

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for the *Journal of Theological Studies* (old series) can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jts-os_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[1st page of article]

But in view of the unparalleled use of a plural noun to denote a single point, I am inclined to conclude

(1) That the Samaritan text in Num. xxxiv is the original.

(2) That the LXX, except in Joshua xix 33, is a literal rendering of its Hebrew original and not an idiomatic rendering of our present Hebrew text.

(3) That the singular verbs of the K'tib are older than the plurals of the K'ri, and are a survival of the original text allowed to remain after the noun had become plural as standing *before* the subject and therefore excusable. In any case, the singular verb of the K'tib is more probably original than the plural of the K'ri. The K'tib should therefore have been retained by Paterson and Bennett in the Polychrome text of Numbers and Joshua.

(4) That subsequent to the date of the LXX, the plural noun in almost every case and the plural verb in most cases were substituted in the Hebrew text for original singulars. Sporadic traces of the earlier text are perhaps to be found in the Syriac of Joshua xix 22, 33.

The reason of the change to the plural is not clear; and the unique plural rendering by the LXX in Joshua xix 33 is more interesting than easy of explanation.

G. BUCHANAN GRAY.

SARBÔG, SHURUPPAK.

THE *Hymn of the Soul* in the Acts of Thomas, edited first in Wright's *Apocryphal Acts*, pp. 274-279, and then again by Bevan in *Texts and Studies*, v 3, tells the story of the Soul's incarnation and subsequent return to its heavenly home under the figure of a Prince, who left his father's palace in the highlands of Persia to bring back with him the Pearl which was guarded in Egypt by the 'hissing Serpent that is in the midst of the Sea.' The geographical details are suggested with great skill, and modern names like Ctesiphon and Seleucia are generally avoided. A journey which ends by an encampment in Egypt near the Serpent-guardian of a magical Pearl is necessarily a fairy voyage, and the places on the route are more likely to be found in myth and legend than in the pages of a gazetteer. Although the ordinary road to the prosaic Egypt of actual fact passes through the towns and districts of the Upper Euphrates where the author of the Hymn may be supposed to have lived, it is noticeable that these places are never alluded to in the Hymn. For aught that appears the Prince may have been wafted from Babylonia straight through the great and mysterious Syrian Desert.

Three places are mentioned on the way. At *Maishân*, 'the mart of

Eastern merchants,' he leaves friendly soil; then comes *Babel*, a land of evil spirits; then the city of *Sarbôg*. Maishân appears to be the district of Mesène near the mouth of the Tigris, Babel is naturally the district of Babylonia proper, but *Sarbôg* is a town with walls. Its inhabitants are savage demons.

Where and what is this city of *Sarbôg*? The Prince goes to Egypt from the highlands of Persia by Maishân, Babel, *Sarbôg*, and a letter follows him which passes these three places in the order named. On his return the Prince passes by *Sarbôg*, leaves Babel on his left hand, reaches Maishân and so arrives home. Thus between *Sarbôg* and Egypt there is no intervening stage: the devils in *Sarbôg* are terrible and dangerous, but the journey between *Sarbôg* and the land of Egypt where the Serpent dwells calls for no remark. If then we are to find a city with which *Sarbôg* is to be identified it must satisfy three conditions. It should be (1) famous in legend, (2) the abode of demons, (3) suitable as a starting-point for a journey to the other-end-of-nowhere.

All these conditions are satisfied by the city which is called in Babylonian legend *Shuruppak*, the home of the Babylonian hero Xisuthros, who has been compared to Noah.

In the first place the two names *Sarbôg* and *Shuruppak* are practically identical in form. The Babylonian city is spelt *šu-ru-up-pak*, *šu-ri-ip-pak*, and *šu-ru-pak* (BM 82. 8. 16, 1 obv). All these forms might equally well be transliterated 'Shuribbag' or 'Shurubag,' but the gentilic *šu-ri-ip-pa-ku-A* (Nimr. Ep. xi 19) shows that the Assyrians at least pronounced the word with *p* and *k*, not *b* and *g*. This, however, causes no difficulty in a word of Babylonian origin. *Sharrukinu* appears in Hebrew as סַרְגִּין (*Sargon*), so that *Shuruppak* might become סַרְבִּין. The Syriac Hymn in which 'Sarbog' appears is unvocalised, but the metre shows that the word has only two syllables and that a vowel comes between the 𐤔 and the 𐤍. If the text be correct,—and the word occurs three times in the Hymn without variant,—the vowels may be long or short, and there may or may not be a half-vowel between the 𐤍 and the 𐤔. In other words ܫܘܪܘܦܟܝܢ, i. e. 'Sârëßöy,' is as possible a spelling as ܫܘܪܒܘܟܝܢ, i. e. 'Sarboy' or 'Sarbuy.' If the first of these alternatives be adopted we have an equivalent for the doubtful second vowel of the Babylonian word.

The identification of *Sarbôg* and *Shuruppak* was suggested some time ago by G. Hoffmann of Kiel in a communication to P. Jensen, the Assyriologist, as my friend Professor Bevan has pointed out to me. Unfortunately the identification was made a matter of topography. Dr. Jensen seems to have understood that *Sarbôg* was mentioned in some Syriac *Acta Martyrum* as a town near Babylon, and, as there is some reason for thinking that *Shuruppak* was the name of a real place

which existed or had existed in South Babylonia, he rejects Hoffmann's identification on the ground of geographical discrepancy¹. But from what has been said above it is evident that the position of Sarbôg is as vague as that of Armageddon. We need in fact to illustrate the Gnostic Hymn from the Babylonian Legend, not the Babylonian Legend from the Gnostic Hymn.

The mention of Shuruppak comes quite at the beginning of the Chaldean story of the Flood. Xisuthros begins his tale to Gilgamesh with the words

'Shuruppak, a city which thou knowest [on] the Euphrates doth lie,
The city it is old, and the Gods within it—

The great Gods who brought their mind to the crossing of the
Flood. . . .'

Xisuthros himself was of Shuruppak. Warned by the God Ea he embarks in the ship, and so is saved with his companions when the Flood overwhelms the rest of living things. It does not appear to be certain whether the 'great Gods' are distinct from the Gods within Shuruppak.

Thus the Babylonian city occupies a very prominent place in the great Epic: it may very well have entered into the general folk-lore of the Euphrates Valley. It was the abode of ancient heathen Gods who were somehow concerned in a terrible deluge, and a Christian poet would naturally express this by calling it the dwelling-place of savage demons. Above all it was famous as the point from whence the Babylonian Noah started on his wonderful voyage. It was therefore not inappropriate that the Prince in the Gnostic Hymn should pass by this city on his way to find the Pearl that was guarded by the Serpent in the midst of the Sea in Egypt.

F. C. BURKITT.

THE INTERPRETATION OF *BAR-JESUS*

WE read in Acts xiii 6-8 that when Paul and Barnabas came to Paphos they met with 'a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was *Bar-Jesus*'; and when they were speaking to Sergius Paulus, the proconsul, '*Elymas* the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them.' Here we at once meet with the difficulty that '*Elymas*' cannot be described as an interpretation of '*Bar-jesus*,' nor does it mean 'sorcerer'; in fact, there is no satisfactory explanation of what the meaning of the name can be.

¹ Jensen, *Assyrisch-Babylonische Mythen und Epen*, p. 481.