks, I venture to suggest that an ancient Hebrew student of the text of Hosea wrote a marginal note on *מִיּוֹם הַנִּבְעָה* prefacing it by *שֶׁם עָמַד*, *there stood*: *ולא תשיב בנבעה*. And most probably this was not a conjecture of his, but the reading of a better manuscript from which he had taken it. He meant, of course, that this correction should take the place of *מִיּוֹם הַנִּבְעָה*. If it had simply been substituted, there would have been no difficulty,

but again the corrupt text was retained, and the correction incorporated, unfortunately with a slightly wrong division.

If we take the corrected reading with the immediately preceding context, we get the following well connected and original sounding sentence, *and they shall say to the mountains cover us, and to the hills fall upon us, but the sin of Israel shall not protect them in (with) the hills!* "The sin of Israel" had just been mentioned and explained in v. 8. Punctuate **הַצָּמַח**, and **הַשִּׁינִים** from **שִׁינִי**, **סִינִי**, *to fence about, protect*, cf. **שָׂכַךְ**, **סָכַךְ**. For the thought compare Isa. 2 10. 19. 21, Rev. 6 18.

The reading makes it evident that the immediately following words **מִלְחָמָה עַל בְּנֵי עוֹלָה**, which are now part of v. 9, belong to a new sentence which also has suffered slightly as a result of the incorporation of the correction. The parallelism shows that we must take **בְּאוֹתַי** of v. 10 with the preceding, but reading it **הַבְּאוֹתַי**, the **ה** had been omitted by haplography, cf. **עוֹלָה**: *I will bring war upon the evil-doers*. The parallel line makes this quite certain, whether we read with the Masoretic text *and nations will be gathered against them*, or with the slight change of **וְאִסְפוּ** to **וְאִסְפוּ**, cf. Mic. 4 6, *and I will gather nations against them*. The tenses are, of course, prophetic. In either case **וְאִסְרוּ** appears to be a corrupt variant of **וְאִסְפוּ**, the corrupt word remaining in the text with the correction, as usual.

Presumably these three variants are but representatives of similar ones in other parts of the Hebrew Bible. The recognition of the formulas

כַּאֲשֶׁר רִאִיתִי
אֲדַמָּה
שֵׁם עַמֵּד

may perhaps unlock some other difficult passages. Incidentally they reveal the personal and even subjective side of the work of the ancient scribes and students. For that reason their readings must be subjected to just as rigid criticism as those of later scholars, for they need not necessarily be the original readings either. These writers were as little inerrant as the authors of the later *Qerels*. But it is of much

interest that they were all very ancient, for they antedate the Greek Version, in which their readings are all found.

A similar scribal note in the Greek translation of Ez. 43 s has been pointed out by Dr. John P. Peters in this JOURNAL, vol. xii (1893), p. 47, where *διαγεγραμμένοι* is shown to be a corrector's remark = *erased*. Dr. Peters adduces parallels from the Babylonian and Chinese scribes.