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THE HIGHER CRITICISM OF THE PENTATEUCH—RE-EXAMINED

IX

(1) It is stated that each of the sources uses a different name for God. One preferring Jehovah, whilst the other prefers Elohim. This however we have already shown to be contrary to the facts of the case, for the names are interchangeable, and we find that Jehovah occurs in the E sections, whilst Elohim appears in J.

In fact the critics have practically abandoned this particular difference, for we read "The use of the criterion (that is, the use of the different names) which is of limited value in Genesis and Exodus i. and ii., becomes almost negligible in the rest of the Hexateuch."¹

(2) Both take a great delight in mentioning sacred sites and sacred trees, etc., where God has manifested Himself from time to time, and moreover J prefers to mention places in the Southern Kingdom, whilst E gives a list of places in the Northern part. Here again however we have to say that this argument cannot be maintained in view of the facts, for we have seen that J mentions places in the North, and E places in the South, apparently without any thought of a selection. The most obvious reason to account for this is that they were not two sources, but one whole, and that each part is recording the events as happening at the place where they were believed to have actually taken place.

(3) "As compared with J, E frequently states more particulars; he is the best informed on Egyptian matters."²

In connection with this statement it is necessary to point out that archæology has brought so much information to light concerning the early life in Egypt, that what was once denied as being impossible in the days of Joseph, has now been proved to be true to its historical setting, and moreover the colouring is so exact, that it has been felt that none save an eye-witness of the events could possibly have described it so minutely. For a fuller discussion of this point, it would be advisable to read it in Orr's book on pages 413-417.³ The only conclusion which I wish to bring out here is, that if this account was written by an eye

¹ G.O.T., p. 30.

² L.O.T., p. 118.

³ Orr's *Problem of the O.T.*

witness, then it means that at any rate part of the E side of JE is much earlier than the time of Moses, and hence it does not require any very great stretch of imagination to believe that Moses could have used this as an original source, which he worked over into the whole plan.

But now as regards the other part of this section, we have seen that E is supposed to give more particulars. What weight such an argument has in view of another statement made on the next page of the same book must be left to the reader to decide. The other statement is this "In ease and grace, his (J's) narratives are unsurpassed; everything is told with precisely the *amount of detail* that is required; the narrative never lingers; and the reader's interest is sustained to the end." To the writer of this article there appears to be very little point in the question of details, if both give details where necessary.

(4) There are also certain characteristic words and phrases assigned to each part. Thus, for example, J usually has Sinai, but E substitutes Horeb for this, as the name of the Mount. The name of Moses' father-in-law is given as Jethro in E, and as Reuel or Hobab in J. All these instances can be answered, but just to show the general line of attack which is usually adopted, we may deal with the second example cited above. The name Hobab occurs twice in the Old Testament, in Numbers x. 29, and in Judges iv. 11. Supposing for the moment that we were to accept the modern critical position for the reference in Judges, we should discover that it is regarded as a late gloss borrowed from i. 16, or the source of ch. i. This is the view of Moore in his International Critical Commentary on Judges. Then, in that case, if the words are a gloss, it means that they are added much later to fill in, and so they certainly could not be regarded as carrying any weight for the earliest of the sources JE, for all admit that this compilation is the oldest of all. Consequently the argument for difference in style is brought down to one single reference. But it is questionable whether it is right to build up any theory on any one single reference, for if this is done, the Bible can be made to teach all manner of contradictory things. But on closer examination, it is not quite certain that J is not correct in mentioning Hobab as distinct from Jethro, because a different person may have been intended, for when we turn to Exodus ii. 18 and compare it with ch. iii. 1, we find that Jethro

¹ L.O.T., p. 119.

is to be identified with Reuel or Raguel, and in this case Hobab is not the father-in-law of Moses, but a brother-in-law, and then when we turn once again to Numbers x. 29, we see that the text is certainly very ambiguous as it reads in the English, for we really do not know whether it is Hobab or Raguel who is intended to be the father-in-law of Moses, but in the light of the other references we see it is Raguel, and so Hobab is quite a different person to Jethro, for he is his son, and so it is only natural that if Moses was addressing the father-in-law, he would not call him by his son's name.

(5) The last point brought forward usually to show that J is separate from E is, that there are parallel accounts of different stories. Thus, for instance, there are two accounts of the name of Beersheba. One account is given in Genesis xxi. 31 (E), and the other is in ch. xxvi. 33 (J).

Before we look closely into this particular example, it must be remembered that narratives of the same event may contain different details, because looked at from a different point of view, though in reality they need not be discordant or for that matter at all contradictory. Moreover similar acts may be, and frequently are repeated under new circumstances. This being the case it is not unreasonable to suppose that if there was one original compiler working over some earlier sources, he would incorporate both accounts. There is yet another point which favours the idea that certain events might possibly have taken place on two occasions under almost identical conditions, and that is how in some cases we find that the same source gives the story twice. If there had been one marked consistency, and each source had given the story only once, we might have thought the argument stronger, but now there are instances where J for example gives a story twice. Thus in the case of Abraham deceiving Pharaoh concerning Sarah. This story is given to J, but there is also the story of Isaac deceiving the men of Gerar (Gen. xxvi. 7f) and this also is assigned to J. If it was not at all probable that an event should happen twice in history, how is it that J has taken the trouble to assign a story to Isaac, when he had already mentioned one in connection with his father Abraham? If again it is said that one of the stories is a story made up on the basis of the other, then it seems very wrong of J to have assigned such treachery either to Abraham or Isaac, whichever was the secondary story, when the person in question was not guilty of such an offence.

But now let us turn our attention to the story of the name given to Beersheba a little more closely, and we find that in the second story, where Isaac gives the name to the place, that after all, there is a reference to a former story, for in ch. xxvi., verse 15 we are told that all "the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stoppped them, and filled them with earth."

This being the case, either Isaac did not know where the old well of Beersheba had been, and so re-named it as "The well of the oath," or else he remembered, and because the circumstances were similar, he called it by the old name which his father had given to it. In this way the difficulty disappears.

Let us now try and sum up this section, so far as our study and investigation of J and E have led us.

(a) Apparently there is nothing to prove that J and E were at one time separate documents, but on the other hand there is every reason to believe that though they may have existed as separate versions of stories at a very early date, yet they were worked over by one editor, who incorporated several parts which appear to be parallel, but which in reality, to the editor were essential to the complete story.

(b) There is no reason for assigning J to 850, and E to 750 B.C., for their origin; nor is it even necessary for the conservative scholars to worry over this point of modernist criticism, since the critics are so undecided amongst themselves as to the date, and indeed are not quite sure whether J should precede E, or vice versa.

(c) The evidence of the Bible itself gives us no reason to believe that J was compiled in the South, whilst E originated in Ephraim in the North, indeed the facts are such, that it appears that there is no particular desire to favour one part or the other, but merely to record the details of the events as they were believed to have occurred in the actual place, whether it be in the North or the South.

(d) According to the critics themselves, we are told that J and E originated in "The Golden Age of Hebrew Literature." This being the case, we may rightly conclude that the documents would not appear in such a polished style in their first edition, and so this leads us to the thought that they were based on a much earlier tradition, and that as the stories are so definitely fixed, it suggests that the tradition was of long standing, and therefore had

probably been written down long before. According to this, it would mean that the tradition could have originated in the time of Moses, and we conclude that though the original tradition may have been worked over in later times, yet Moses appears to be the most likely author of the original compilation.

(To be continued.)

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