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# JUDGES vii 3.

## (*A* caveat *against hasty emendation.*)

WHEN Gideon assembled a host to fight against the Midianites who were ravaging the fertile plain of Esdrêlon (valley of Jezreel, vi 33), he pitched his camp beside the Spring of Harod. This spring is identified (see George Adam Smith *H. G. H. L.*, page 397) with the modern *Ain Jalud*, close under the steep banks of a mountain which he with good reason identifies with Gilboa. It is quite likely that Gideon occupied with part of his host the very ground on which at a later time Saul fought his last battle.

This probability has suggested to several commentators one emendation for Judges vii 3, which has the qualified support of Driver in his article GILEAD in Hastings's *DB*. In the context the fear is expressed that, as Gideon had so large a host, Israel might attribute the approaching victory to their own prowess. The LORD therefore charged Gideon to make the following proclamation to his people:—

מִי יָרֵא וְחָרֵד יָשֹׁב וְיִצְפֹּר מֵהַר הַגִּלְעָד

'Whoso is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead' (A. V.).

Upon this, the Massoretic reading, the criticism of the Emendator is, 'Israel was not stationed on Mount Gilead, and therefore could not *depart from* it. Let *Mount Gilboa* be read here'.

Against the emendation two things must be said: (1) Gilboa is not mentioned in the previous narrative (vi 33–vii 2), and we cannot feel sure that Gideon's encampment of 32,000 men corresponded so closely with the site of the scene of Saul's last battle, that the phrase 'depart from Mount Gilboa' could be used as equivalent to 'depart from the Israelite host'; (2) the versions give 'Gilead (Galaad)' with one consent.[1]

But the difficulty of the verb remains, even if the reading 'Gilboa' be adopted; יצפר is ἅπαξ λεγόμενον, and the versions seem to be ignorant of its meaning. They translate, guided only by the context, in various ways. Thus LXX B gives ἐκχωρείτω ('depart', R. V. text);

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[1] I have specially noted Peshitta (cod. A and *U*ᶜ as well as *Lee*); Targ. (of Yemen, ed. Praetorius, as well as Lagarde); LXX, A and B; O. L., Lyons MS, ed. U. Robert; Vulgate, ed. Hetzenauer.

the Yemen Targum ויתחזר ('go round about', R. V. marg.); O. L., Lyons MS, 'descendat' (perhaps a corruption of 'decedat'); the Peshitta, *nĕphŭsh leh* ('let him desist, let him be excused').

It is hardly surprising therefore that emendations are offered. G. F. Moore (*in loco*) tentatively suggests גדעון ויצרפם 'and Gideon *tried* them' in place of the MT represented by 'and depart from Mount Gilead'. In making a new sentence Moore has the support of LXX A, καὶ ἐξώρμησεν (*al.* ἐξώρμησαν); his verb is obtained from ver. 4. The place-name, 'Mount Gilead', is removed. The passage now runs:—

'Whoso is fearful and afraid, let him return. And Gideon tried them, and there returned,' &c.

I doubt whether the emended text is strong enough either in external attestation or in internal probability to assert itself against the MT, if further consideration be given to the MT. Something is missing from Moore's text. The Gideon-story is distinguished by several caustic sayings, and if in vii 3 nothing more was said than ' Whoso is fearful and afraid, let him return', a great opportunity was missed. A rough agricultural humour pervades the narrative. The victory is due in the first place to the *dog-men* who lap up their water; Gideon styles his slaughter of the Midianites a 'vintage' (viii 2); he tells the elders of Succoth that he will 'thresh' their flesh with thorns in revenge for their churlishness (viii 7, R. V. marg.); and finally it is said with grim humour that Gideon 'taught the men of Succoth'. In vii 3 we have, if I am right, another instance of caustic humour, not too caustic for Gideon.

In the first place the balance of the sentence is surely better preserved in the longer form of the saying preserved in MT and LXX B. Gideon's proclamation *halts*, if it stops at 'let him return'. If something like the words 'and depart from Mount Gilead' can be given to the speaker, the better for the harmony of the sentence.

But the sense as well as the sound demands more than the emended text gives. *Whither* were the fearful to go? Each man *to his place*, as in ver. 7? The text does not say so.

The verb יצפר is ἅπαξ λεγόμενον, but it is so near in form to a very common word, that it is not difficult to guess its meaning. This word is צפור, *çippor*, 'a bird', and יצפר may very well be a denominative verb meaning to *perform some birdlike action*.[1] Two such actions are attributed to the *çippōr* in the O. T.: (1) timid flight (Ps. xi 1); (2) watching from a height (Ps. cii 8):

'As careful robins eye the delver's toil.'

'Return', says Gideon, 'and play the part of small birds watching the

[1] Cp. *J. T. S.* iii 470.

work which ye dare not perform !' Here is scornful humour, as there is 'pleasant' humour in the comparison of the 300 to dogs.

But why were they to watch 'from Mount Gilead'? For two reasons. *First*, because the war was west of Jordan, while Gilead was east ; Gideon bids them seek safety *beyond the river*, just as the Hebrews did in the days of Saul (1 Sam. xiii 7). *Secondly*, Gilead is mentioned because Gideon's words did not come from an emendator's study, but hot from the field of battle. Looking eastward down the valley of Jezreel .Gideon points to the hills of Gilead, and says to the deserters, 'Watch from yonder heights the issue of the battle '.

# TWO PASSAGES IN DAVID'S LAMENT.

## (2 SAM. i 19 AND 21.)

THE first recorded exploit of Jonathan took place on a rocky crag near Michmash. The crag was all but inaccessible, but Jonathan went up on hands and feet, slaying the Philistines and creating a panic (1 Sam. xiv 1–16). His last deeds also were performed on the heights ; he fell fighting by his father's side in the mountainous district of Gilboa. Without doubt he deserves the eulogy passed on the mighty men of Gad that 'they were as swift as the roes (or gazelles,' *çěbā-îm*) upon the mountains ' (1 Chron. xii 8).

The lament over Saul and over Jonathan (rather ' over Jonathan and over Saul ') begins with the words :—

' Gazelle (הַצְּבִי) of Israel, art thou slain upon thy high places?'

Such is the Massoretic text, and I venture to say that it contains as much poetry, good sense, and good grammar as any of the emended readings. Its chief rival, the Septuagint text, deserves consideration no doubt, but it is open to two criticisms : (1) it is not so personal and direct in its appeal; it is *less living*; (2) it is undoubtedly corrupt after the first two words.

Στήλωσον, Ἰσραήλ, ὑπὲρ τῶν τεθηνκότων ἐπὶ τὰ ὕψη σου τραυματιῶν.

Here there is a doublet : *either* ὑπὲρ τῶν τεθνηκότων and ἐπὶ τὰ ὕψη σου represent the same group of Hebrew letters, *or* τεθνηκότων and τραυμα-τιῶν are doublets. There is a variation between codd. A and B, but the reading of A seems to be secondary. The conflate reading of B gives us the nearest approximation to the original Greek which can be obtained without emendation.

But it is the first two words which really matter. The Greek text opens David's lament by suggesting to Israel the erection of a tomb- ·