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(LXX)

- 87 27 Bless the Lord, ye holy and humble (men) in heart,  
Praise and highly exalt him forever.
- 90 28 Bless the God of Gods, all ye that worship,  
Praise and acknowledge (him),  
For his mercy (is) forever.

## BENEDICTUS ES

- 52 1 Blessed art thou, O Lord God of our Fathers,  
And praised and highly exalted forever.
- 2 And blessed is the holy name of thy glory,  
And highly praised and highly exalted forever.
- 53 3 Blessed art thou in the temple of thy holy glory,  
And highly praised and highly glorified forever.
- 54 4 Blessed art thou on the glorious throne of thy kingdom,  
And praised and highly exalted forever.
- 55b (s) Blessed art thou that sittest (upon) the cherubim,  
And praised and highly exalted forever.
- 55a 5 Blessed art thou that beholdest the depths,  
And praised and glorified forever.
- 56 7 Blessed art thou in the firmament of heaven,  
And praised and glorified forever.

Okanogan, Wash.

ELMER B. CHRISTIE

An Identification of *tiškaḥ yēmīnī*, Ps. 137 5

The common rendering of this phrase is still, "Let my right hand forget *her cunning*"—as if having to deal with the usual verb **נָשָׁח** "to forget." The words *her cunning*, however, are not to be found in the Hebrew text. They merely represent an indispensable addition made by translators in order to supply the direct object required by **נָשָׁח** in consequence of its interpretation as a transitive verb, "to forget." The actual absence of this object in the MT then naturally induced modern scholars to suggest a change of vocalization, viz. **נִשְׁכַּח**, so as

to give the same verb a *passive* form in supposed accordance<sup>1</sup> with LXX ἐπιλησθείη. Now "Let my right hand be forgotten" presents a very poor sense and bad parallelism with תרבק לשוני לחי' although apparently more satisfactory grammatically. But precisely in view of this latter fact one could hardly imagine how, in dealing with so familiar a verb as שכח, "to forget," it would have occurred even to the least scholarly copyist or Masorete to mistakenly change the vocalization from a supposed תשכח to the apparently less correct MT תשכח. Thus the authenticity of the latter vocalization seems well to be warranted by the very fact of its having been preserved by the Masorah notwithstanding the grammatical disadvantage entailing a forced interpretation of תשכח as "forget her cunning." If there is anything wrong here, it must then be with the consonants.

Ehrlich's<sup>2</sup> suggestion to read תשכח ימיני instead of תשכח ימיני is a little too easy, paying no heed at all to parallelism. There is, however, all evidence from the context that our phrase is parallel to תרבק לשוני לחי'. While the latter clause speaks of a physical disablement of the tongue that would henceforth be prevented from singing, תשכח ימיני must similarly convey the idea of crippling the right hand to make it incapable of playing the musical instruments mentioned in verse 2.

The reading תבכח, however, adopted by many a scholar since Graetz's days, can hardly suit our context where "to grow lean" (בכח) would present an obviously too pale and prosaic<sup>3</sup> parallel to תרבק . . . לחי', "cleave to the mouth-roof." This latter expression seems best to point to a counterpart similarly connoting *loss* of the faculty of motion.

Now to the same effect we find a very curious and suggestive

<sup>1</sup> This accordance seems to be only superficial, i. e., of a morphological character. Semantically speaking, however, the optative aorist ἐπιλησθείη might perhaps have the same active connotation that attaches to the MT תשכח, being derived from a *deponent* verb ἐπιλανθίσκειν, "to forget." The rule of the object in the *genitive* characterizing this verb makes it further improbable to give the above passive form also a passive meaning.

<sup>2</sup> See A. B. Ehrlich, *Die Psalmen*, Berlin 1905, pp. 356-7.

<sup>3</sup> The same can be said of Perles' suggestion to view תשכח as a combination of the Mishnaic phrase . . . תש נח, lit. "the power of . . . grew weak." It is rather ingenious, but can hardly have here any practical value.

remark in Ibn-Ezra's commentary (XIIth cent.). After having accepted the usual interpretation of our verse, albeit "the object of **תשכח ימיני** is missing," he adds with regard to this verb the following short observation: "However, some say it means **תיבש**, being a *ἀπαξ λεγόμενον*." This **תיבש** "to dry up" evidently refers to 1 Ki. 13 **וְלֹא יָכַל לְהִשִּׁיבָה אֱלֹהִים . . . וְתִיבַשׁ יָדוֹ**, where it properly means "to be *paralysed*." Cf. also Zech. 11 17. Thus in the XIIth century there were scholars who considered our **תשכח** as an *intransitive* verb—different from the common **שכח** "to forget"—with the proper signification "to be *paralysed*." Very probably we are here in the presence of one of those curious cases where tradition might have sporadically preserved the correct *connotation* of a phrase even after the original form of the latter had been impaired in writing.

Be that as it may, the MT **תשכח** certainly represents a mere metathesis of **תבשח** from an archaic verb **בשח**, "to be paralysed, lame." This is sufficiently borne out by Arabic where the same root has been preserved under various forms, as **كَسِمَ** "to be crippled in the legs," **أَكْسَمُ** "lame, cripple," **كَسِيمٌ** "weak-handed, impotent," **كَسَمٌ** "lameness, impotence of the limbs," **كَسَاةٌ** "crippleness." Our **אם משכחך ידשלים תבשח ימיני**, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, Let my right hand grow *paralysed* (or *crippled*)" originally presented a mere case of *assonance*, a form of style of which Hebrew poetry is quite fond, and which in medieval Arabic, for instance, became almost a mania.<sup>4</sup> Now, when the identity of this **תבשח** as a *hapax legomenon* had been forgotten, any copyist could not but confuse its root with that of **משכחך**, precisely on account of the original *assonance* with it. Thus most naturally arose the MT **תשכח** instead of the archaic and genuine **תבשח**, cf. above Arab. **كَسِمَ** etc.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

ISRAEL EITAN

<sup>4</sup> Compare, e. g., any paragraph or maxim in Zamakhshari's *Golden Necklaces* (اطواق الذهب), ed. Barbier de Meynard, Paris 1876.