

keep Jahve apart from Šamaš; the more so as the seat of Jahve on earth, at Jerusalem, was indeed situated in the West, in relation to that of the Babylonian Šamaš. But more probably the shifting was one of mere accommodation. The political interest of the Jews, at the time of Zechariah, looking from the geographical position of Judaea, had not great concern with the West, but mainly with the other regions: North, East, and South. Therefore Jahve's messengers had to go out, for inspection or eventually to exercise justice, north-, east-, and southward. The region of sunset, remaining as the starting-point, thus replaced the region of sunrise as a meeting-place of the celestial messengers before Jahve, where they assembled coming back from, or whence they started on their departure to, their mission.

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PSALM lviii 10 (9).

בטרם יבינו סִירְתִּיכֶם אִמֶר  
כִּמוֹ חִי כִּמוֹ חֶרֶן יִשְׁעֶרְנִי

*πρὸ τοῦ συνεῖναι τὰς ἀκάνθας ὑμῶν*

*τῆν ῥάμνον ὡσεὶ ζῶντας ὡσεὶ ἐν ὄργῃ καταπίεται ὑμᾶς*

LXX

Before your pots can feel the thorns,

He shall take them away with a whirlwind, the green and the burning alike.

R. V.

Even as raw flesh, even so, shall fury sweep them away. R. V. mg.

THIS verse is notorious in the obscure rendering of Coverdale. R. V. gives a tolerable sense, but 'the green and the burning alike' is doubtful as a translation and weak as imagery: חֶרֶן which means 'burning wrath', especially the burning wrath of God, could hardly be used for burning sticks.

Emendations are proposed, but (except for the adjustment of the personal suffixes) LXX gives no support to them. It is better to see whether the only attested text will not yield good sense as it stands.

סִירְתִּיכֶם introduces the picture, a gipsy's fire by the wayside. The word may mean thorns, as LXX. But the second 'thorn' is then awkward, and the feminine form of the plural suits the other סִיר, 'pot'.

חִי is the chief difficulty. R. V. mg. takes it of the raw flesh in the

pots. So 1 Sam. ii 15, and for the thought Cheyne compares Mic. iii 2, 3, the rulers of the house of Israel flaying and cooking the poor like flesh. LXX, keeping the simpler meaning 'full of life', reads a 2nd plur. suffix to the following verb, and applies the adjective to the oppressors whom the Psalmist is denouncing. But LXX misses what R.V. (text) preserves, the terse strong parallelism of כִּמוֹ חַי כִּמוֹ חֲרוֹן.

Now חַי is sometimes used in a rather remarkable fashion. The construct plural חַיִּים is a usual form of oath, which in conjunction with יהוה is varied for the sake of reverence to יהוה: 'חַי יהוה וְחַי נַפְשְׁךָ', 'by the living LORD and the life of thy soul!' In 1 Sam. xxv 6 וְאָמַרְתָּ כֹה לְחַיִּי, the greeting to Nabal, the rendering 'to my brother' (improvement of the Vulgate *fratribus meis*) may be right, but the old comparison with the Arabic salutation, 'God keep you in life', is more interesting. And did not LXX understand the phrase so? Its εἰς ὄρας is perhaps no evidence of a variant or an ancient emendation, בעת חיה, but an idiomatic equivalent to what it supposed the meaning to be: Driver quotes Theocritus, after Field, κῆς ὄρας κῆπειτα φίλ' ἀνδρῶν ἐν καλῷ εἴης. In 2 Sam. xxiii 20 Benaiah is described as בֶּן אִישׁ בֵּן רֶב פְּעֻלִים; which in 1 Chron. xi 22 becomes בֶּן אִישׁ חֵיל וְגו', according to the Chronicler's usual method of emasculation, cf. 2 Sam. xxi 19, 1 Chron. xx 5 ('the brother of Goliath'). When we think of בֶּן אִישׁ לְחַיִּי it is hard to avoid the suspicion that the Samuel text in 2 Sam. xxiii 20 preserves an ancient formula which the Chronicler has 'restored' away.

Gesenius (who, however, in the Psalm interprets '*de carne cruda*') boldly says that *Beer lahai roi* means *puteus vitae visionis*, 'the well of seeing God and keeping life'. Driver, on 1 Sam. xxv 6, objects that 'the rendering *in vitam* is doubtful. חַי is always an adj. *living*'. If this is absolute without any exception we might translate the phrase in our Psalm 'like His living self, like burning wrath': cf. A.V. mg. 'as living as wrath'. But in English idiom this brings us to a paraphrase corresponding with Gesenius's *vita*; 'swift as life, swift as wrath'. At any rate both חַי and חֲרוֹן are best taken generally, a flashing double metaphor, not grammatically linked either to the thorns, or the pots, or the oppressors.

Now look at the whole context. The Psalm tells of the crying violence of the great ones in the land, the 'gods' of government (1-6). The One, the supreme God, is called upon to crush these oppressors (7-10). Image follows image with increasingly realistic vigour; lions with broken jawbones, mowed grass, melting snails, untimely births. Then, dropping the third person, the Psalmist once more, as in his opening verse, addresses the arrogant 'gods' themselves with a culminating imprecation: 'You shall be like a gipsy's fire by the wayside,

or like a fugitive vainly trying to cook himself a meal in his perilous flight—Before your pots feel the thorns you have lighted beneath them, swift as life, swift as wrath, He shall storm the whole thing away.’

‘He’ is the Elohim of elohim (7), the God to whom these little visible ‘gods’ must give account; His concealed omnipotence is more felt in the undefined pronoun than if His name had been repeated. And הוּ is a vague archaism indicating that living energy, so bright and strong and various, yet so pathetic in its transience, which like the light and the mysterious influence of speech dominated the subtle imagination of the Hebrew.

It may indeed be objected that the LXX  $\acute{\omega}\sigma\epsilon\iota\ \epsilon\nu\ \delta\rho\gamma\eta$  = בְּמוֹ חַרְוִין, and that the meaning will therefore be ‘while it is raw, in wrath He whirls it away’. But if  $\epsilon\nu$  = בְּמוֹ,  $\acute{\omega}\sigma\epsilon\iota$  = בְּמוֹ, and the textual evidence cancels out. And if so, the argument from context is weighty on the other side. The sudden introduction of ‘raw’, without anything to explain it except the general picture of a wayside fire, is almost intolerably harsh. And R.V. surely represents a sound instinct: the vigorous double image is the most certain thing in the verse. If the other objection be pressed: ‘No doubt “Like Living One, like wrath” is possible; but does “swift as life, swift as wrath” really represent the meaning?’, its force must be admitted. The latter is only offered as a paraphrase which may represent the meaning to a modern English ear. And perhaps this Note should end with a reminiscence of Aldus Manutius: *Locus hic ex illis est, quos ego quidem sine libris antiquis posse corrigi non sperarim. itaque, ut aliquid ex ingenio liceat comminisci, placeat tamen fateri potius nescire quod nesciam, quam afferre quod non probem.*

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