

Ecclesiasticus v 10.

הִיָּה קָמוּךְ עַל דְּעָתְךָ
וְאַחֲרָיִהּ יְהִי דְבָרְךָ

Here the Greek and Syriac offer a text identical with the Hebrew. 'Let thy speech be one' can only be explained as meaning 'Be consistent in speech'. The connexion with *vs.* 11-13 suggests, however, that the thought of the writer is that, while mental apprehension should be swift and sure, speech should be *considered and deliberate*. The simple correction of אָחֵר for אַחֲרָיִהּ makes the couplet run—

'Be steadfast (i. e. well-assured) in thy understanding,
And afterward let thy speech be'.

The meaning is—'Do not speak till you are well-assured of what you have to say'.

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PSALM LXXXV 9.

THE recent discussion in this JOURNAL of the Hebrew text of the passage above referred to has reminded me that about half a century ago I sent to the late Professor Weir, of Glasgow, a conjectural emendation of the last clause of the verse, and that in some extracts from that scholar's note-books, published in the *Expositor* a few years back, I had the surprise of finding my conjecture recorded, with my name and address appended.

My proposal was to read וְאַל יִשְׁנוּ לְכַסְלָהּ. וְאַל יִשְׁרִי לֵב קָלָהּ instead of וְאַל יִשְׁנוּ לְכַסְלָהּ. This was of course suggested by the rendering of the LXX, καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐπιστρέφοντας πρὸς αὐτὸν καρδίαν. It is evident that the Greek translator read לֵב; and if this reading be correct the acceptance of 'Selah' seems inevitable, in spite of the absence of διάψαλμα in the Greek; the LXX and the Masoretic text do not always agree with regard to the insertion of this word. It appears to me that one strong argument in favour of the originality of the reading לֵב is that in the older Hebrew alphabet there is very little resemblance between the letters ב and כ, which in the later square character are almost indistinguishable. As the MS which the Greek translator had before him was presumably written in the

ancient script, it is not likely that he can have misread a כ as a ב, while the converse misreading on the part of a later scribe would be quite natural.

On the other hand, the Greek translator appears to have read יִשׁוּבוּ as the received Hebrew text does; and as it did not occur to him to suppose that וַאֲל had here a vocalization different from that which it has in the two preceding clauses, he had to extract the most plausible sense he could out of an ungrammatical passage. I am bound to confess that the palaeographical consideration which I have adduced in support of the reading לֵב is a somewhat serious difficulty in the way of my proposal to correct יִשׁוּבוּ into יִשְׂרִי; for although the ב and the ר are sufficiently similar in the ancient Hebrew character, the י and the ו are about as unlike as any two letters could be.

Whether my suggestion has any value I must leave it to the judgment of better Hebraists than myself to determine. I am quite aware that it is not free from difficulty. I have already referred to the palaeographical objection; and it may perhaps be doubted whether so common an expression as לֵב יִשְׂרִי would be likely to be corrupted at all, even in copying from a badly written MS. Then I have felt from the first that the verse, as I proposed to read it, seems to conclude rather feebly and unrhymically; but I doubt whether any other conjecture that has been offered is in this respect much better. The traditional text (in which many eminent scholars have found no stumbling-block) gives excellent sense and rhythm; but the sentence comes in rather abruptly, and I find it difficult to persuade myself that וַאֲל has not the same pronunciation and meaning in the three successive clauses. The case for לֵב, too, appears to me to be strong. While I do not feel great confidence in the correctness of my own conjecture, I cannot help thinking that the received text requires emendation of some kind.

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