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ART. I.—SOME LINGUISTIC PECULIARITIES IN
GENESIS.

IT is generally acknowledged that the whole air and aspect of Genesis is early, simple, archaic, and patriarchal, rather than Israelite, Davidic, or Exilic. But if the book is really the earliest part of the Bible, one might expect to find some peculiarities in its language which would distinguish it, in part at least, even from the later books of the Pentateuch, and which would make a strong line of severance between its pages and those of the later histories. A pre-Mosaic book could hardly be expected to be in the same style as those written in or about the period of the Exile.

When this subject is broached in conversation, the reply usually given is that there are no such linguistic differences; and that this disappointing fact is either owing to the conservatism of the Hebrew tongue, which remained as stationary as the Assyrian did, or else it is to be regarded as a proof that Genesis is not early, and that its date as a composition must be brought down to the period of the Exile. But is it absolutely certain that Genesis contains no peculiar linguistic features, and that it possesses no marks by which its primæval character may be ascertained? The careful study of the Hebrew text, and the constant use of a Hebrew Concordance, ought to enable any ordinary inquirer to answer the question one way or another. I propose to answer it simply and briefly, and for convenience I divide the subject as follows: (i.) I note certain undifferentiated forms; (ii.) certain verbal reminiscences; (iii.) peculiar words in the story of the Flood; (iv.) peculiarities in the patriarchal narrative; (v.) the story of Joseph; (vi.) the proper names; (vii.) provincialisms.

I. Undifferentiated Forms.

One of the most remarkable features of the Pentateuch as a whole is this, that the third person feminine pronoun is spelt in the same way as the masculine. Whereas in all the later Hebrew books it is, in unpointed Hebrew, HIA (היא), in the Pentateuch it is HVA (היא). The word occurs hundreds of times, and there are only about a dozen passages in which the ordinary spelling is adopted, and these may well be taken as copyists' slips. The later Hebrew authorities who inserted the vowel-points so as to secure the traditional pronunciation, have put the true feminine vowel-point under the middle letter, but have not ventured to alter the letter itself. It is as if we put a dot over the letter *u* to show that it stands for *i*. This strange form thus stands as a monument on almost every page of the Pentateuch. How is it to be explained? It can hardly be an accident. There are, indeed, frequent changes in copying owing to the similarity of the ordinary Hebrew letters U or V (ו) and I (י), though in the older Hebrew, as represented by the Samaritan and Moabite character, there is no marked resemblance. Moreover, there is too much method in this case to justify such a supposition. The phenomenon seems to point back to a time when the Hebrews had the same form for the masculine and feminine pronoun, and made no difference in writing *she* and *he*.

The curious thing is that the same is true of the Hebrew words for "young man" and "young woman" all through the Pentateuch (*i.e.*, in about twenty passages, the only exception being Deut. xxii. 19). In all these places the later authorities, instead of altering the text (נער), have introduced a note at the foot giving the feminine termination (נערה).

We thus possess two witnesses to the archaic and undifferentiated state of the text of the Pentateuch as it stands.

It is well known that the name *Adam* means "man," and consequently is capable of a definite article. In the earliest passages where the word occurs it is "*the* man"; and it is not till chap. iv. 25 that the definite article is dropped, and Adam stands forth as a differentiated personage. Our Revisers have noticed this fact, and have not introduced the name Adam into the Bible till this verse, except in two places where we have the dative case (see iii. 17, 21). In these the Hebrew letters leave the matter open, and the Revisers have deferred to the later Masoretic pointing, though whether they were right in doing so is open to question.

The name of *Israel*, like that of Adam, has to do double duty in the Bible. In the later books it stands either for the

twelve tribes or for the ten. In Exodus it stands for the family or clan, the Beni-Israel. But in Genesis it means the actual patriarch. His children are called "sons of Jacob" in chap. xxxiv. 7, and it is not till chap. xlii. 5 that the "sons of Israel" are so called, and they were still "all one man's sons."¹

No distinction is more frequent in later books than that between the Israelitish *people* (עַם, 'am) and the surrounding *nations* (goyim, גוֹיִם); but the position of Israel is not thus differentiated in Genesis. The word *goi* in the singular and plural is freely used of Abraham's seed, and likewise the word 'am of outsiders. Thus we read: "I will make of thee a great nation" (xii. 2); "I will make thee nations" (xvii. 6); "a nation and a gathering of nations shall be from thee" (xxxv. 11); "He (Ephraim) shall become the fulness (or filling up) of nations" (xlviii. 19). In all these places *goyim* is used.

II. Verbal Reminiscences.

In chap. iii. 16, 17 we read: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow . . . in sorrow thou shalt eat." The word here translated "sorrow" is *itzavon* (יְצַוֹן). The only other place where this form occurs is chap. v. 29, which is a manifest reference to the curse on Adam: "He (Noah) shall comfort us concerning our work and concerning the sorrow (A.V. toil) of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." This is not only a reminiscence, but a verbal one, so that this form of the word is practically unique.

In chap. xvii. we have the institution of the rite of circumcision. According to ver. 12, "He that is born in the house (*i.e.*, in the family), and he that is bought with money from every son of an alien" must be circumcised. As for the uncircumcised man, that soul shall be cut off from his people. When the Passover was appointed (Exod. xii.) no "son of an alien" was to eat thereof (ver. 43), but every man's servant that is "bought with money" and "circumcised" (ver. 44) was to eat it. Here the double verbal reminiscence is clear, though the Hebrew words are not confined to these passages.

The blessing given to Jacob in chap. xxvii. 29, though it resembles that given to Abraham in chap. xii. 3, is not altogether the same. The words in Gen. xii. 3 run thus: "I will bless him that blesseth thee, and him that lightly esteemeth (קָלָל) thee I will curse (אָרַר)"; but in Gen. xxvii. they run thus: "Cursed be he that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee." It is not surprising that these remarkable

¹ Chapter xxxii. 32 is a note, and the expression "children of Israel" is naturally used there in its later sense.

utterances should be known in the East in later days, or that Balaam should be led to incorporate one of them into his prophecy. The form of blessing as bestowed on Jacob was that which he was most likely to have heard; and this he cites (Numb. xxiv. 9), combining it with a verbal reminiscence of Jacob's benediction on his son Judah (Gen. xlix. 9).

One hardly cares to speak of the use of a technical or ceremonial word as a reminiscence; but when it is connected with a rite, as in the case of the Sabbath, or with a peculiar custom, as when a younger brother had to marry his deceased brother's widow, the use of a special word emphasizes the relationship between the more ancient and the less ancient observance. Patriarchal usages were the seeds of some important Mosaic laws. Thus, in connection with the last-named custom, there is a particular word, *yabam* (יָבַם), which binds together Gen. xxxviii. 8, Deut. xxv. 5, 7, and Ruth i. 15. It occurs nowhere else.

There is another apparent reminiscence which deserves attention. In the story of the Flood we read of animals which were regarded as clean and of others which were not clean (Gen. vii. 2, 8). Some think that this distinction between two classes of animals did not exist until the Mosaic age (Lev. xi.); but this is pure imagination. The Levitical distinction was probably based on an earlier one. But it has not been generally noticed that the Levitical word for "unclean" (*thama*, טָמֵא) is *not* used in the narrative of the Flood. In fact, this noun is never used in Genesis or in Exodus, and the verb barely exists in Genesis, and then in a somewhat different sense (Gen. xxxiv. 5, 13, 27). Strange as it may seem, the expression "not clean" (לֹא טָהוֹר) is never used in the whole Bible after the story of the Flood, the later ceremonial word "unclean" having entirely taken its place. If the narrative of the Flood were written in late times, is it likely that this would have been the case?

III. Peculiarities in the Story of the Flood.

Besides the singular fact just mentioned, the story of the Flood contains a series of words of deep interest and of marked peculiarity. As to the word "Flood" itself, it is only used in this connection and in Ps. xxix. 10, which is a verbal reminiscence, and which the Revisers render:

The Lord sat *as King* at the Flood,
Yea, the Lord sitteth *as King* for ever.

It is literally "a torrent." A different form of the word is used in Isa. xxx. 23, xliv. 4, etc. I may mention, in passing, that eight different Hebrew words are translated "flood" in the A. V.

The word for the ark (תֵּבָה) is only used elsewhere of that in which Moses was exposed. The "living substance" (vii. 4) which was to be destroyed is literally "the crop" (יֵרוֹב), but the word only occurs again in Deut. xi. 6. The so-called "giants" (vi. 8), or *nephilim*, are only mentioned again in Numb. xiii. 33.

The words "My spirit shall not always strive with man" (vi. 3) have puzzled translators from the earliest times. The word rendered "strive" (רָוַי) is in its accepted form unique, and the conglomerate word (בִּשְׂנֵהוּ) rendered "for-that-he-is-also-(flesh)" is also unique. The verb rendered to "bring a cloud" in chap. ix. 14 is nowhere else used in this sense, but occurs in the *post* form for the "observing times," or cloud-gazing. Once more, the word rendered "enlarge" (*yapheth*, פִּת) in the utterance "God shall enlarge Japheth" is never used again in this form, and is evidently introduced here in connection with the name Japheth.

It may be added that the simple ejaculation (הִבְרָה) rendered "Go to!" in chaps. xi. 3 and xxxviii. 16 and Exod. i. 10 is not found elsewhere.

IV. The Record of the Patriarchal Age.

In the Patriarchal narrative there are some obsolete customs, and some rare, if not unique, forms which deserve notice.

To "lift the foot" in the sense of starting for a journey is only found in chap. xxix. 1. To be "gathered to one's people" is an expression used only of the patriarchs and of Moses and Aaron. Other forms of expression afterwards took its place. The strange custom of putting the hand under the thigh in connection with an oath is only referred to in chaps. xxiv. 27 and xlvii. 29. The word used for the pitching of a tent, which occurs twice in chap. xxxi. 25 in the story of Laban and Jacob, is generally used of the sounding of a trumpet. The word, in fact (*taka'*, תִּקַּע), represents the sound either of a hammer striking a tent-peg or of a trumpet blast. It is only used again, however, of pitching a tent in Jer. vi. 3. The "binding" of Isaac represents a unique word (*'akad*, עִקַּד); so with the word "a hundred-fold" (Gen. xxvi. 12). The word for "seething" pottage (xxv. 29) is never used elsewhere in this sense. The same is the case with the word for "feeding" in the next verse. Laban is twice accused of changing Jacob's wages *ten times* (xxx. 7, 41); but the word translated "times" is not found elsewhere.

In chap. vii. 11 we read of a date in Noah's *life*; in xxiii. 1 of the period of Sarah's *life*; in xxv. 7 of Abraham's *life*;

and in xlvi. 8, 9 of Jacob's *life*. It seems strange that this simple form of expression died out, though the Hebrew word itself is such a common one. The idiom "large enough" (*lit.*, "wide of hands"), in chap. xxxiv. 21 is only found again in Judges xviii. 10. The pieces of money (xxxiii. 19) are literally *kesitahs*. The word is used again by way of verbal reminiscence in Josh. xxiv. 32. The only other place where it occurs is Job xlii. 11.

The verb *racash* (רָכַשׁ), which signifies the "possession" of goods, is only used in Genesis, though the kindred noun is found in the later books. The word used for "sheep" in Gen. xxx. 32, etc., is never used after the Pentateuch. The word translated "furnace" in chap. xix. 28 is never used after the Book of Exodus. The "quiver," the "savoury meat," and the "deceiver" of chap. xxvii. stand for forms which occur nowhere else. The "young pigeon" of chap. xv. 9 is only found again in Deut. xxxii. 11, and the verb used for "dividing" it (ver. 10) occurs nowhere else, though a noun formed from it is found in Jer. xxxiv. 18, 19. The "veil" of chap. xxiv. 65 and xxxviii. 14 is never used again. The same is the case with the particular form of the word rendered "pledge" in chap. xxxviii. 17, 18, 20, and with the expression for "obtaining children" in chap. xiii. 3 and xvi. 2.

In chap. xviii. 21 we read, "I will see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it." The word *calah* (כָּלָה), here rendered "altogether," is never used again in this adverbial sense except in Exod. xi. 1, "He shall thrust you out hence altogether."

Perhaps it ought to be pointed out that the documents comprised in the earliest part of Genesis may be translations into Hebrew from a language more of the Accadian cast. The only difficulty in this view is that the proper names, such as Adam, Eve, Cain, Seth, have Hebrew explanations attached to them; and the same is the case with names of places, *e.g.*, Eden, Nod, and Babel. This difficulty, however, may prove to be not insurmountable. Perhaps the late Mr. C. Forster's dream of the discovery of the "one primæval language" may yet be realized.

V. The Story of Joseph.

In chap. xxxvii. 36 and xxxix. 1 Potiphar is called "the captain of the guard." The word used for "guard" in these chapters (*Thavach*, טָבַח) is never used of an Israelite guard. In 1 Sam. ix. 23, 24 it refers to a cook; and it is also used in Kings and Jeremiah of the Chaldean guard.

The expression for "prison" used in chaps. xxxix. and xl.

occurs nowhere else. The same is the case with the word for the "interpretation" of dreams in chaps. xl. and xli., and for the "white" baskets of chap. xl. 16. The word translated "provender" in chap. xxiv. 25, 32, xlii. 27, and xliii. 24 is never used afterwards except in Judges xix. 19. In chap. xlii. 4, 38, and xlv. 29 we read of "mischief" befalling; but the word only occurs again in Exod. xxi. 22, 23, though its late use may be traced in the newly-discovered Hebrew Ecclesiasticus.

In chap. xlv. 17 we have the expression "lade your beasts." The word translated "lade" is used nowhere else in this sense, and the word for "beasts" is only to be found in Exod. xxii. 5, Numb. xx. 4, 8, 11, and in Ps. lxxviii. 48, which refers to the Mosaic narrative.

It has often been pointed out that three Hebrew words are translated "sack" in this narrative. One is the word "sack" itself (*sak*, שַׁק), which shows that the material brought its name with it to England from the East; another is an ambiguous word which would serve for any household goods; but the third, which occurs no less than fifteen times in this story, never appears again. It was not a corn-sack, but a pouch for money and personal necessities, and might well have been translated "bag." Strange that anyone should detect signs of diverse authors in the use of these diverse words! Compare the use of three words for "window" in the story of the Flood.

In chap. xliii. 11 we meet with the words "take of the best-fruits of the land." The word "best-fruits" (*Zimrah*, זִמְרָה) never occurs again except in a musical sense, though the cognate verb is used of pruning. In the next verse the word translated "oversight" occurs nowhere else in this form. In chap. xlvii. 2, "He took some of his brethren," the word rendered "some" is never used again in this sense. It ordinarily means an extremity or boundary. In the seventeenth verse of this chapter the word translated "he fed them" is always used elsewhere not of *feeding*, but of *leading*.

VI. The Evidence of Proper Names.

It is plain that Genesis contains many rare words for ordinary things. This is to be expected if the work is wholly or mainly pre-Mosaic, but is not easily accountable on the other hypothesis. It should be added that the proper names in Genesis are a perfect treasury of remarkable roots. I only here refer to one or two of the most familiar names. The root *raham* in the name Abraham is not known in Hebrew, and must be looked for in Arabic. The verb from which the name of *Israel* is formed occurs nowhere else except in Hos. xii. 34,

which is a verbal reminiscence of Gen. xxxii. 28. The verb from which *Jacob* gets his name is only used in two verbal references to his history (Hos. xii. 3; Jer. ix. 4), and in Job xxxvii. 4; whilst the other wrestling word (*abak*, אַבַּק) from which possibly *Jabbok* got its name, never occurs except in chap. xxxii. 24.

It may be added that there are places named in Genesis which afterwards occur no more, such as *Mamre* (xiii. 18, etc.); compare *Moreh* (Gen. xii. 6 and Deut. xi. 30); whilst others spring into being and have their names accounted for in the Patriarchal history, e.g., *Bethel*, and *Mahanaim* (xxxii. 2).

VII. *Provincialisms.*

The question of provincialisms and dialectal differences is an obscure one, but will repay examination. Some things are clear, and others will be cleared up by further discoveries. *Laban*, for example, talked in a different dialect from that of *Jacob*, and called the "heap of witness" by a different name (xxxi. 47). *Leah* and *Rachel* naturally talked their father's language; and we cannot be surprised to find that when *Leah* bore *Zebulon*, and said, "God hath endowed me with a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me," the words "endow," "dowry," and "dwell" occur nowhere else. The word for "dowry" (זֹבֵד) is, however, in the newly found Hebrew *Ecclesiasticus*. Again, when *Abimelech* made terms with *Abraham* (xxi. 23), he said, "Swear that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my *son*, nor with my *son's-son*." The words "son" and "son's-son" only occur again in Job xviii. 19 and Isa. xiv. 22. The book of *Job* has so many strange words in it that we are not surprised to find these; but it is curious that they should occur also in *Isaiah*. But this is only one out of many verbal relationships between these books. The words now referred to are to be found in the Hebrew *Ecclesiasticus*, which evidently contains some interesting old provincialisms.

The "dukes" of *Edom* (Gen. xxxvi. 15, etc.) had an official title (אֶלִיָּא), which is used only of them in the historical books, though afterwards it occurs in a more general sense. The Midianite name of a "castle" (xxv. 16) is only used again in *Numb.* xxxi. 10, where also it is Midianite. The word used of the "field" (A.V. country) of *Edom* (xxxii. 3) is never used of the land of *Israel*, but of *Moab*, *Amalek*, *Philistia*, and *Syria*.

With regard to all these expressions, we may regard them not as marks of lateness, but as peculiar characteristics of special families, persons, and places. They would lurk in a language for centuries, and be used in people's home life, even

though they might be avoided on public occasions; just as many who naturally said "Sibboleth" would make a great effort to say "Shibboleth" to save their lives.

The typical chapter for the study of provincialisms is the twenty-fourth, which gives us the steward's narrative of his mission to Haran. This steward we naturally take to be Eliezer of Damascus. He is adjured to be faithful in a peculiar and solemn way, as in the presence of the God of heaven¹ and earth. He is to go to Abraham's country, and to his kindred or family, which had hardly been mentioned since the beginning of the twelfth chapter. Accordingly he goes to the city of Nahor, but, strange to say, he omits to name it, though he tells us that it is in Aram Naharaim (A.V. Mesopotamia), which the inscriptions call Naharina. The city or region is called Padan Aram in chap. xxv. 20, and Haran (Kharran) in chap. xxvii. 43. He now prays to his master's God that He would "send-good-speed," using a word which is found nowhere else in this exact sense. The word for the "damsel" occurs five times in the chapter—of course, in its masculine form. He asks that a particular act may indicate the "appointed" damsel. Here, again, he uses a word which is not found elsewhere in this sense. In ver. 17 he says, "let me drink"—literally, "let me swallow" (שָׁבַע). This word is found elsewhere only in Job xxxix. 24. The damsel empties her pitcher into the trough or "cistern," the word for which only occurs again in chap. xxx. 38, when Jacob is in Laban's domain. The man "wonders" (ver. 25); here we have another unique usage (וָאֵלֵךְ). He gives her a golden earring, such as Jacob's wives had in later days (xxxv. 4), and such as the Israelitish women afterwards turned both to an evil purpose (Exod. xxxii. 2) and to a good one (Exod. xxxv. 22). It was a half-shekel weight—literally, a Bekah (see Exod. xxviii. 36, where alone it occurs, and where an explanation of it is given). She provides "provender"—a word only to be found in this book and in Judges xix. 19; and the servant gives to her relatives "precious things"—a word which does not occur again till Chronicles and Ezra. Finally, when she meets her husband-elect, she puts on a "veil" of a kind which is only named again in chap. xxxviii. 14, 19.

Hebrew poetry always contains more rare words than prose does, and an examination of Jacob's blessing (iv. 9) would give some unique expressions; but I am content to let the matter be decided on the evidence of current everyday language.

¹ This title Eliezer would appreciate. It does not occur again till the age of Cyrus.

The subject is by no means exhausted. In some cases I have laid more stress on the phenomena than others would do. But I have pointed out certain linguistic features in Genesis which seem to testify both to its antiquity and to its originality, and which indicate a literary distinction between the Hebrew text of this book as it stands and the usages of the centuries which elapsed between the time of Samuel and the Exile. These phenomena must neither be exaggerated nor minimized. Some may be accidental; but the fact stands forth that in a number of places where an ordinary word might have been used it was not forthcoming, and terms and forms were in vogue when the materials which compose our Genesis were written down which dropped out after the age of Samuel. It would be interesting to confirm this argument by taking the converse, and by showing that many words are freely used in the time of Samuel which are conspicuous by their absence in Genesis. How is it, for example, that "the Lord of Hosts" is never named by this grand title in the whole Pentateuch? How is it that so little is said about Jerusalem in Genesis? Why is it that the idea of God as a Saviour is not hinted at until we reach Jacob's blessing of Judah? (xlix. 18). There must be a reason for these things, and the "traditional" view seems to afford their true solution.

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ART. II.—ST. BERNARD.

LIVING in an island has its undoubted advantages, but it has also its serious drawbacks. It has its advantages, for by the sea which surrounds us we are protected from many ills, invasion and the like, from which the other nations of Europe have without exception suffered in the past, while we have dwelt in safety. It has its drawbacks, for a nation so situated is tempted to become insular in its ideas and narrow in its conceptions. Even if its vision is not so short-sighted as to prevent it seeing things which have or are happening elsewhere, it is prone to see them through insular-tinted glasses, and only to take an interest in them as they seem to affect its own well-being. But in so doing we are of necessity the losers, for we cannot isolate ourselves from the rest of mankind even in thought without serious detriment. Our understanding of the true meaning of events in past or present is imperfect, our interest in them faint and uninspiring, our grasp of matters of world-wide importance feeble and enervated.