Text-critical Suggestions on Hosea xii. 1, iv. 4, iv. 8; Isaiah xiv. 12; Psalm xi. 1.

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Hos. 12. — The second half of this verse which in the Masoretic text reads

ןִּכֶּנָה יִשְׂרָאֵל

has always been regarded as a crux interpretum. Conjectures have been made again and again, some bearing very famous names, and yet the verdict of the lexicographer Buhl is that it is "ganz unklar." And now that this verdict holds still good after Nowack has published his commentary, it seems almost presumptuous for me to suggest another emendation and to declare that the verse is — in my opinion — by no means so difficult as has been supposed. This would have been found out long ago if the LXX had been retranslated into the Hebrew with due regard to the liberties of the translator, and if the whole of the verse had been retranslated.

LXX reads, taking לַמְרוֹם with the preceding sentence, וְזֶה יְגַנֵּו אֲבֵדָו בְּיִהוֹשֵׁב, כִּי לָאֹד אָמְנוֹ קִקְסַלְסֵתֵי בְיוֹשֵׁב.

The underlying Hebrew of the first half is יִשְׂרָאֵל, for which the Masoretic text has רְאִים. It will be seen that the only difference in the consonantal text is the prefixed כ, which is not so extraordinary that by all means (כ) must be presupposed, if we consider that they wanted to get some good sense; רְאִים = יִשְׂרָאֵל did not seem to fit, so they translated the כ with יְגַנֵּו. But whether they read רְאִים or יִשְׂרָאֵל, the רְאִים of the Masoretic text is to be preferred as after all the more fitting reading, and this is done, so far as I know, by all scholars who have written about this verse.1

1 Marti, Nowack: רְאִים, instead of יִשְׂרָאֵל "ist vertraut" (cf. LXX).

M.T.: רְאִים יְגַנֵּו

Wellh.: רְאִים יְגַנֵּו (Pi: "etwas vermissen lassen").
The second half of the Hebrew text of the LXX is מְשִׁפְתַּיָּהוּ, which corresponds to the Masoretic text: מְשִׁפְתַּיָּהוּ, the only consonant difference being the נ instead of the ג. For the use of לֻכָּן in this sense compare Jer. 7:1.

That the θεῶ of the LXX presupposes no Hebrew word, but that מְשִׁפְתַּיָּהוּ was translated by λαὸς ἅγιος θεῶν, is manifest.1

If we regard the thus restored Hebrew text of the LXX as original, we have to translate “God knows them still and people of the Holy One is it called.” But does this fit into the context? The first half of the verse reads,

Ephraim compasseth me about with falsehood,
And the house of Israel with deceit.

Then he goes on,

But God knows them still,
And people of the Holy One is it called.

I have omitted here מְשִׁפְתַּיָּהוּ which has nothing to do in this verse. The reasons for regarding it as a later insertion Nowack has adduced. But apart from this, does this translation give a good sense? In the previous verses the prophet has so pathetically contrasted the shameful behavior of the people with the marvellous compassion of Jahve, has shown that they pretended to walk after Him, but were really not doing it, they compass him about with falsehood, and yet Jahve will not utterly destroy them. And the reason for this he found to lie in Jahve’s nature; he is not man, but God, El. Now our verse follows directly upon this statement (vv. 10–11 are a later insertion 2). Insisting in its first half on the deceitful conduct of the people towards Jahve, the prophet cries out in utter amazement that El, in spite of it all, still knew, i.e. owned, them, they were still called the people of the Holy One. Thus it explains itself, why the prophet uttered first the message 1a in Jahve’s own words and then uttered his own conviction by using not ‘Jahve’ but the word ‘El,’ which had brought such a revelation to his soul.

The verse was early misunderstood. Somebody reading here the favorable words for Ephraim reflected that they could only be

1 M.T.: מְשִׁפְתַּיָּהוּ
Cornill: מְשִׁפְתַּיָּהוּ
“und mit Hierodulen ist es zusammen gekoppelt.”
Wellh.: “und macht sich gemein mit den Kadeschen.”

2 So Smend, Volz, Nowack, and others.
addressed to Judah, and inserted, therefore יִדְעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, contrasting thus Judah's faithfulness with Ephraim's deceitfulness. This יִדְעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל was already in the Hebrew text of the LXX, but the two copyist's errors had not yet been made. When they had been made, especially the first which mistook the א for a ס, the text became unintelligible, and the Masorites punctuated as well as they possibly could. That the Masorites regarded the second half of v. 1 as a contrast to the first half, but not as contrasting God and his people, but Ephraim and Judah, is clear, even though the words לֶא יִדְעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל be unintelligible. They may have meant by these words "but Judah still walks with God," putting perhaps the ל in some connection or other with יִדְעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל 'to walk,' cf. Assyr. ῥαδα.

It might be said, why cannot we do that, too? It would make sense! Yes, it would make sense, if taken by itself, but in the context it would be impossible; we should have to regard the whole of 11 as a later addition, which is done by many scholars, last by Nowack, for Judah is utterly out of place here as well as in v. 3, where it has to be changed into לֶא יִדְעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

If the above proposed emendation is accepted, we have to strike out merely יִדְעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל as later, and read as the original text:

Ephraim compasseth me about with falsehood,
And with deceit the house of Israel,
Yet El knows them still,
And people of the Holy One is it called.

What a contrast! They are false, but he punishes them not with utter destruction! Astonishing? Yes, but He is לֶא יִדְעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Hos. 4:

This phrase has given a good deal of trouble to scholars, all the more because the LXX text does not help us here. It reads ὅσον μον ὁς ἀντιλεγόμενος ἀρετῶς, which presupposes as the Hebrew original מַהֲרֵי כְּפָרַי הַלֵּךְ. This is essentially the consonantal text of the Masorites, only the ל in לַכְּפָרַי and the final ס in מַהֲרֵי are omitted.

Scholars have usually thought that the trouble was in the מַהֲרֵי,
and have thus tried to remedy the text by attacking רבי כהן, so Wellhausen, who reads with Beck, "und mein Volk macht es wie seine Pfaffen;" P. Ruben, and Nowack, קְפָקִים כֹּהֶן וּבְלוֹת, "and my people is like thee, O priest!" Oort קְפָקִים רוֹעֵי בְלוֹת, "with thee is my strife, O priest!"

I believe that the real cause of the difficulty does not lie in קְפָקִים but in כְּפָקִים, for which I would read כְּפָקִים. The whole clause would then be in Hebrew, קְפָקִים כֹּהֶן וּבְלוֹת, "thy people is namely striving thus." Taken together with the first part of this verse,

בְּלוֹת אֵיךְ אֲשֶׁר
כְּפָקִים אֵיךְ

it is a kind of explanation, "thy people is namely striving thus," and is, in my opinion, an old additional gloss.

Hos. 4:8. —

Nowack has again pointed out with what difficulties the common interpretation which takes קְפָקִים כְּפָקִים as referring to sin-offerings, is beset. For in how far could there be a reproach in this statement, since the priests received the sin-offerings by law? But also the modification by reference to 8:1, that they desire the aggregation of Israel's sin because they will have the profit by receiving all the more income from the sin-offerings,—is not free from objections. For as Nowack points out: (1) the sins which had to be atoned for by a sin-offering could not be designated by כְּפָקִים; (2) it cannot be proved that sin-offerings occurred in this time of Hosea.

Nowack regards, therefore, rightly קְפָקִים and כְּפָקִים as parallels, referring to the sin of the people. He defines the sin more definitely as the cult of the people by comparing 8:11 (also Am. 7') and says: "they think they fulfil Jahve's requirements by their sacrifices, but that is only a proof that they do not know Jahve. The priests cultivate this ignorance, instead of restraining it, because they live by the sacrifices."

I do not think that we can feel altogether at ease in accepting this interpretation. If it had been noticed that this sentence does not refer to the priests but to the people, the difficulty would have
been solved long ago, for it would have suggested itself that we should punctuate the text,

My people's sin shall devour it, and their guilt shall take away its life.

The suffix in לָאַבֵּכְיָא refers to מָצָא. The verse expresses the way of punishment. In the previous verse Jahve had said that every one of them sinned and that he would change their glory into shame. This 8th verse carries out this thought.

The difference in the suffixes לָאַבֵּכְיָא plural and לַךְ singular need not occasion any difficulty, for לָאַבֵּכְיָא is to be taken distributively, the guilt of the different members of the people, while לַךְ is used collectively for the life of the people as a whole.

The מָצָא before לָאַבֵּכְיָא in the Masoretic text has probably come in by dittography, the ל of לָאַבֵּכְיָא having been repeated.

It is, however, also possible that לָאַבֵּכְיָא is here, as so often = מָצָא. In this case we should have to read, לָאַבֵּכְיָא לָבְבִים, "and because of their guilt shall they take away its life"; or, since the active construction is used for the passive, "and because of their guilt shall its life be taken away." The parallelism is good also in this case:

My people's sin shall devour it, and because of their guilt shall its life be taken away.

Isa. 14:10.—

The לָאַבֵּכְיָא has given very much trouble to the exegetes. Gunkel's suggestion to regard לָאַבֵּכְיָא as meaning 'prostrate,' and change לָבְבִים into לָבְבִים 'corpses,' though accepted by Marti and Cheyne, who translate

How art thou struck down to the ground, to lie a stiff corpse upon corpses,

(Cheyne, *SBOT*, Isaiah) has not met with universal assent, and has not been accepted by the *New Hebrew Lexicon*. It is true that the LXX does not help us much, for it read δ ἄπαντας, *i.e.* לָאַבֵּכְיָא instead of לָאַבֵּכְיָא, and the meaning thus received "who stretched out (his hand) against the nations" is too weak in this connection.
I suggest that we take the hint of the LXX to transpose the letters of מָשַׁל but not so as to read מָשַׁל but מָשַׁל, transposing only the last two letters. It is abundantly clear from the cognate languages, for which see the references in the New Hebrew Lexicon, s.v. מָשַׁל, that מָשַׁל means ‘to shatter.’ But if we put this into the text, we are troubled by the מָשַׁל, for we should expect the accusative. But here again the LXX helps us, for it reads מָשַׁל מָשַׁל, therefore מָשַׁל instead of מָשַׁל. The πρός was made necessary by the מָשַׁל; it presupposes no Hebrew equivalent.

If we make these two changes and read מָשַׁל מָשַׁל, “who shattered all nations,” we have a powerful contrast to the condition in which this “shatterer of all nations” is now, in the first half of the sentence. The whole verse requires just such a strong antithesis, for it reads:

How art thou fallen from heaven,
radiant one, son of the dawn!
How art thou struck down to the ground,
shatterer of all nations!

Formerly it was supposed that the passage Ex. 17:13 shed light on this passage in Isaiah, but the Exodus passage was itself doubtful in regard to the meaning of מָשַׁל. If the suggested transposition be made in Is. 14:19, we might make it also in Ex. 17:13 and read מָשַׁל מָשַׁל, “and Joshua shattered or destroyed Amalek and his people with the sword.”

The Masoretic text has the root מָשַׁל only once in Deut. 25:18 מָשַׁל מָשַׁל, and strangely enough in this instance the transposition of מָשַׁל into מָשַׁל, i.e. מָשַׁל מָשַׁל would fit better, being more in harmony with the following מָשַׁל מָשַׁל.

Ps. 114.

כֹּה מַעֲקוֹל מִי יֵלֵד
נַחַל רֵאשֵׁה בתו

The literal translation would be “how do you say to my soul, ‘Flee to your mountains, ye birds!’” Duhm has shown in his commentary that this can hardly be correct, and he proposes to read מָשַׁל מָשַׁל מָשַׁל “flee to the mountains like a bird,” transposing in the consonantal text only the מ and מ of מָשַׁל and reading the singular מָשַׁל which also the Masorites suggest and LXX read. His authority for transposing the מ and מ is the LXX, which reads מָשַׁל מָשַׁל מָשַׁל. There can be hardly any doubt that Duhm is in the main correct.
The only question is, was it necessary to transpose the ב and ב? I think not, for that ב can be and must be used here collectively has always been held by scholars, so that we can translate ב ב "flee to the mountains" (Geburg, Duhm). The troublesome suffix ב we should punctuate (בם) and read thus ב. That ב is used in poetry instead of ב is plain from Ex. 15:1, "they went down ב like a stone," cf. New Hebrew Lexicon, s.v. ב. (Compare he fled kima iṣṣuri, 'like a bird.') Translate, therefore,

How do ye say to my soul,
‘Flee to the mountains like a bird’?