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Old Testament Notes

HENRY PRESERVED SMITH

AMHERST COLLEGE

I. Nisroch and Nusku

PROFESSOR PRINCE, in his interesting discussion of these words (*JBL*, 1904, pp. 68 ff.), suggests that "were it not for the Greek variants we might reject the τ entirely in נסר and read נסך." It may be worth while to point out that if the Hebrew author wrote נסך the word might easily be corrupted into נסר, and if this took place before the Greek translation was made we should have no external evidence for the original form. For the possible mistake of τ for ν one might cite Zech. 4⁶, where one manuscript of LXX reads Ζοβαβελ for זרכבל. The example is not convincing, however, because Ζοβαβελ may be a corruption of Ζοροβαβελ, which is given for this name elsewhere. We do find, however, a Greek Ιωχηλ for ירחל of the current Hebrew (1 Chron. 2³⁴), where the interchange of ν and τ has actually taken place. In 1 Sam. 14⁴⁷ it is generally admitted that an original ישיע is now represented by ירשיע. Conversely in Gen. 49²⁶ a present הורי seems to be a misreading of הורי. Other cases can probably be found, but these are sufficient to show that the confusion of ν and τ is quite possible. If the Hebrew scribe read נסר for נסך, he may have been influenced by a vague recollection of נטר, a hero or demigod of ancient Babylonia.

II. Nabi'

The connection of this word with the name of the Assyrian and Babylonian god Nebo (Nabu), the god of revelation, was suggested by the late Robertson Smith, and may

have occurred to others before him. His language (*Prophets of Israel*², p. 86) is: "The very name and idea of the prophet (*nabî*) are common to Israel with its heathen neighbours, as appears . . . from the fact that the Assyrians had a god Nebo, whose name is essentially identical with the Hebrew *nabî*, and who figures as the spokesman of the gods." If I understand this aright, it means that the god Nebo is the eponym god of the *nabîm*. The late Franz Delitzsch and others have emphasized the fact that *nabî* is passive in form, supposing the form to indicate that the prophet is overpowered by a divine influence.¹

Now, as we know the worship of Nebo to have been carried on in Palestine from early times, is it not simpler to take the name of the god (borrowed from Babylonia no doubt) as the foundation upon which *nabî* was constructed, as a denominative with passive signification? We speak of a man as bemused or bedevilled, just as the Arabs speak of him as *magnûm*. There seems no reason why a man might not be called *Neboed* when possessed by the god Nebo, and the Hebrew form would be *nabî*. Any god might take possession of his votaries and inspire them to reveal his will; but such action was particularly appropriate to Nebo, who was the herald of fate. The only way in which he could maintain his reputation was by throwing his servants into an ecstasy and speaking through them. The name once given to prophets of Nebo would easily attach itself to all prophets. The enthusiastic nature of early Hebrew prophecy is clearly indicated by the Biblical narratives. Parallels in other religions can easily be cited.

The large number of nouns in Hebrew of the form *pa'il* is well known (discussed for example by König, *Lehrgebäude*, ii. 1, pp. 130 ff.). Some of them seem to be denominative, but I find no clear case of one derived from a proper name.

¹ Professor Arnold calls my attention to the fact that Beyer has recently made the word a passive, with the meaning *one who is carried away*, and also that Zimmern (*KAT*³, p. 400) makes Nabu a contraction from an original *na-bi-u*. This would perhaps favor Robertson Smith's contention.

III. Naioth

The place at which Saul found David under the protection of Samuel (בניית ברמה, 1 Sam. 19²²⁻²³ with the Qrê בניית) is still a puzzle to the expositors. It is, perhaps, significant that the college of *nebi'im* has its residence there, and we may venture to suppose a corruption of an original נבית or נבוה. The interchange of נ and ו is not without precedent — the notorious בת שבע appears in Chronicles as בת שוע (1 Chron. 3⁶). If the original נבוה meant the *Nebo-sanctuary*, we can see reason for its mutilation. The original pronunciation escapes us, but place names in נ may be found, such as קנת, תפת.

IV. 1 Chronicles 22^a

The commentaries seem to take no offence at דגרים, but the word does not belong in this connection. We should correct to דגורים or הגורים; masons or stone-cutters are the men needed for David's purpose; cf. 2 Kings 12¹², 22⁶.

V. Genesis 35¹¹

Stade corrects סמך in 2 Kings 20¹⁸ to סמעך, and this is confirmed by the similar passages, Gen. 15⁴, 25²², 2 Sam. 7¹², 16¹¹. How easily the two words may be interchanged is shown by Gen. 15⁴, where the Greek has *ἐκ σοῦ* for סמעך. Add to these Gen. 17⁶, where the current text has סמך, but where סמעך is restored by Grätz. Further, what has not been noticed heretofore so far as I know, Gen. 35¹¹ must be similarly corrected. We now read סמך, but סמעך is demanded by the parallelism, for the second member of the verse has מוהיצד. Having gone so far, there is no reason why we should hesitate to make the same correction in Isaiah 39⁷.

VI. Judges 9²⁰

The verse has long given trouble to the interpreters. The latest device is to remove the second half to another connection; so Nowack in the *Handkommentar*. The diffi-

culty has arisen by duplication of one clause, as may be shown by writing them together :

ואמרה את אבימלך
 ואמר ל אבימלך

The original seems to have had **ואמרה אל אבימלך** as the completion of the optative clause preceding. The whole sentence thus restored would read smoothly: "Oh, that this people would join me, *that I might say to Abimelech*: Increase thine army and come out!"

VII. The Emphatic ל or לא

Some scholars still doubt the existence of this particle in Hebrew, first affirmed by Professor Haupt (see Casanowicz in *JAOS*, xvi. p. clxvi). In addition to the examples pointed out in my commentary on Samuel (1 Sam. 14²⁰, 20²⁰), I now call attention to Ex. 8²³: **הן נוכח את תועבת מצרים לעיניהם ולא יסקלנו לא**. It is extremely awkward to interpret the **לא** as a negative, whereas it is beautifully expressive as an emphatic: "If we sacrifice the god of the Egyptians before their eyes, *surely* they will stone us." I assume that **תועבת** has been substituted for **אלהי**, but this does not affect the main contention.