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SOME TEXT-CRITICAL NOTES ON JOB

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THE book of Job has of late received a marked degree of attention. Within two years four noteworthy commentaries upon it appeared. In 1920 the late Professor Jastrow published his *"Book of Job, its Origin, Growth, and Interpretation, together with a New Translation based on a Revised Text."* In 1921 appeared the International Critical Commentary on *"Job"* by the late Professor Driver and Professor G. B. Gray. Early in 1922 Professor C. J. Ball published his *"Book of Job,"* and Professor Moses Buttenwieser, of Hebrew Union College, also published his. Each of these last mentioned volumes contains a new translation based on a revised text as well as a commentary.

In his seminary the present writer is testing and assimilating the new material and points of view presented by these books. While his work has not been completed, it has progressed far enough for him to record certain impressions and convictions, and to make a few definite suggestions.

Of the four new commentaries before us three extensively revise the Massoretic text. Driver and Gray alone are conservative and cautious in making emendations. The other three scholars make them freely and frequently. As every student of Job knows there are passages in which emendation is unavoidable, but a fresh study of Job has convinced the present writer that such passages are much less numerous than many commentators have supposed. Every correction of the text that is suggested should be considered fairly with open mind, and those made in the commentaries named above have, for the

early chapters of Job, been so considered, but in the great majority of cases they seem to weaken the force of the thought or spoil its poetry. At the best they occasionally present an alternative which is plausible. Only rarely do they remove a real difficulty and actually improve the text. In other words, a study of the manifold suggestions of revision increases one's respect for the Massoretic text.

Notwithstanding this respect, there are passages in which correction is necessary, and one must employ the best means at hand in the effort to remedy the corruption that has evidently taken place.

A few instances taken from Chapters 8—11 are added as illustrations of unfortunate and also of necessary emendation.

1. The last clause of 9 35, כִּי־לֹא־כֵן אָנֹכִי עִמָּדִי, has puzzled translators, both ancient and modern. The LXX, followed by the Coptic, read οὐ γὰρ οὕτω συνεπίσταμαι, possibly taking עִמָּדִי as equivalent to יֹדֵעַ. The Syriac, which is supported by the Arabic, reads ܡܟ̈ܒ̈ܐ ܘ̄ܗ ܝ̈ ܡ̈ܟ, possibly taking עִמָּדִי as equivalent to עַל־פָּנַי, but possibly understanding it as equivalent to צָר or צַר (as in 1 Sam. 28 16) "adversary." The Vulgate reads: neque enim possum metuens respondere, reading עֹנֶה for עִמָּדִי. In ancient times, therefore, the text was regarded either as difficult or uncertain. It has been treated differently by every recent interpreter.

Jastrow follows a conjecture of Ehrlich that, out of reverence, the Massoretes substituted הוא for אֹנֹכִי, so, restoring the הוא he translates: "That he is not fair to me"—a rendering that does not seem as fitting an introduction to ch. 10 as that which it displaces. Ball, correcting עִמָּדִי on the authority of the LXX to יֹדֵעַ, renders: "For I, I know him not right." Buttenwieser, retaining the MT, nevertheless translates, "My mind is thrown into confusion." Driver and Gray, on the other hand, not only retain the present text, but find in it the meaning which had previously been found by others, (e. g. Davidson, Budde, Duhm, Peake, Barton), that Job is conscious in himself of no cause (i. e. no sin) why he should be terrified at God. This suits the beginning of ch. 10 much better, and is to be preferred.

Again in ch. 8 Jastrow, having excised vv. 6, 7, would remove

vv. 21, 22 from their present position and place them after v. 5.
He thinks they were removed from that position "to make
Bildad's speech end with consolation." Ball, while leaving v. 21
in its present position, suspects v. 22 as an infelicitous restoration
by the Massoretes of a mutilated text.

These criticisms seem hypercritical. It is improbable that the
poet would make the first speech of one of the friends end with-
out an exhortation to Job to repent. Had he not done so the
poet would have been a poor psychologist. On the other hand
he was, at this point, representing the irritation of Job's friends
as on the increase. It is altogether fitting to his purpose, there-
fore, that the note of warning in v. 22 should be mingled with
the ray of hope in v. 21.

To take an example of another kind, יחד סביב in 10 8 presents
an impossible text.

> "Thy hands have fashioned me and made me
> Together round about thou swallowest me up,"

a poet of the power and clarity of thought of the author of Job
could not have written. Probably the text has suffered corruption.
The Syriac and Arabic read צבית for סביב, but the reading of
the LXX μεταβαλών = סבב is much simpler and more probable.
Both the LXX and the Syriac, followed by the Cop. Eth. and
Arabic, support the reading אחר instead of יחד. Adopting these
slight changes, we obtain the satisfactory couplet:

> "Thy hands have fashioned me and made me,
> Afterward, turning, thou also swallowest me up."

Again in 10 16, the reading of MT ויגאה, causes difficulty.
Both before and after it Job is speaking in the first person;
why should we have a verb in the third person here? AV
followed by Driver and Gray and Buttenwieser tried to solve
the difficulty by supplying "my head" as the subject, while
Jastrow and Ball drop the line as a dittograph. The LXX
read להרג instead of ויגאה, making the line "Thou huntest me
for slaughter." The Syriac has, however, preserved the right
reading ואגאה, "and if I exalt myself." This should be adopted.

Finally, in Job 10 21, 22 the recurrence of the many synonyms
for darkness in the description of Sheol is thought to cause

difficulty. The suspicion that something is wrong is increased
by the fact that the LXX arranged the clauses differently.
Jastrow thought he could disentangle the confusion by detecting
a gloss and a super gloss. It was thus that he accounted for
the occurrence of אֹפֶל twice in v. 22. Ball, similarly feeling the
difficulty of so many references to darkness, regards the whole
of v. 22 as a gloss.

It has occurred to me that some light might be gained on the
way a Semitic poet would handle such a theme by comparing
"Ishtar's Descent into the Lower World"—a poem that begins
with a description of the darkness of Sheol. In that poem we
have within the space of nine lines the darkness of Sheol referred
to five times. Of these five references three consist of the same
word *eṭu*, though once the feminine-abstract ending is added
making *eṭuṭu*. The other two references to darkness are phrases
which speak of the lack of light in Sheol, into both of which the
word *nûru* enters. (*ṣu-um-mu-û nu-û-ra* and *nu-û-ru ul
im-ma-ru*). Such a passage reveals at once the horror which
Sheol inspired in the Semitic mind and how, in expressing it,
even a great poet might reiterate the same words.

There is, however, one word, סֹדְרִים, which seems out of place.
While סֵדֶר occurs often in post-Biblical Hebrew, it occurs in no
other passage in the Old Testament. לֹא־סְדָרִים seems to have
little meaning here. It is certainly a strange way of expressing
"disorder," and "disorder" seems a strange idea to be thrown
into the midst of these synonyms for darkness. Again the LXX
point the way to a solution of the difficulty. They translate by
φέγγος, which represents a Hebrew צׇהֳרִים — a reading that
should be adopted. לֹא־צׇהֳרִים, "without light" or "without
noonday" is, as the parallel from "Ishtar's Descent" shows,
exactly what a Semitic poet would say in such a connection.