The Location and Etymology of מַגֵּר, Gn. 22 14

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THE explanations that have been offered for this difficult term have been largely conjectural. It is generally recognized that the pointing must be the same in both occurrences of the expression (both in the same verse), and that מַגֵּר should not be pointed as Qal the first time and as Niphal the second. So the Pesh., Old Latin, and Vulgate read Qal in both places; LXX and Luc. read as in our present Hebrew texts; the majority of modern scholars read Niphal in both places.

There is a difference of opinion as to the location of the sanctuary. The Samaritans placed the story of the interrupted sacrifice of Isaac at Mount Gerizim; the Jews, with equal tenacity, placed it at Mount Moriah, and the later editor of the chapter has rather clumsily trundled the Jewish tradition into the story.¹ Both these notions may be abandoned, and some other explanation sought.

By judicious omissions, substitutions, and changing of order, Gunkel² finds that the group of consonants מַגֵּר occurs three times in this chapter. For this reason he proceeds to identify the spot which is called in our present text מַגֵּר with the מַגֵּר of 2 Ch. 20 16, and locates it in the neighborhood of Tekoa. This at least has the merit of

¹ The reading מֵר is plainly not the original in Gn. 22 2. Pesh. reads מַגֵּר. LXX τῆς χώρας and Aq. καταρρέει show that both these authorities read מַגֵּר, which was probably the earliest reading. Aquila’s translation evidently derives מַגֵּר from the root מָגֵר “to be evident, prominent”; cf. Assyrian amar, “to see.”
² Genesis, in loco.
ingenuity. Holzinger makes the significant note, "ohne Location, auf jeden heiligen Ort anwendbar," not attempting to identify it with any particular spot.

Gunkel is undoubtedly correct in his supposition that the original reading must have been instead of . Cheyne notices this, and suggests the identification of this spot with the of Gn. 16. Of this conclusion the present writer sees further indications.

The Hagar story of Gn. 16 is universally ascribed to J, with the exception of vv. 9-10, which are attributed to E. These two verses are each introduced by the stereotyped plainly from a later hand. With the exception of this introduction, they may be compared with two verses from the story of the interrupted sacrifice of Gn. 22.

In the comparison of these verses three observations may be made, not all of equal importance, but all bearing upon one another.

1. In 16 9 and 22 19 occurs the use of with and the person.

2. 16 10 a and 22 17 a are identical.

3. 16 10 b and 22 17 b, while not in the same language, express exactly the same idea.

The commentators all agree in making 16 9-10 the work of some other hand,—probably of E,—but they offer no explanation of how the verses came to their present position. But it would seem that in the agreement with 22 17. 19 we have a clue, not only to the way in which they came to their present position, but also as to their author.

There are in 16 and 22 two traditions which endeavored to

8 Genesis, in loco.

4 Articles "Jehovah-Jireh" and "Isaac," in EB.
explain the etymology of a Premosaic divine name, for the 

mn~ of 22 is undoubtedly the "aM" of 16. The 

account in 16 is that of the southern school J; that in 22 is 

that of the northern school E. The principle underlying 

both traditions is that at some time the divinity, the "aM" 

revealed to a worshipper the fact that he was unexpectedly 

watching him. That this fact was connected with Hagar in 

one chapter and with Abraham in the other is of no great 

importance. Other traditions are connected with two per­

sons and pictured upon entirely different backgrounds, e.g. 

the naming of Beersheba.

The school by which the two accounts were edited after 

being welded together, JEr, recognized the kinship between 

these two chapters, and did what had been done in numerous 

cases, viz. supplemented the one account with a verse or 

verses from the other. Because there was such divergence 

between the subject matter of the two chapters in the form 

in which they came to JEr, the chapters themselves could 

not be combined. As men from the southern kingdom, the 

writers of the JEr school were interested primarily in the J 

document, which they supplemented from E, rather than the 

reverse, while E was left practically intact. The transition 

from "aM" to "aM", while possibly not apparent upon 

first reading, is comparatively easy.

In 16 1.3 the " of " is not the first person pronominal 

ending. A great many of the " verbs, besides " have 

a participial or abstract nominal formation ending in " (among 

them may be instanced " , " , " , " , " , 

, " and "), and the simplest explanation of " is 

that it is a similar participial or abstract nominal formation, 

so that " would be "the God of vision" or "the God of 

seeing," preferably the former, making " a synonym of " , "vision," in Is. 28 7.

In accordance with the suggestion made on pages 59–62 of 

the current volume of this JOURNAL, I would read in 22 11 

instead of " , and in 22 14 I would suggest that the verse 

originally read " . The
writer of 22 14 was in possession of a very old tradition that the name “God of vision” was used at that mountain because it was narrated that the מ"מ once appeared there, substantially the same tradition which underlay 16 13. The JEr writer, following the practice of his school, substituted מ"מ for מ"מ, making the name read מ"מ מ"מ. This, however, was an unusual term, calling for some explanation. This explanation was placed in the margin: מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"מ מ"m, and soon crept into the text, which, under its influence, was altered to מ"מ מ"מ, the alteration in no way changing the meaning of the original.

If these conclusions be correct, they would militate against the claim of Wellhausen that מ"מ is the name of an animal, and against the suggestion of Gunkel and others that it is the name of the place. They also complete the link in the chain of evidence that in the legends of Genesis מ"מ is never used with the name of a place, as would be the case if poly-demonism or polytheism were the prevailing thought of the time, but that it is always used with an attributive noun descriptive of some activity of the El.