

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 φ , ψ , ρ : 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. $\varphi\psi\alpha$ and $\rho\psi\alpha$ in the Senjirli, and $\varphi\psi\alpha$ and $\rho\psi\alpha$, equal Hebrew $\varphi\psi\alpha$, 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 φ after ψ 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 φ before ψ 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 $\varphi\psi\alpha\theta\eta\kappa\iota\mu$ is explained by many as an error for $\varphi\psi\alpha\theta\eta\kappa\iota\mu$ *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) $\alpha\iota\ \beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\alpha\iota\ \delta\mu\omega\acute{\nu}$, and P. $\alpha\iota\ \beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\alpha\iota\ \delta\mu\omega\acute{\nu}$ certainly imply the consonants transposed, viz. $\rho\psi\alpha\theta\eta\kappa\iota\mu$, which the latter Version represents by the same word in five out of the seven occurrences. The rendering of the Targum, $\varphi\psi\alpha\theta\eta\kappa\iota\mu$ *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 φ as ρ , i. e. $\rho\psi\alpha\theta\eta\kappa\iota\mu$, 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 ק and once with ע. See note on the passage.

xlix 24. The context and Versions shew clearly that we ought to read עריין and not צריק, but, in admitting this, as most interpreters do, the Mas. is not necessarily an error, but may be a remnant of the original spelling, צ standing for ע and ק for צ, but a later copyist, not noticing the context and regarding ע צריק as strangè, altered the ר into ג.

Hos. vii 6. The suggestion (Oxf. Lex.) to alter קרבו into בער after G. ἀνεκαύθησαν implies an improbable error. It is more likely that ק stands for צ, i.e. צרבו, which also Doederlein suggested but regarded the Mas. as error.

Amos iv 13. Aquila (Syr. Hex. marg.) translates עיפה ἐπίχυστος, which clearly implies ציפה *inundation*. Cf. Syriac and Aramaic כתרף. It is not easy to say whether he read the Mas. so on traditional authority or found a צ in his copy. In any case, his rendering makes better sense if he read שיהר for שחר—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. בעליל לָאֲרִיץ 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 ע is meant for what is צ in the other dialects, and see if it yields the required sense. In Arab. ج 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. ܚܝܝܚܝܝܢ means *expurgavit, percolavit, defaecavit*, ܚܝܝܠܐ, pass. partic. used as adjective means *translucidus, transparens*; compare ܚܝܝܠܐ (Syr. Hex. marg.) for ܚܝܝܠܐ, Mal. iii 3. The word has the same meaning in the Talmud. Now G.’s rendering of ὁ 7 ἄργυριον πεπυρωμένον, δοκίμιον τῆ γῆ γῆ 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 ܚ after a passive has a parallel in Ezra vi 8. It is, however, difficult to say whether the phrase בל is original or a gloss to explain that צרף does not mean here the refining process, as it often does, because זקק means this. If one could rely on the witness of G. in Prov. xxv 4, where it translates לְצַרְףּ בְּלִי וּיְצֵא וְיִצְחַק וְיִצְחַק וְיִצְחַק וְיִצְחַק και καθαρισθήσεται καθαρὸν ἄπαν, the word צלל in the above-named meanings occurs also in Hebrew, for the Greek obviously implies וְיִצְלַל צַרְףּ בְּלו, which gives a more

natural sense. The correction $\text{כְּלוּ נִצְרָף כְּלִי}$ for לְצֹר כְּלִי after G. (Kit. *Bib. Hebr.*) does not account for *καθαρισθ.*

Ps. xix 5. קִיָּם cannot mean *their circuit*, nor does it go with the parallel; hence, very many commentators regard it as an error for קָלָם . 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. $\text{סֹפֵר, נָגַד, נָבַע, חוּה, אָמַר, דָּבַר, קוֹל, מָלַל}$, that he would leave out so well-known a word as צִוָּה ? It is quite clear that the ק is here the equivalent of the Hebrew צ , i. e. צָוָם , though it is difficult to decide whether it is original or an error of an Aramaic-speaking copyist. If this view be correct, צִוָּי and קִוִּי 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 לְעֵינֵי שֹׁפֵה and לְשׁוֹן אַחֲרַת , and the Aramaism זַעֲר seem to support this explanation, though the exegesis of the section still remains obscure.

xxix 18. $\text{עַם קִנִּי אֲנִיעֵה}$. P. translates the line twice: $\text{חַבְּשָׁה מִמְּחַנְּהָ}$ and $\text{סֹאמִי פִּנְסָה לְחַכְּמִי}$, the second implying קִנִּי with ק , the first עֲנִי . The meaning of the first rendering is, 'I shall remove to a poor nation', implying $\text{עַם עֵינֵי אֲנִיעֵה}$. 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 הָיָה לָהּ in the usual sense, it is admittedly difficult to make any sense of the line. Many, relying on G. *συνέτισεν*, alter הָיָה into נָפַל . 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 הָיָה should be used in the sense of נָפַל than it is for the latter to be used in the sense of the former in Ruth iii 18. The Vulg. translation of $\text{לֹא הָיוּ לָהּ עוֹד}$ *non sunt amplius in diversa mutata* suggests that הָיָה was without the vowel letter in the translator's copy, and he read the two words חִילָהּ from חִיל , retaining the second radical as in בָּיִן , and giving the word the meaning which it has in Arab. حَال and in the Talmud חול . P. وَكَبِ حَف implies the same root.

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

2 Kings vi 11. מִשְׁלָנִי , G. *προδίδωσίν με*; from which Klosterm. and others infer מִגְּלָנִי ; 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 חֲרַחְחֵי in v. 8 is a slip for the Aram. חַרְחַחֵי , and so is מִשְׁלָנִי for the Aram. מַעְלָמִי . Compare Syr. Hex. ح. مَعْلَم .

Isa. ii 16. שְׂכִיֹת הַחֲמָדָה. G. *θεῶν πλοίων κάλλους*. It seems clear that the Greek represents two translations, *θεῶν*, a form of שְׂכָה and *πλοίων*, a word which means 'ship'; but as there is no such word in Hebrew with this meaning, many regard שְׂכִיֹת as an error for קַפְיִנֹת. As far as I know, no one has explained how G. came to use *θεῶν* if 'ספי' were before the translator, so I presume we must assume that he had two MSS, one with the Mas. reading and one with 'ספי', which view diminishes the trustworthiness of the Mas. I contend that G. had the Mas. form only, and *πλοίων* represents the well-known Egyptian word, of which there are several variants, in Semitic consonants, שֶׁכַּ, שְׂכַתִּי, שְׂכַת, שְׂכַת, meaning not only the sacred bark but also an ordinary ship, such as a tug (Brugsch *Hieroglyph.-demot. Wört.* p. 1327, Suppl. p. 1142). I have shewn elsewhere that the problematic עֲרוֹת Isa. xix. 7, as well as the second יֵאֵר in this verse, are well-known Egyptian words, though of course the vowels of יֵאֵר for the Nile and 'יא' fruit are unknown at present (*Orient. Literaturz.* 1912, p. 496).

Isa. iii. 6. וְהִמְכַשְׁלָה הוֹמָת. G. *καὶ τὸ βρῶμα τὸ ἐμόν* is said to imply וְהִמְכַשְׁלָה (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 וְהִמְכַשְׁלָה הוֹמָת.

lvii 9. וְתִשָּׂרִי. 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 וְתִסְכִּי, which is said to be implied by *ornasti unguento* (Sym. Vulg.). But why change the Mas. consonants? Pointing וְתִשָּׂרִי it means 'and thou art moist', or *saturated*, with oil to please the king. From the root שָׂרָה (see etymology in *Oxf. Lex.*) we have מִשְׂרַת Num. vi 3. The Prophet uses this word in satire; not the ordinary anointing, but a soaking in it.

Hos. viii 6. מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְהוּא. The several interpretations and emendations do not as yet satisfy many sober critics, and nothing seems to suit the context better than the reading מִי שׁוֹר אֵל 'For who is the bull god, whom but a craftsman has made, but really he is not אֱלֹהִים?' It seems probable that in the extremely difficult verse, xiii 1, רַתָּה is a dogmatic alteration of תִּרְתָּה, 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 מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְהוּא the verse would mean, 'When Ephraim uttered religious injunctions he was beguiled by the bull god'.

xi 4. The last clause beginning with וְאֵם is admittedly obscure, and the unique form אֹכִיל is suspicious. One of the several suggestions offered to make it intelligible is to read וְאֵם. I think the Mas. pointing

is right; it is meant for the adverb from אטט, and the reading of three Kenn. MSS אוביל for אוביל confirms this. The line means, 'and I am ever leading them gently': cf. 1 Kings xxi 27, Gen. xxxiii 14.

xiii 2. לָהֶם הֵם אֲמָרִים. 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 זָבַח for Mas. זָבַחַי, 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 הָלָם is used, suggests that the repetition of the letters ה, ל, מ in the line beginning with בָּלָה, made the copyist write the ל of לָהֶם before the ה instead of after it, i. e. בָּלָהוּ לָהֶם אֲמָרִים 'all they (craftsmen) that hammer them say', satirically, they who are so cruel as to sacrifice human beings have tenderness enough to kiss mere dumb animals. Compare Cheyne's fine translation of the passage in Isaiah in Haupt's *SBOT*.

Amos iii 12. וַיִּבְרְמֵשֶׁק עָרֶשׁ. I venture to think that the generally accepted view that the ב of בפאת follows היושבים is open to question. One expects עַל, and the first half of the verse makes it more natural that the ב should follow יַנְעִלוּ: '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 וַיִּבְרְ מֵשֹׁק עָרֶשׁ. To what particular part of the couch יַרְדֵּי 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 הָאָה בְּתִימוֹ and עָרִימוֹ; זָכְרָם הֵמָּה is wrongly divided, viz. הוּא יְהוָה: הוּא יְהוָה. 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. **יְשִׁיבֵנִי**. It must be admitted that the verb does not go with **וְהָיָה**, but the correction **יְשִׁיבֵנִי**, after Sym. Jerome and *ἄλλος*, is unnecessary: the Mas. means the same, if read correctly, viz. **יְשִׁיבֵנִי**, from **סָבַב**, also **שָׁבַב** Deut. xxxiii 19. This reading is indirectly confirmed by the curious rendering of P. **سَوِّفُ ح**, which is after the Arab. **سَوِّفُ**, to be *thin, transparent, translucent*.

Job xiii 14. **עַל פִּי**. 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. Literaturz.*, 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 **לֹא אֶתְרָס**). 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 **אֶתְרָס**. He strikes out **עַל פִּי**.

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 *ὀλίγα ὄν ἡμάρτηκας μεμαστίγωσαι, μεγάλως ὑπερβαλλόντως λελάληκας*. 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 **הִמְעָט**, the imper. As it is clear that G. read some form of **נָבַח**, G. and P. suggest that in the first line the consonants are wrongly divided, viz. **הִמְעָט מִכַּפַּת נְהַמּוֹת אֵל** 'Deduct from the afflictions God's comforting-deeds'. G. Bickell, in his earlier work, strikes out **אֵל**; in his later work he alters **מִכַּחַךְ** into **לְךָ**. Duhm transposes the verse to produce some sense and the desired tetrastich. If my reading of the first line be correct, **עַם** must have fallen out by

dittography before עמך, viz. וְדָבַר לֹא טַעַם עִמָּךְ. The whole verse means, 'Deduct from the scourges God's comforts (good things of life), and thy pleading is without discernment'. תְּנַחֲמוֹת occurs only here and xxi 2, in which latter passage there is also an error in the division of the consonants.

In xxi 16 בְּיָדֶם טוֹבָם 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. בְּיָדוֹ יִמְטִיבֵם. The same may be said of the unique בְּיָדוֹ, the meaning of which is uncertain. The required word is בְּרֵי'וֹ: 'His own eyes "gaze on his affluence": what does he care what will happen to his children when he is dead'? With this agrees וּמַחְמַת, i. e. וּמַחְמַת (cf. xxix 6) for the Mas. 'וּמַחְמִי'.

Dan. iv 5. וְעַד אַחֲרֵינָם. As the verb אָחַר 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 אַחֲרֵינָם, 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 poetic work, and is therefore exposed to the additions of a glossator. In l 18 העריבו נרו, which is very obscure, has been emended לעריבו רנן by Schechter with a note of interrogation after it, conjectured from G. ἐγλυκάνθη μέλος, though G. never renders the Heb. רנן 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 רנן does not occur in Biblical Hebrew. I take it that G. gives a free rendering of the MS consonants divided thus: העיר כְּנֹרָו; as שיר in the first line is a collective, meaning the choir, and the verb is singular, so it would also be here; cf. Ps. lvii 9, cviii 3. The error is due to reminiscence of the technical phrase in Exod. xxvii 21, Lev. xxiv 3, 4.