

On Ps. xlix. 7.—The Revised Version renders as the Authorized:—

“None (of them) can by any means redeem his brother,  
Nor give to God a ransom for him.”

This rendering however inserts one word which is not in the original (“his” before “brother”), and does not take notice of the unusual position of the object or accusative (*i.e.* that the clause begins not with עֲשֵׂה, but with אֲנִי). We surely want such a word as “even” prefixed to “(his) brother.” So much for the translation. It ought however to be added that there is a strong exegetical argument against accepting this as the psalmist’s meaning. The context suggests that the idea in the mind of the writer is that the irreligious rich man will not be able at the last to save himself from the grasp of death. Ewald would therefore take אֲנִי to be an error of the ear (both the ear and the eye bring fertile sources of false readings) for אֵל, and render, “Nevertheless none can set himself free,” corresponding to “Nevertheless God shall set free my soul,” in v. 15. If we keep the usual reading, we must say with Riehm that the nothingness of money is illustrated by the fact that, just as Dives can do no real harm to those he oppresses (see v. 5), so he can do no real good to those whom he would fain befriend. Some may think that אֲנִי may possibly be an allusion to a dirge in which the mourner declares that he would redeem his deceased friend, if he only could. Wetzstein (in Delitzsch’s *Iob*, ed. 2, p. 463), refers to a Syrian dirge with the phrase *bi-abi*, *i.e.* I would give my father for thee. Elsewhere he quotes two verses of another Syrian dirge, probably embodying primitive ideas:—

“Ah! if he could be ransomed! Truly I would pay the ransom!  
Redeem me, O my dear kinsfolk, with steeds of noble limbs.”

“Ah! if he could be ransomed! Truly, I would pay the ransom!  
Redeem me, O dear brethren of mine, with pure virgins.”

In later Jewish theology it was held that the living could “redeem the dead” (the same word is used as in the psalm, פִּדְיוֹן) by almsgiving (Weber, *Altsynagogale Theologie*, p. 315). In a different context these illustrations would almost settle the meaning.

T. K. CHEYNE.