

SOME HEBREW ROOTS AND THEIR MEANINGS.

MANY difficulties in the Hebrew text have been elucidated by the comparative study of the Semitic languages, and the following notes are an endeavour to throw light on several difficult words in the Old Testament with the help of Arabic and Assyrian.

The meaning of רמך in the phrase בני הרמכים (Esther viii 10) has long been considered doubtful, but the conjectural rendering 'stud-mare' is confirmed by the Arab. رَمَكٌ, stayed indoors, رَمَكَةٌ, a mare kept in the stables for rearing foals, and رَمَاكٌ, celui qui garde les juments or qui les fait couvrir.¹ Thus בני הרמכים may be rendered 'thoroughbreds'. Of two other words the roots may perhaps be sought in Arabic: הרש, magic charm, and עברה, arrogance. The word הרש should be connected with Arab. حَرَسَ, opportune moment, الْحَرَسَانُ, night and day, and حَرَسَ, kept watch, and thus חכים הרשים (Isa. iii 3) will mean 'wise in the seasons', 'skilful in discovering the right moment'.² As regards עברה, I would suggest that it is cognate with عَمِرَ, was ulcerated (of a wound), bore rancour, and غَبِرَ, rancour, malice, hatred. In no Semitic language does the (ע)עבר√ connote 'overflowing' of pride or wrath, and there is no reason why עברה, though the implication of the corresponding word in Arabic is bad, should not in Hebrew mean not only malice or enmity, but also righteous resentment, indignation. There will therefore be two roots in Hebrew, (i) עבר(ע), passed over, and (ii) עבר(ג), rankled.

In two passages in Jacob's Blessing Assyrian may prove of assistance in interpreting obscure phrases. The words נזיר אחיו (Gen. xlix 26) are rendered 'that was separated from his brethren' by the Revised Version. It is possible that there is a play on the classical meaning of נזיר, consecrated, in Hebrew and the original signification which has survived in the Ass. *nazāru*, to curse. Render therefore נזיר אחיו, 'that was accursed of his brethren', for 'they hated him and could

¹ Dozy *Supplément* vol. i p. 558 b, Ed. König (*Hebr. u. Aram. Wörterb.*, under רמך), however, deny this connexion. Possibly the original root is Ass. *ramāku*, to pour out, sprinkle, while Ar. رَمَكٌ, stayed indoors, is merely a *vb. deriv.* from رَمَكَةٌ, mare.

² Whether the Ass. *erēšu*, to settle, and *eršu*, wise, cunning, are connected with this root is uncertain; for many scholars would find the cognate root in הרש, engraved, devised, Arab. حَرَسَ, (i) tilled, ploughed, (ii) cultivated, studied. Compare probably הרשש (Targ.) enchanter, with חכים הרשים. (For Ass. *e* = Hebr. ח cp. *edēšu* = חרש, *ešēqu* = חשק, &c.)

not speak peaceably unto him' (Gen. xxxvii 4). Perhaps also מכרה (Gen. xlix 5) can be traced back to the Ass. *makaru* or *makkaru*, staff (for driving donkeys, &c.), and should be rendered 'staff', the implication being that the brethren have abused the herdsman's staff and employed it in deeds of violence. Again, may there not possibly underlie שִׁילָה in Gen. xlix 10 a long lost root in Ass. *šilu* or *šilu*, prince, ruler? Then it should probably be pointed שִׁילָה,¹ and the passage will run: 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah . . . until the ruler thereof come, whom all people shall obey', viz. until the local rule of Judah's princes passes away before that of one who shall hold universal sway.²

In Isa. xli 8 I should be inclined to suggest הִתְחַשְׁשׁוּ, grieve yourselves, for הִתְאֲשִׁשׁוּ. This is textually nearer to the original הִתְאֲשִׁשׁוּ, and is phonetically a corruption easier to understand than the suggested emendation, הִתְחַשְׁשׁוּ; nor is it easy to account for any error arising in the case of so well-known a root as בּוֹשׁ. Further, it agrees with the LXX, which reads στενάξατε. The √חשׁשׁ has long been regarded as confined to Aramaic, but it is now known to occur frequently in Assyrian, where *aššū* means 'to be sad, troubled', and *aššūtu* means 'trouble, sorrow, affliction'.³ The occurrence of such an ἀπαξ εἰρημύμενον, only known in Assyrian and Aramaic, apart from a single possible occurrence in the Old Testament, is no more striking than that of אָנַח, אָרַח, and so on, while the second Isaiah is especially prone to the use of such words.⁴ In at least one instance Assyrian, instead of being adduced in support of textual emendation, may possibly prevent it. In 1 Sam. ii 33 various proposals have been made to remove לָאֲרִיב from the text, as inexplicable. But the √אָרַב appears to be confirmed by the Assyrian *addbu*, (i) to bind, (ii) to oppress.⁵ If this is correct, לָאֲרִיב should probably be pointed as a Pi' infin., לְאָרַיִב, incorrectly written *plene*, and לָאֲרִיב אֶת נַפְשׁךָ translated 'to vex thy soul'.

Assyrian may sometimes correct the false exegesis of the Rabbinic scholars. As an example of this may be cited the word בְּלֹא, without,

¹ Like דִּינָה, for example, with the archaic pron. suff.; cp. Ges.-K. § 84^b b, and 91 e.

² Other words in this poem which have to be referred to Assyrian for solution are הוֹר הַר הוֹר (Ass. *uru* = *uru*) and יְקָהָה (Ass. *aqū* and Arab. وقى).

³ The same root, it has been suggested by Dr Gray, underlies חוֹשִׁי in Job xx 2 (Driver and Gray *Job* pt. ii p. 134).

⁴ Examples are מַחֵא, מַכְמַר, שָׂרֵב, שָׂבֵל, צָרַח, צוּחַ.

⁵ See Delitzsch *HWB*, pp. 20 b and 21 c. It should, however, be added that Professor Langdon regards the meaning 'oppress' as not well established for √*addbu* in Assyrian.

which they regarded as a compound of בָּלָא, not, and בָּ, with. But the Assyrian *balum*, *balu*, without, side by side with *bali*, without,¹ clearly proves that in Hebrew also בָּלָא and בָּלִי were originally different cases of the same noun, from the √בלה, Ass. *balû*, to be nothing.²

Another word which has been wrongly suspected by scholars is אֲבָנֵי נֹר in Ps. lx 6 (נִתְחָה לִירֵאִיךְ נִם לְהִתְנַסֵּם) and Zech. ix 16 (אֲבָנֵי נֹר מִתְנוּסָסוֹת), for Assyrian proves that 'to wave to and fro' is the correct meaning.³ In II Rawlinson 40. 21 *nussusu ša zibbati* means 'wagging of the tail', and in the Epic of Gilgamesh, col. iv a l. 4 (Schrader's *K. B.* v 140), *linassisa kummaššu* is rendered by Jensen 'let him shake his hair'. In Ps. xl 6 therefore נִם לְהִתְנַסֵּם should be translated 'a flag to be waved to and fro', and in Zech. ix 16 אֲבָנֵי נֹר מִתְנוּסָסוֹת are 'jewels in a crown waving to and fro' with the movement of the head, and picturesquely depicted as 'waving to and fro over the land'. Similarly I would translate רֹחַ יְהוָה נֹסֶסָה בּוֹ (Isa. lix 19) 'the spirit of the Lord passing to and fro upon it', regarding נִיֶּסְפָה as the Qal ptcp.⁴ from [נִסַּם], Arab. نَسَسَ, and not the pf. Po'l. from נָסַם.⁵ Consequently גָּס, standard, will have meant primarily 'something waved to and fro', 'a banner', and be a derivative from √נָסַם rather than the primitive noun from which נָסַם was formed as a denominative verb.⁶

Lastly, I am inclined to think that in several cases in Hebrew, where two roots bear the same form, the rarer has been lost by being merged in that whose occurrence is more common.⁷ Two examples will suffice

¹ In Assyrian *bala* and *bali* were originally the acc. and gen. respectively of *balum*, *balu*; thus in *bala šaltum šabit* (= it was taken without fighting), the phrase *bala šaltum* constitutes an adverbial accusative, and in *ina bališu* (= without him) *bali* is in the genitive case after a preposition.

² In Arabic also بَلَّآ is probably philologically incorrect for بَلَّأ by similar false analogy.

³ With Ass. [*nasāsu*] cp. Arab. نَسَسَ, *pervasit, celeriter progressus fuit (in omni re); celeriter abiit; dispersus fuit*, and its derivative تَنَسَّسَ, rapid motion. The meaning of the √נָסַם is, therefore, 'to move quickly', probably with the special connotation of 'moving quickly to and fro'.

⁴ The ptcp. also agrees better with the sense of the passage than the perf., all the tenses referring to future time.

⁵ There can be no doubt that Hebr. נָסַם, fled, and Arab. (و)نَاسَ, oscillated, was in commotion, Hebr. נָסַם, waved to and fro, and Arab. نَسَسَ, moved to and fro, went quickly, are ultimately to be derived from a common root signifying quick motion (cp. מוּלַל and מוּלַל, &c.).

⁶ For the form גָּס (c. suff. גָּסִי) from √נָסַם, cp. אָסַם from √אָסַם, מָדָה from √מָדַה, מָדַר from √מָדַר, &c. (Ges.-K. 84^a c.).

⁷ Thus Delitzsch (*Prolegomena* pp. 66 ff) has detected a second root מוּחַץ,

to illustrate my meaning, the words **מָצָא** and **פָּרַץ**.¹ There are, it would seem, two roots **מָצָא** in the language, which should be kept distinct, viz. (i) **מָצָא**, found, and (ii) **מָצָא**, sufficed, corresponding to the Assyrian verbs, (i) *mašû* = to find, obtain, and (ii) *mašû* = to be wide, broad; to be enough, be plentiful. As in other cases of this nature, (ii) **מָצָא** was lost through the rarity of its occurrence; for it is perhaps only to be recognized in five or six passages of the Old Testament. In Num. xi 22 **וּמָצָא לָהֶם** clearly means 'that it suffice them, that there be enough for them'; in Judges xxi 14 **וְלֹא מָצְאוּ לָהֶם כֵּן**, 'and even so they sufficed them not', the meaning given by the Revised Version, is therefore correct.² The Niph. **נִמְצָא**, which occurs in Joshua xvii 16 and Zech. x 10, in the same way signifies 'was accounted sufficient'.

As a last instance in which Assyrian is of assistance, it suffices to recall two occurrences of **פָּרַץ**, where the usual rendering 'broke forth' is unsatisfactory and can only be extended to mean 'spread abroad' by a violent exegesis. The passages are **נִפְרְצָה נִשְׁלַחָה עָלַי** (1 Chron. xiii 2), where the Revised Version avoids the difficulty by rendering 'let us send abroad everywhere . . .', and **כִּפְרִץ הַדְּבַר** (2 Chron. xxxi 5), for which the same translation gives 'as soon as the commandment came abroad'. But in both cases the sense required by the context for **פָּרַץ** is 'to command', 'issue an edict', and this is exactly what the cognate root in Assyrian offers. There we find three roots corresponding to **פָּרַץ**: (i) *parāsu*, to tell lies, which has no equivalent in Hebrew; (ii) *parāsu*, to break through; (iii) *parāsu*, to decide, with its common derivative noun *parsu*, command, order, law, edict, especially of a god or king.³ The Hebrew lexicon should therefore be corrected to read (i) **פָּרַץ**, broke through (= Ass. (ii) *parāsu*); (ii) **פָּרַץ**, issued an edict, commanded (= Ass. (iii) *parāsu*); and at the same time these two passages in Chronicles should be translated: 'Let us issue an edict, let us send unto our

corresponding to Ass. *maḥāsu*, to sprinkle, dip, and bearing that meaning, which has only survived in Ps. lxviii 24: **לְמַעַן תִּמְחֹץ רַגְלֶךָ בַּדָּם**, that thou mayest dip thy feet in blood.

¹ Another example is perhaps **הִתְחַנַּן**, implored, with its derivative **תְּחִנּוּן**, supplication, which cannot be brought under the $\sqrt{\text{חנן}}$, was gracious. There are clearly in Semitic four roots of the form **חִנַּן**: (i) **חִנַּן** [חִנַּן], Hiithp., implored = Ass. *anānu*, to implore; (ii) **חִנַּן**, was gracious = Ass. *anānu*, to be gracious; (iii) *anānu*, to be hostile, which has no cognate root in Hebrew, and (iv) **חִנַּן**, was loathsome = Arab. **حَنَن**, was loathsome.

² Another probable instance in the Qal is in Lev. xxv 26, where **וּמָצָא כִרְיִי** **וְנִמְצָא** should be rendered 'and there be enough for its redemption'.

³ See Burney *Judges* p. 116 n.

brethren . . . that they may gather themselves together unto us', and : 'when this thing was decreed', as indeed the LXX (*ὡς προσέταξεν τὸν λόγον*) renders the latter.

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[I have no doubt that Mr Driver is right in finding under Heb. מָצָא both Assyr. *mašû* 'find, obtain', and *mašû* 'be wide, suffice'. The latter verb may be paralleled by Aram. ܡܫܘܐ 'able, possible', properly *capax*. The two sets of meanings appear, however, to go back to a common idea, and thus to have a common root, with which is connected Aram. ܡܫܘܐ, ܡܫܘܐ 'reach, attain' (against Nöldeke, *ZDMG.* xl 736, and *BDB*), Heb. מָצָא 'stretch out, extend', Assyr. *našû* 'be feasible, attainable', Heb. מָדַד, Assyr. *maddû* 'measure' (from idea of *extension*, as appears from Ar. مَدَّ 'extend, stretch', Heb. מָדַד extending 'garment'), probably also Heb. מָדַד 'extend', Aram., Ar. *ibid.* (ܡܫܘܐ strengthened to ܡܫܘܐ gutt. as in ܡܫܘܐ, ܡܫܘܐ), and perhaps even Heb. מָדַד 'draw out, extend' (מ strengthened to כ as in Assyr. *tamâhu*, Heb. מָדַד). We thus have a common Semitic biliteral MAŞ, (MAŞ), MAṬ, MAD, MAT, NAṬ, the meaning of which appears to have been 'stretch, extend; reach'. The difference between the meanings 'find, obtain', and the meanings 'be wide, suffice', is merely the difference between 'stretch, extend' (trans.) and 'be stretched, extend' (intrans.); and the connexion between the trans. and intrans. meanings will be clear to those who are familiar with the uses of the Permansive in Assyrian.

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FURTHER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CRITICISM OF ZMARAGDUS'S *EXPOSITIO LIBRI COMITIS*.

IN the earlier article¹ I attempted to shed some light on the authorities used by Zmaragdus by presenting the results of a collation of the marginal symbols in the Bodleian, British Museum, Paris (B. N. 2341), Berlin, Einsiedeln, St Gall 424 and St Gall 435 MSS. Since then I have been able (*a*) to add to the list of MSS, especially by Dom Wilmart's kindness, the following:—

Paris B. N. 12045 (formerly of St Maur des Fossés) (saec. ix), defective at beginning and end,²

¹ See the *JOURNAL* vol. ix (1907-1908) pp. 584-597.

² Begins *tunc abiit unus de duodecim* (p. 176 c), ends *in conscientia et intellectu* (p. 454 B).