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The Original Home of the Story of Job

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PROFESSOR MACDONALD published in this JOURNAL some years ago (vol. xiv, 68-71) convincing proof that the story of Job as told in the Prologue and Epilogue of our book is by a different author from the author of the poem, and that it originally contained the portrait of a different Job. Afterward Professor Macdonald presented (*AJSL*, xiv, 137-164) some external evidence in corroboration of this thesis.

Later Professor Jastrow published in this JOURNAL (vol. xxv, pp. 135-191) an able study of a poem from the library of Assurbanipal concerning a high official or king of Nippur called Tâbi-utul-Bêl, which presents many parallels to the poem of Job, and raised the question whether the story of Job may not have had a Babylonian origin.¹

If there is any connection between this Babylonian poem and our story of Job, it was only of the most general character. It is clear that our poem of Job is the free composition of one of the world's greatest poets. Such coincidence of imagery as may be found with the Babylonian poem is due to similarity of theme and not to conscious borrowing. Moreover, the Prologue and Epilogue, as Professor Macdonald pointed out, and as is now generally accepted, represent an

¹ In addition Jastrow published a German translation of all the text then known in his *Religion Babyloniens und Assyriens*, ii. 120-133. Translations are also found in Zimmern's *Babylonische Hymnen und Gebete*, Leipzig, 1905, 28-30, and Weber's *Literatur der Babylonier und Assyrier*, 135-137. A more recently discovered fragment is published by R. Campbell Thompson in *PSBA*, xxxii. 18-24, and the whole is translated again by M. F. Martin in the *Journal Asiatique*, July-August, 1910, pp. 75-143.

earlier form of the story, the Job of which was not a critic of the divine government, but was an example of uncomplaining patience. Now that R. Campbell Thompson has recovered a tablet which contains, though in fragmentary form, the turning point of the Babylonian story, it appears (though the fragmentary text leaves some doubt about it) that that form of the story represented Job as finally discovering a conjurer (*mašmašu*) who was able to make for him effective intercession with his god. Assuming for the moment that the three forms of the story spring from the same root, the Babylonian tale was told to magnify the power of magicians, the story of the Prologue and Epilogue to glorify patient submission, and the poem to demonstrate the inadequacy of an out-worn theology.

It is quite clear that, if the story traveled westward from Babylonia, it traveled orally in bare outline, shorn of all local features. The name of the sufferer, Job, is quite different from the name of Tābi-utul-Bél, and the localities mentioned in our Biblical story, indefinite as they are, certainly have nothing to do with the neighborhood of Nippur.

It is a well-known fact that stories travel and attach themselves to new localities and new characters. Two or three years ago the writer was told in a remote country village an amusing story of the school days of Colonel Roosevelt. Repeating it some weeks later to a man who had traveled much, he was informed that that story was told in England forty years ago of the school days of the author of *Tom Brown at Rugby*.

The locality, then, to which the story of Job had attached itself was probably much nearer to Palestine than Nippur. The author of the Prologue refers to it vaguely as among the "children of the East" (1 3).

A study of other parts of the Old Testament reveals the fact that there were two different traditions concerning the location of Uz. Gen. 22 21 (J) and 10 23 (P) make Uz a son of Aram. This implies that it lay to the northeast, but it might be anywhere between the Hauran and the Euphrates. On the other hand, Gen. 36 28 (P*) and Lam. 4 21 point to

a locality in or near Edom. Jeremiah in 25 20 mentions Uz between Egypt and Philistia, as though it lay between Palestine and Egypt, but it is not impossible that Jeremiah may have had in mind a territory near Edom.

Similarly, outside the canonical text we find evidence of two views as to the location of Uz. Shalmaneser II of Assyria (860-825 B.C.) received tribute from Sasi, the Uzzite (Obelisk inscription, l. 154). As this Sasi is mentioned in connection with the men of Patin, it is clear that the Uzzite must have belonged west of the Euphrates. The connection with Patin would lead one to look for it east of the Lebanon, but that consideration is not absolutely decisive. Again, Josephus in his *Antiquities*, i. 6. 4, says, "Of the four sons of Aram Uz founded Trachonitis and Damascus." Josephus, then, placed Uz to the northeast of the Sea of Galilee, but not so far away as the inscription of Shalmaneser seemed to do. Shalmaneser's reference was, however, vague, and it is quite possible that both he and Josephus referred to the same place.

On the other hand, the addition to the Hebrew text of Job 42 17, which is found in the Greek, Sahidic, Ethiopic, and Arabic versions, places Uz "on the borders of Edom and Arabia," and this view is perpetuated in the Testament of Job.

Of these two traditions it is clear that the oldest is the one which places Uz in an Aramæan and not in an Edomite locality. The latter tradition is not older than Jeremiah, and it is not certain that it can be traced back of a late supplementer to the Priestly Document, the author of Gen. 36 23. The Aramæan tradition, on the other hand, is as old as the J Document (Gen. 22 21) and that writer's contemporary, Shalmaneser II, and can be traced through the main P Document and Josephus down to the end of the first century of our era.

It is interesting to note that this older tradition would be satisfied if Uz were situated to the eastward of the Sea of Galilee, where many years ago Wetzstein found villages named for Job, *Dér Eyyub* (Job's house) and *Maqam Eyyub*

(Job's place) (see his "Anhang" to Delitzsch's *Das Buch Job*, p. 551 ff.), and where later Schumacher found a place called by the common people "The Threshing Floor of Uz" (see Schumacher, *Across the Jordan*, p. 179, and Ewing, *Arab and Druze at Home*, p. 17). These places lie an hour to an hour and a half south of Nâwa, which is situated some twenty miles east of the north end of the Sea of Galilee. Wetzstein further pointed out that the home of Eliphaz the Temanite was to be found in the village of Tema, distant the journey of a day or a little more to the eastward in Jebel ed-Druz (cf. Ewing, *op. cit.* 19 ff.), and that Zophar the Naamathite came from the village of En-No'eme (spelled En-Nu'eme on the map of Baedeker's *Palästina*, ed. 1910, *op. p.* 144), which lies a little to the east of Der'at, and less than a day's journey from the "Threshing Floor of Uz." Tema and En-No'eme are so appropriate as the homes of Eliphaz and Zophar that it seems as though this must indeed be the country in which the Job legend either grew up or took root after it was transplanted. All that it needs to make it certain is to find a town in the region from which Bildad the Shuhite could plausibly come and to get rid of some difficulties to be mentioned later. Wetzstein saw the original of Shuhu in the "city Sueta," which some medieval writers (Eugesippus, William of Tyre, and Marino Sanuto) mention as existing in the region, and which Wetzstein thinks may have been a name for the country to the west of the Hauran mountains (*op. cit.* 569 ff.). Unsatisfying as this solution of Shuhu is, it seems clear that if the Uz and Tema and Na'amah of our Job lay in the Hauran, the original of Shuhu must have been there also, and could not have been the distant Aramæan country of Suḥu on the Euphrates with which Assurnasirpal had trouble (cf. *KB*, i. 99 ff.).

If we could regard the localities mentioned in the Prologue to Job, then, as all lying in the Hauran, the conditions of the older tradition as to the locality of Uz would be satisfied, and the origin of the younger tradition would easily be explained. The Teman of Edom was much better known to the dwellers west of the Jordan than the Tema of Jebel

ed-Druz. This last place is never elsewhere mentioned in the Bible, while their Scriptures kept the memory of Teman in Edom alive among the Jews. It was natural, accordingly, for the second tradition to spring up. Perhaps at the same time Bildad was identified with the distant Shuhites, who are said in Gen. 25 2 to be descended from Abraham through Keturah.

There is an objection to this view of the origin of these traditions, which at first sight seems important, but upon closer scrutiny disappears. In Job 1 15. 17 the Sabæans and Chaldæans are said to have each had a part in destroying Job's property. While it appears from Eze. 21 20 ff. that the Chaldæan king Nebuchadrezzar may have marched against Rabbath Ammon, going in all probability through the Hauran, it is improbable that in a little district like that in which the "Threshing Floor of Uz," Tema, and No'eme lie, two distant nations like the Sabæans and Chaldæans should be on hand at the opportune moment to help on Job's trial. Grant that it is only a story, still it seems unlikely that, if the story originated here, these nations were a part of the tale. The Septuagint, Sahidic, and Ethiopic versions lead us to believe that in the original account neither of these nations played any part. In v. 15 instead of Sabæans (שָׁבָא), these versions read "those who take captive" (Gr. *αἰχμαλωτεύοντες*, so Sahidic, Ethiopic), *i.e.* the reading was from the root שָׁבָה², "take captive," from which the phrase, שָׁבָה שְׁבָיָה, "lead thy captivity captive," Jud. 5 12, comes. Clearly, then, the original reading here was שָׁבָה, "raiders." One can understand how שָׁבָה might be changed to שָׁבָא, but the contrary change would be improbable.

Similarly, in v. 17 these versions read "horsemen" (Gr. *οἱ ἵππεῖς*, cf. Sahidic, Ethiopic), which is the Hebrew שָׁרָיִם, a word that could easily be corrupted into שָׁבָאִים,

² Three possibilities are presented by the reading of the versions. 1. The Hebrew may have been שָׁבָיִם, but this is improbable as it would involve a change of two Hebrew verbs from singular to plural. 2. It may have been the singular participle, שָׁבָה. 3. It may have been שָׁבָה, regarded by the Septuagint translators as a collective noun. One must choose between the second and third alternatives.

and which there is as much reason for regarding as the original reading here as for regarding **שׁוֹבָה** as the original reading in v. 15. The removal of Sabæans and Chaldæans from the original story, and the substitution of "raiders" and "horsemen" greatly increases the probability that Wetzstein was right in finding the home of our form of the Job story in the Hauran.

The introduction of the Sabæans and Chaldæans into the narrative was, no doubt, made in order to give Job a greater prominence. It helped to this end by making his wealth seem such that distant nations found it worth while to attack him. This tendency to glorify Job appears in the addition to 42 17 already referred to. That addition has been preserved to us in two recensions, the earlier and shorter one in the Arabic version, the later and longer one in the Septuagint, Sahidic, and Ethiopic versions. According to the shorter recension Job is identified with Jobab, a king of Edom, while Eliphaz is the king of the Temanites. According to the longer recension Job came of a line of kings of Uz; Eliphaz was also king of the Temanites; Zophar, king of the Minæans in South Arabia, while Bildad was tyrant of the Shuhites. In these two recensions the tendency to exalt Job and to make the theatre of the story an international one has gone still further. Our present Hebrew text, which introduces the Sabæans and Chaldæans, contains but the beginnings of this tendency. In the Testament of Job the glorification of Job has gone to the extreme. King Job tells at length of the truly royal munificence with which he helped the poor, while his royal friends come to condole with him accompanied by splendid bodyguards. Thus in the end Job, like Tâbi-utul-Bêl, was regarded as a royal sufferer.

Wetzstein's theory of the location, then, accounts for the introduction of the story into Israel, accounts for the two traditions concerning the home of Job, and is supported by the fact that the natural growth of a popular story accounts for all features inconsistent with such a cradle land.³

³ Since this article left the hands of the writer, Dhorme, *Revue Biblique* for January, 1911, pp. 102-107, has argued that the tradition of an Edomite locality is the earlier, but his reasons do not seem convincing.