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BRIEF COMMUNICATIONS

1 Sam. 13 21

THE rendering "pim" at 1 Sam. 13 21 in the new Jewish version of the Scriptures is illuminating in several ways. It exemplifies the utility of excavation; it exemplifies the fact that a Masoretic reading which critics have unanimously condemned as hopelessly corrupt may have been exactly right all the time; it gives intelligibility to the text itself.

The plan of their work forbade the translators to make this justification of the first Masoretic words a basis for any emendation of the words which follow. But obviously the attitude of the LXX in finding the word שקל in the midst of ולשלש קלשון is powerfully supported by "pim". If we say that the fee was a pim for the sharpening of tools listed by name, this calls at once for some mention of those for which the charge was something else than a pim; otherwise why the list of tools, why not let the sentence end at "pim"?

When we have "pim" and a list of tools, and then the letters שקל in a group of letters for which no satisfactory meaning has otherwise been found, it ought to need no further demonstration that the last part of the verse is a list of those for which a shekel was charged. There remains the question how to dispose of the letters surrounding שקל.

We read in the first place, then, that the fee was a pim למחרשות ולאתים ולשל. Do we hear elsewhere of the של? Yes, in 2 Sam. 6, 7, where again it has been an unsolved difficulty: traditional interpretation makes it an abstract noun, but Klostermann and Smith have already seen and said that it ought to be that upon which Uzzah falls as he is struck down, presumably

a part of the cart. If we may recognize the same word in
1 Sam. 13 21, then we learn that it was a sharp iron. Now we
know that a man may die from Jahveh's stroke without other
weapon; nevertheless, if the stroke throws him down upon a
sharp iron, the mention of the fact seems very pertinents to the
record of his death.

In the next place, שׁקל imperatively requires to be followed
by ל, as פים is; and we may regard the dagesh of the Masoretic
text as the relic of this additional ל. Supplying this ל, we find
that the fee was a shekel לשׁן ולהקרדמים ולהציב הדרבן. The
motive for the higher fee is that the ax is a larger and heavier
tool than the hoe or colter, demanding more labor for its sharp-
ening, and that in shoeing the goad the smith had to con-
tribute not only his labor but a piece of iron. As to the preced-
ing piece, we do not know שׁון; we know לשׁון, but not as a
piece of iron. Once the לשׁון is a piece of metal, Achan's לשׁון
of gold. The fact that the English Bible renders this by "wedge"
will not seem to anybody to have great evidential value for the
interpretation of our passage; nevertheless we may perhaps
take a hint from it. The wedge is a tool used since primitive
times, heavy enough to make the smith much work in sharpen-
ing if it has grown as dull as the Hebrew peasant probably let
it grow before he carried it down to Philistia and paid a shekel
for sharpening it; and it might well be called לשׁון. Of course
the reading of the noun לשׁון requires us to assume that the
text had originally ללל, which copyists reduced to a single ל
with dagesh; but it is not violent to suppose that if ללל occur-
red in an unintelligible sequence of letters there would be a
tendency to simplify the gemination in copying.

What we have thus obtained, if we resist the temptation to
supply also a conjunction before שׁקל, is "and the charge for
sharpening was a pim for hoes and colters and *shal*, a shekel
for wedge and ax and for shoeing a goad". Here we have
given a motive to the listing of the tools that cost a pim, we
have put meaning into the unintelligible word in the middle,
and we have obtained from this passage a definite indication
as to the meaning of an unintelligible word found elsewhere.
Our income from the operation is thus considerable; it is time

to look at the expenses, for there are reasons for not being too positive of it all.

In the first place, the proposed emendations give us two singulars in a series of plurals. However, דרבן is singular already, and in Judges 9 48 the plural form of קרדם has singular meaning, while we know little of the syntax of the other two words. In the next place, I find it difficult to think of any sharpened iron that belongs to a cart. or that would be carried in driving a cart, so that a person suddenly struck down should fall upon it; unless it be the goad, and in our passage the goad appears with another name. In the third place, in the use of a wedge it is ordinarily best economy of strength to start the wedge in a cleft made by an ax. so that the wedge does not need to be very sharp; however, if the Hebrew held it long enough before taking it to the smith it might get so dull that it could not be used anyhow. Obviously the effect of the high charge would be to make the sharpening come seldom and hence to make it a very hard job when it was done, and the smith may have worked hard enough to earn what he got. In the fourth place, if we knew the tool to be a wedge (though in fact this is the part of our conjecture that has least foundation) there is no reason why the wedge should not be just as likely to be called שן as לשון. and שן could be got out of the received text just as easily as לשון; or one might even retain the ו by assuming that the wedge was called by a name that was originally a dialectic variant of שן, with different vowel. A fact that should be remembered in all conjecturing, though I think it commonly is not, is that a passage containing an unfamiliar word or words is naturally more exposed to corruption than one in which all the words are familiar, and hence a hundred lines of corrupt text will, if restored to their true original. contain decidedly more hapax-legomena (which, bear in mind, will be words that are not now known to have existed at all) than do a hundred lines of uncorrupted text. This consideration cuts a great part of the foundation from under the whole business of conjecture, since the foundation has generally to consist in an attempt to restore words such as we are already acquainted with; on the other hand, a conjecture which produces

an unheard-of word, which will generally be regarded as the
most reckless type of conjecture, may claim at least that it has
more chance of being right than any one would allow it at first
glance. Ordinarily, to be sure, one will sooner acquiesce in an
unintelligible traditional text than create by conjecture an
equally unintelligible text; so we simmer down to Porson's
"Conjectural readings are worth a farthing a cartload". But
in the present instance the sense requires שֶׁקֶל and שֶׁקֶל lies
before our eyes in the traditional text.

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חשׁך

The Hebrew Lexicon under חשׁך cites Palmyrene Aramaic
as using this word in the meanings given by Vogüé. Some
users of the Lexicon may not have Vogüé at hand, and it is a
safe guess that not every one who could get a look at Vogüé
will take the look. It will not be superfluous, therefore, to set
forth what I found when I looked up the texts.

The two occurrences that are cited are from bilingual honor-
ific inscriptions for statues of men who have deserved this honor
because each of them, among other merits, חסך certain moneys.
The first presumption, to me, is that the word will have the
same meaning in the two passages. Vogüé recognizes no such
presumption, but gives quite dissimilar meanings, each of which
he arrives at by rejecting the testimony of the Palmyrenes
themselves as furnished by their Greek translation.

The Greek of inscription 15 translates חסך by ἀφειδήσαντα.
Inscription 6 is defective, but according to Vogüé's restoration
we should read ἀφειδήσαντι there also. Vogüé's note on 15
remarks that the meaning of חסך as shown by Hebrew usage
is exactly contrary to ἀφειδήσαντα, and that the meaning φείδω,
not ἀφειδέω, is congruous to the other statements about the
man's services. But here is the same fallacy that one may ob-
serve sometimes in certain works of Biblical criticism, of start-
ing from the text as if it were a free composition, and not ob-
serving that the author is likely to have been bound by the
facts, whether actual or traditional, which he had to record.

If the man had actually deserved well by ἀφειδεῖν his own
money, the inscription could do nothing but record that, even
if his official position had given him opportunity to deserve
well by φείδειν the public money.

In restoring ἀφειδήσαντι for the lacuna in 6, Vogüé shows
that he does not assume the Greek word to have been any slip
of the stone-cutter of 15; his assumption is therefore that in
Palmyrene usage this word had the opposite of its natural Greek
meaning. One expects, therefore, that he shall interpret it the
same way in 6. But he does not; and indeed it would require
some ingenuity. though hardly more ingenuity than he uses.
That which the man חסך in 6 was a נור דנרין די דהב עתיקין
תלת מאה, in Greek χρυσα παλαια δηναρια τριακοσια αναλ[ωμα]α-
[τ]ω[ν]. Vogüé notes "La formule דנרין עתיקין = δηναρια πα-
λαιά correspond à celle qui se trouve sur les médailles pour
indiquer la remise faite par l'empereur de l'arriéré dû au fisc...
On peut aussi la considérer comme ... *anciennes espèces.*...
aurei du haut empire, d'un poids supérieur..." Despite his
profession of uncertainty, he feels so sure of the former half
of this note that without any other foundation, so far as I see,
he conjectures for the word נור = ἀνάλωμα the meaning "debt",
and, as the end of the chain of inference. makes חסך here
mean "remit".

But if instead of taking all this interpretation as canonical
we start from the modest-looking assumptions that the Palmy-
renes understood the two languages of their city and that the
same word will most probably have the same meaning when
found in similar contexts, we may buttress these assumptions
by remarking that the normal Greek meaning of ἀνάλωμα har-
monizes beautifully with the normal Greek meaning of ἀφειδεῖν,
and that both the men honored are perfectly likely to have
been honored for "generously spending" their money in services
to their fellows.

My conclusion is that if anybody feels himself to need more
light on the meaning of חסך than the Hebrew Lexicon gives
him, he will do well to read his Palmyrene texts in the original
rather than in Vogüé's translation.

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אָבִּיר 1 Sam. 21 8

One hears nowadays that אָבִּיר in 1 Sam. 21 8 has super-
lative adjectival sense, "the mightiest of" &c. But if Doeg was
the mightiest of either Saul's herdsmen or Saul's guardsmen
the mention of the fact would stand unmotivated in the text.
And if such had been the meaning the words would have been
אָבִּיר רֹעִי שָׁאוּל; the use of the periphrastic genitive shows that
we are speaking not of the אָבִּיר of Saul's רֹעִים but of Saul's
אָבִּיר רֹעִים. So this text cannot be an exception to the rule
that אָבִּיר is substantive; and presumably אָבִּיר רֹעִים is some
sort of office. I conjecture that with large herds like the king's
there was so much specialization of function that one man was
engaged as the fighting man of the company, whose chief quali-
fications were willingness to fight at any moment and ability
to kill any number of robbers or lions. Such a character would
suit the part that Doeg plays.

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נדגלות

Surely the interpretation "bannered hosts" for נדגלות is, as
Graetz says, mere conjecture. But if we are to conjecture, the
parallelism in Cant. 6 10 bids us conjecture rather a celestial
luminary. There are two luminaries which the tradition of the
world recognizes as "terrible" and which would be appropriately
named by a plural word meaning "bannered": (a) the aurora
borealis, (b) comets. History records that there have been
times when the aurora borealis has appeared conspicuously in
the latitude of Palestine often enough to be likely to have a
name given to it; that it has not appeared very often is just
what is wanted, for this is what makes it "terrible". On the
other hand, I believe every nation which has observed comets
has observed that comet differs from comet and hence that
they are to be spoken of in the plural. I should regard either
of these interpretations as convincing if it had not the other to
compete with it; at any rate I see no occasion for considering
any third interpretation.

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