THE EXAGGERATION OF ERRORS IN THE MASSORETIC.

In this paper it is suggested that in the admittedly difficult passages of the Old Testament the consonantal text is not so corrupt as many interpreters assume, and that the following examples are sufficiently representative to shew that errors are generally due to the confusion of letters similar in sound or form, to the wrong division of consonants, wrong pointing, dittography, reminiscence, or dogmatic alteration. Then, there are a number of words now regarded as errors which are really only dialectic variations of spelling; these will be considered in a separate paragraph. I refer to the interchange of the letters י, ר, כ: the Senjirli inscriptions and the Elephantine Aramaic papyri shew that the interchange was more prevalent than we had hitherto believed, and that, even in one and the same document, e.g. מִי and מָי in the Senjirli, and עָרָב and עֲרָב, equal Hebrew בּוֹר, in the Elephantine. That the several writers of the Old Testament should be free from these dialect influences is improbable from a historical point of view; and even assuming that the spelling was gradually unified, it is equally improbable that some instances were not overlooked. It is pointed out in Gesenius (Gram. Oxf. 1898, p. 27) that the sequence of certain letters in the Hebrew alphabet indicates an attempt at classification: I should give the same reason for the position of י after כ in Lam. ii–iv, for the letters were closely related by their interchange; and this may also account for the LXX departure from the Mas. (Massoretic) in placing י before ר in Prov. xxxi 25. The question why Lam. i retains the usual order of the letters is literary and not textual, and therefore beyond the scope of this paper. On this dialectic point I should refer the reader to Dr Driver's lucid notes and foot-notes on 1 Sam. i 6 in Notes Heb. T. B. S. ed. 1913.

(a) In Isa. xli 21 the difficult יִעֲרָבֶים is explained by many as an error for יְעַרֵּבָה יִבְיָרֵית your idols, after Jerome idola vestra, by others as meaning defences, after the Arabic. Though the former view assumes a unique form and the latter a unique meaning in Biblical Hebrew, both are possible. It is, however, strange that the two other Versions should have been ignored, for G. (LXX) αἱ βουλαὶ ὑμῶν, and P. Ματθαίοβι, which the latter Version represents by the same word in five out of the seven occurrences. The rendering of the Targum, יִרְאָבִין visions, prognostics, prophecies, is very strange, for this version is generally literal when not paraphrastic or Midrashic; and the simple way of explaining it is that it read the י as כ, i.e. יִרְאָבִין, which in Syr. and Targ. means vaticinium. This
view finds support in the fact that P. translates in Job xxix 18 the same word twice, once as spelt with $p$ and once with $\nu$. See note on the passage.

xli 24. The context and Versions shew clearly that we ought to read מַעְנָה and not מֵעְנָה, but, in admitting this, as most interpreters do, the Mas. is not necessarily an error, but may be a remnant of the original spelling, $\nu$ standing for $\nu$ and $p$ for $\nu$, but a later copyist, not noticing the context and regarding מֵעְנָה as strange, altered the $\nu$ into $\nu$.

Hos. vii 6. The suggestion (Oxf. Lex.) to alter רֶבֶן into רֶבֶן after G. אֶנְכָּלְבַּרְבַּרְבַּר implies an improbable error. It is more likely that $p$ stands for $\nu$, i.e. וּרְבַּרְבַּר, which also Doederlein suggested but regarded the Mas. as error.

Amos iv 13. Aquila (Syr. Hex. marg.) translates מַיֶנוּ אֶפֶס�וֹר, which clearly implies מַיָךְ inundation. Cf. Syriac and Aramaic מַיָךְ. It is not easy to say whether he read the Mas, so on traditional authority or found a $\nu$ in his copy. In any case, his rendering makes better sense if he read מַיֶנוּ for מַיֶנוּ—as he must have done to make sense—'He turns the Delta into an inundation, and He treads on the dry heights of the earth'.

Ps. xii 7. מַיָךְ מֶלֶל מַיָךְ is a riddle, which has been variously emended, but is still regarded by the more cautious as hopelessly corrupt (Buhl in Kit. Bib. Hebr. 1913). Let us assume that $\nu$ is meant for what is $\nu$ in the other dialects, and see if it yields the required sense. In Arab. מַיָךְ means to clear wine, or grain that was mixed with dust, so that each becomes separated from the other (Lane); compare Jerome's rendering of the clause separatum a terra. In Syr. מַיָךְ means expurgavit, percolavit, defaecavit, מַיָךְ pass. partic. used as adjective means translucidus, transparens; compare מַיָךְ (Syr. Hex. marg.) for מַיָךְ, Mal. iii 3. The word has the same meaning in the Talmud. Now G.'s rendering of v. 7 $t$ מַיָךְ מַיָךְ מַיָךְ can only mean: silver smelted, examined or tested with reference to the earth, or tested with the earth on it; in other words, the translator understood the line to refer to the first process in making silver fit for the jeweller, the separation of the earth from the metal, as distinct from the second process, refining, the separation of the silver from alloys. Hence the original may mean 'when it is purged in respect of the earth': the syntax is rough, but this sense of מַיָךְ after a passive has a parallel in Ezra vi 8. It is, however, difficult to say whether the phrase מַיָךְ is original or a gloss to explain that מַיָךְ does not mean here the refining process, as it often does, because מַיָךְ means this. If one could rely on the witness of G. in Prov. xxv 4, where it translates מַיָךְ מַיָךְ מַיָךְ, the word מַיָךְ in the above-named meanings occurs also in Hebrew, for the Greek obviously implies מַיָךְ מַיָךְ מַיָךְ, which gives a more
natural sense. The correction לארז לכלו לֵב for after G. (Kit. Bib. Hebr.) does not account for קַהֲבָר וֹדֵד.

Ps. xix 5. פֶה cannot mean their circuit, nor does it go with the parallel; hence, very many commentators regard it as an error for פֶה. But this has serious difficulties: (a) it is improbable, though possible, that the same word would be used in two consecutive lines, (b) the error is also improbable, (c) is it conceivable that when the author has obviously tried to use as many different words as he could think of which express utterance, viz. מָלַל, כֹּל, זְרֹר, אָמַר, הוֹדֵד, נַעַם, מַסַר, that he would leave out so well-known a word as פֶה? It is quite clear that the פ is here the equivalent of the Hebrew י, i.e. פֶה, though it is difficult to decide whether it is original or an error of an Aramaic-speaking copyist. If this view be correct, פ and פ in Isa. xxviii 10-13 look like a satire on the mixed peoples to whom the Prophet was speaking, some pronouncing the same word one way and others another. The words לַעֲרֹה and יִרְעָה seem to support this explanation, though the exegesis of the section still remains obscure.

xxix 18. מַסַר. P. translates the line twice: מַסַר מַסַר מַסַר מַסַר. The second implying פ with פ, the first פ. The meaning of the first rendering is, 'I shall remove to a poor nation', implying מַסַר פ. Here also it is difficult to say whether the translator had two alternative readings before him or knew that the letters were often so used.

(b) 1 Sam. i 18. Taking the verb in the clause מְאֵר in the usual sense, it is admittedly difficult to make any sense of the line. Many, relying on G. הֹמָטנָה, alter מְאֵר into מְאֵר. Such an error is improbable, and the Greek may represent the Arabic sense to fall, which is so used in Job xxxvii 6; it is no more strange that מְאֵר should be used in the sense of מְאֵר than it is for the latter to be used in the sense of the former in Ruth iii 18. The Vulg. translation of מְאֵר מְאֵר מְאֵר non sunt amplius in diversa mutata suggests that מְאֵר was without the vowel letter in the translator's copy, and he read the two words מְאֵר מְאֵר from מְאֵר, retaining the second radical as in מְאֵר, and giving the word the meaning which it has in Arab. כַּל and in the Talmud יֵשָׁבָה. P. מְאֵר implies the same root.

1 Kings xii 8. מְאֵר מְאֵר מְאֵר is certainly improbable syntax, but it is rash to strike out מְאֵר as Dr Burney does; the second word was meant to be read מְאֵר מְאֵר מְאֵר 'whom he had already made to attend' on him.

2 Kings vi 11. מְאֵר, G. προδίδομεν με; from which Klosterm. and others infer מְאֵר, מְאֵר; the equation of the correction with the Greek is improbable, and so is the error implied by the correction, and the Mas. consonants are original. It is quite natural to expect an Aramaean to use Aramaic, hence מְאֵר in v. 8 is a slip for the Aram. מְאֵר, and so is מְאֵר for the Aram. מְאֵר. Compare Syr. Hex. מְאֵר מְאֵר.
NOTES AND STUDIES

Isa. ii 16. ἡ ἡραμότης ἡ αἰείναι. G. ἰθανὶ πλῆθος κόλλουσ. It seems clear that the Greek represents two translations, ἰθα, a form of ἱλα and πλῆθος, a word which means 'ship'; but as there is no such word in Hebrew with this meaning, many regard ἱλαθείες as an error for ἱλαθεία. As far as I know, no one has explained how G. came to use ἰθα if ἱθα were before the translator, so I presume we must assume that he had two MSS, one with the Mas. reading and one with ἱθα, which view diminishes the trustworthiness of the Mas. I contend that G. had the Mas. form only, and πλ. represents the well-known Egyptian word, of which there are several variants, in Semitic consonants. ἱλα, ἱλα, ἱλα, ἱλα, ἱλα, meaning not only the sacred bark but also an ordinary ship, such as a tug (Brugsch Hieroglyph.-demot. Wort. p. 1327, Suppl. p. 1142). I have shown elsewhere that the problematic ἱλα Isa. xix. 7, as well as the second ἱλα in this verse, are well-known Egyptian words, though of course the vowels of ἱλα for the Nile and ἱλα fruit are unknown at present (Orient. Literaturz. 1912, p. 496).

Isa. iii. 6. ἡ ἡραμότης ἡ αἰείναι. G. καὶ τὸ βραώμα τὸ εἰμίν ὄν is said to imply ἱλατόριον (Gray, Int. Crit. Com.), an improbable error on the part either of Mas. or of G., but the latter obviously gave a free rendering of ἱλατόριον.

lii 9. ἱλατόριον. The rendering, 'And thou wentest to the king with oil' (RV.), is somewhat difficult, for this can hardly be a crime; then, the next line implies that the oil was used in some way for personal adornment. So many recent commentators regard it as an error for ἱλατόριον, which is said to be implied by ornasti unguento (Sym. Vulg.). But why change the Mas. consonants? Pointing ἱλατόριον it means 'and thou art moist', or saturated, with oil to please the king. From the root ἱλα (see etymology in Oxf. Lex.) we have ἱλατόριον Num. vi 3. The Prophet uses this word in satire; not the ordinary anointing, but a soaking in it.

Hos. vii. 6. ἡ ἡραμότης ἡ αἰείναι. The several interpretations and emendations do not as yet satisfy many sober critics, and nothing seems to suit the context better than the reading ἵππος ἰπὶ ῥὶ ὄρμον 'For who is the bull god, whom but a craftsman has made, but really he is not ἵππος ἰπὶ ὄρμον?' It seems probable that in the extremely difficult verse, xiii i, ἱλατόριον is a dogmatic alteration of ἱλατόριον, which alludes to Jeroboam's plans and actions as recorded in 1 Kings xii 26-33, and a pious Jew would regard this term as an insult to God's law. Then reading ἵππος ἰπὶ ῥὶ the verse would mean, 'When Ephraim uttered religious injunctions he was beguiled by the bull god'.

xi 4. The last clause beginning with ᾔσα is admittedly obscure, and the unique form ἵππος is suspicious. One of the several suggestions offered to make it intelligible is to read ῖσα. I think the Mas. pointing
is right; it is meant for the adverb from מָאתָא, and the reading of three Kenn. MSS מָאתָא for מָאתָא אֲבָל confirms this. The line means, ‘and I am ever leading them gently’: cf. 1 Kings xxi 27, Gen. xxxiii 14.

A number of suggestions and emendations on this difficult clause are given in Harper’s commentary (Intern. Crit. Comm.). He himself adds a fresh line. Duhm reads in the next clause מָאתָא for Mas. מָאתָא, and interprets the two clauses as meaning that the people cry out, ‘Offer sacrifices to them, a man is to kiss a calf’. Such wording and syntax is not very creditable to a poet who, according to Duhm, could write in metre and different strophic schemes. The line in question is too prosy; then, one expects the speaker, who is supposed to appeal to the people, to be a person of authority, such as a priest or an elder; nor is it probable that the author would have used an imper. and jussive, referring to the same person, in one clause. The same subject in Isa. xli 6–7, where the rare word מָאתָא is used, suggests that the repetition of the letters מָאתָא in the line beginning with מָאתָא, made the copyist write ה מָאתָא in the first half of the verse makes it more natural that the מָאתָא should follow מָאתָא: ‘so will they who dwell in Samaria be saved with only so much as the corner of a bedstead or the cross-piece (or pole) of the leg of a couch’, reading ה מָאתָא מָאתָא. To what particular part of the couch מָאתָא refers it is hard to say, but we know that poles were used for carrying it, and side-pieces were used to secure the legs and other parts. See Pollen Furniture and Woodwork i pp. 21, 24, and illustrations 1, 8, 10, 37, 38. A recently-discovered Egyptian couch of the twelfth Dynasty is described as having its two sides strutted apart by curved pieces of wood, and the head-board is secured by two bent wood angle-pieces (British School of Archaeol. in Egypt, 1912, p. 35 f).

Ps. ix 7, 8. The difficulties in v. 7 are obvious, and Buhl (Kit. Bibl. Hebr.) considers the whole verse to be corrupt; but as the next four verses begin with dittograms the scribe may have made a slip of transposition in this verse, and the original was מָאתָא כְּפַסָּא and מָאתָא כְּפַסָּא; מָאתָא is wrongly divided, viz. מָאתָא כְּפַסָּא קְסָא. This is just what one exulting over a crushed enemy would say, ‘Lo, their homes are ruined for ever; thou hast overthrown their cities; the memory of them has perished. Ha, Jehovah’, &c.
cxxxix 11. יָדַע. It must be admitted that the verb does not go with 'ד, but the correction יָדַע, after Sym. Jerome and אֵלֶּא, is unnecessary: the Mas. means the same, if read correctly, viz. יָדַע, from יָדַע, also יָדַע Deut. xxxiii 19. This reading is indirectly confirmed by the curious rendering of P. יָדַע, which is after the Arab. סְכַם, to be thin, transparent, translucent.

Job xiii 14. דְּנָפֶת. As the verse states the very opposite of what is required by the context, many regard the words as a repetition of the end of v. 13; so Driver in his Book of Job in the Rev. Vers. Their absence in G. is by itself no evidence, for the translator may have omitted them by dittography. I think it is but just to the Mas. that we should first understand the meaning of these antique figures of speech. The first occurs only here; the second three times elsewhere (Judges xii 3, 1 Sam. xix 5, xxviii 21), but if we once know the exact sense of the latter we shall also know that of the former. In a paper on Egyptian Words and Idioms in the Book of Job, Orient. Literature., Aug. 1913, p. 343, I have pointed out that a passage in a fourteenth-century B.C. papyrus shews that the meaning is, 'I am going to face a great danger; I must therefore take extra care of my soul, and keep it in my hand'; and, by inference, the first simile means the same, the figure, no doubt, having its origin in the habit of animals to carry off their prey in their teeth for fear of another animal taking it from them. Thus the verse means simply, Why should I take extra care of my body and soul; I do not mind risking them; 'Behold, let Him kill me, I am not terrified' (v. 15 reading אָלֶת מֵאָנָיו). Duhm, in his commentary, explains the first simile as having its origin in the fact that when an animal cannot save itself by flight it defends itself with the teeth, but this does not account for the use of סְכַם. He strikes out דְּנָפֶת.

xv 11. The consolations are said to mean the comforting revelation spoken of in iv 12 f, and the gentle manner in which Eliphaz speaks in that chapter. Is this convincing? Job protests against the unjust afflictions; can those commonplace words be regarded as comforts? If its original had been the Mas. it is not likely that G. would have made the translation ὅλγα ὃν ἡμῶν ἔχει μεμαστηγόναι, μεγάλος ὑπερβαλ- λόντως λειλάκασ. V. is paraphrastic, and gives no clue to shew what the original was. It is obviously guessing; and the same may be said of P., except that it clearly reads מַעָלֵת יַפְנֵי, the imper. As it is clear that G. read some form of מַעָלֵת, G. and P. suggest that in the first line the consonants are wrongly divided, viz. מַעָלֵת מַעָלֵת תֹּם מַעָלֵת 'Deduct from the afflictions God's comforting-deeds'. G. Bickell, in his earlier work, strikes out מַעָלֵת; in his later work he alters מַעָלֵת into מַעָלֵת. Duhm transposes the verse to produce some sense and the desired tetrastich. If my reading of the first line be correct, מַעָלֵת must have fallen out by
ditography before וַיֶּפֶר, viz. דַּעְקַעְקַע לְכִי מַקְפִּיל. The whole verse means, ‘Deduct from the scourges God’s comforts (good things of life), and thy pleading is without discernment’. מְדַעְקַעֲקָעַת occurs only here and xxii 2, in which latter passage there is also an error in the division of the consonants.

In xxi 16 נְפַלְפַלְפַל סֵתֵמֵס has rightly caused much perplexity, as being the opposite of what the context suggests, and has given rise to transposition of verses and theories of glosses. It is merely a dogmatic alteration of the irreverent utterance which Job puts into the mouth of the wicked: ‘Behold, He does not give the good things with His own hands’, i.e. בְּרָפָט הָכְלִי. The same may be said of the unique הבו, the meaning of which is uncertain. The required word is חָא: ‘His own eyes “gaze on his affluence”: what does he care what will happen to his children when he is dead’? With this agrees מַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְוָל, i.e. מַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמַמְמש (cf. xxix 6) for the Mas. מַמְשְׁשֵׁש.

Dan. iv 5. וְלָא יָזֶר נְפַל. As the verb יָזֶר does not occur in Biblical Aramaic, nor, as far as I know, in Aramaic inscriptions and papyri, the punctators probably thought only of the adverbs and adjectives; hence the alternative spelling and the strange punctuation. But it is obvious that as the preceding verse speaks of many astrologers and soothsayers, the phrase naturally means, ‘and while they—those spoken of in v. 4—were tarrying’, for the king had not yet dismissed them, ‘Daniel entered’. The pointing is יָזֶר, partic.

Though Ecclus. is uncanonical and copyists would be less careful with the text than with that of the inspired Word of God, the errors in it may also be exaggerated, though, it is true, I have not studied it long enough to speak with confidence. Yet one passage, the emendation of which seems to be accepted by the most competent, may shew that the text deserves reconsideration. I may suggest in passing that an epigrammatic writing like this is more difficult to interpret than a historical or poetical work, and is therefore exposed to the additions of a glossator. In 118 חָם הָרְבָּו נֶבֶר, which is very obscure, has been emended by Schechter with a note of interrogation after it, conjectured from G. γιοικανθὺς μέλος, though G. never renders the Heb. ןֶבֶר so. As it is quite clear that the Version is giving merely the sense of the whole verse and not a literal translation, it is not legitimate to impute an error to the scribe, especially as יָזֶר does not occur in Biblical Hebrew. I take it that G. gives a free rendering of the MS consonants divided thus: נֶבֶר; as יָזֶר in the first line is a collective, meaning the choir, and the verb is singular, so it would also be here; cf. Ps. lxxv 9, cxviii 3. The error is due to reminiscence of the technical phrase in Exod. xxvii 21, Lev. xxiv 3, 4.

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