

APPENDIX E

ON

“THE EIGHTEEN EMENDATIONS OF THE SOPHERIM.”

The *Massorah*,* *i.e.*, the small writing in the margins of the Standard Hebrew Codices, as shown in the accompanying plate, consists of a concordance of words and phrases, etc., safe-guarding the sacred text.

A note in the *Massorah* against several passages in the manuscripts of Hebrew Bible states: “*This is one of the Eighteen Emendations of the Sopherim*,” or words to that effect.

Complete lists of these emendations are found in the *Massorah* of most of the model or standard Codices of the Hebrew Bible, and these are not always identical; so that the total number exceeds eighteen. From which it would appear that these examples are simply typical.

The *Siphri*† adduces seven passages; the *Yalkut*,‡ ten; the *Mechilta*,|| eleven; the *Tanchuma*,§ seventeen; while the St. Petersburg Codex gives two passages not included in any other list (Mal. i. 12, and iii. 9 (see below).

These emendations were made at a period long before Christ, before the Hebrew text had obtained its present settled form, and

* For full particulars of *The Massorah*, see Dr. Ginsburg's *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, Part II., chap. xi., published by the Trinitarian Bible Society. Also a popular pamphlet, called *The Massorah*, by Dr. Bullinger, published by Eyre and Spottiswoode, price 1s.

† An ancient commentary on Leviticus (circa A.D. 219-247).

‡ A *Catena* of the whole Hebrew Scriptures, composed in cent. xi. from ancient sources by R. Simeon.

|| An ancient commentary on Exodus, compiled about A.D. 90 by R. Ishmael b. Elisa.

§ A commentary on the Pentateuch, compiled from ancient sources by Tanchuma b. Abba, about 440 A.D.

before the Text passed out of the hands of the *Sopherim** into the hands of the Massorites,† and was handed on to the *Nakdanim*‡.

We cannot call these emendations a corruption of the text; because a note was placed in the margin, in order to call attention to the fact that these were emendations, and not part of the primitive text.

Moreover, most of the emendations were made by the simple change of *one letter*, so that in the Hebrew the alteration is not so great as it appears to be in the English.

An examination of the various passages and emendations will show that the only object was, from a mistaken sense of reverence, to remove from the text certain *Anthropomorphisms* (*q.v.*), so that expressions supposed to be derogatory to God should not be pronounced with the lips in reading aloud, while the true and primitive text was preserved by the note in the margin.

As, however, since the invention of printing, Hebrew Bibles have presented the text *without the Massoretic notes which were intended to safeguard it*, the knowledge of these emendations, together with the vast mass of information enshrined in the Massorah, have been lost to the students of the Hebrew Bible.||

As these emendations affect the figure *Anthropopatheia* (*q.v.*), we here give a complete list of them, for the benefit of English Bible students.

1. Gen. xviii. 22.—“But Abraham stood yet before the LORD.” The primitive text was “*The LORD stood yet before Abraham.*” It was felt to be derogatory for the Lord to stand and wait Abraham’s pleasure; and so the text was altered, as we have it in the present Hebrew Bible and all its versions.

2. Num. xi. 15.—“Kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness,” *lit.*, my evil.

The primitive text was “*Thy evil*”: “evil” being put by *Metonymy* (*q.v.*) for the punishment or evil which God would inflict on the People.

* The original editors of the then current text.

† The authoritative custodians and preservers of the sacred texts.

‡ The official copyists of the standard codices.

|| Dr. Ginsburg has put the whole world of Bible students under a lasting obligation by his edition of the *Massorah* in three folio volumes, and by the fourth volume (in English), now in the press (1899), which will complete this great work

3. Num. xii. 12.—Here the original reading was “our flesh,” and “our mother’s.”

This was changed to “the flesh,” and “his mother,” as being derogatory to the dignity of the great law-giver, Moses.

4. 1 Sam. iii. 13.—“Because his sons made themselves vile (marg., Or, *accursed*), and he restrained them not (marg., Heb. *frowned not upon them*).”

The R.V. renders it: “Because his sons did bring a curse upon themselves, and he restrained them not.”

The primitive Text read: “Because his sons *cursed God*”; but אֱלֹהִים, *God*, was changed to לָהֶם, *them*.

The translators of the Septuagint must have been aware of the emendation; for they render it “spake evil of God”; and it was this that influenced the marginal note of the A.V., and the rendering of the R.V., though the revisers did not altogether depart from the *Textus Receptus*.

5. 2 Sam. xvi. 12.—David said, “It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction” (marg., “Or, *tears*; Heb. *eye*).

The R.V. renders it: “It may be that the LORD will look on the wrong done unto me” (marg., “Some ancient Versions read, *my affliction*”).

The primitive Text was, “It may be that the LORD will behold *with His eye*.” בְּעֵינָיו, *b'ayno, His eye*, one letter being altered: *viz.*, ך to ך, making it *my eye* (בְּעֵינֵי, *b'ayni*). The LXX, Syriac, Vulgate, A.V., and R.V. translate the *kethiv*, and render it *affliction*; which was a later emendation of the text doubtless with a view of making it clearer.

6. 2 Sam. xx. 1.

7. 1 Kings xii. 16.

8. 2 Chron. x. 16.

“Every man to his tents, O Israel.”

The primitive Text was “*to his gods*.”

The emendation was made by transposing the ך and the ל. לְאֱלֹהֵיוּ being changed into לְאֵהָלָיוּ.

9. Jer. ii. 11.—“But my people have changed their glory.” (See Nos. 11 and 15).

This was originally *My glory* (כְּבוֹדִי, *kevodee*, being changed into כְּבוֹדָו, *kevodō*).

10. Ezek. viii. 17.—“They put the branch to their nose.”

This was originally *to My nose* (אִפַּי, *appai*, being changed to אִפָּם, *appam*).

The primitive Text which was thus toned down set forth the awful extent of Judah's sin. The "branch" referred to was the *Asherah* (the *phallus* as an object of worship: the trees being cut into this shape in the "groves," where the worship was carried on). This worship had been actually introduced into the Temple and its courts; and the evil is spoken of as putting the *Asherah* to the nose of Jehovah Himself, by the figure *Anthropopatheia* (*q.v.*).

11. Hos. iv. 7.—"I will change their glory into shame." (See Nos. 9 and 15).

The primitive Text was "My glory they have turned into shame."

12. Hab. i. 12.—"Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD, my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die."

This latter clause originally read, "*Thou diest not.*"

Strange to say, the R.V. calls attention to only this one of their emendations, and puts in the margin, "According to an ancient Jewish tradition, *thou diest not.*" The R.V. takes no notice of any of the other emendations.

13. Zech. ii. 8 (12).—"He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye": *i.e.*, of his own eye.

But the primitive text was "My eye."

14. Mal. i. 13.—"Ye have snuffed at it."

The original text was "*at Me,*" (אֶתִּי, *ōthee*, being changed to אֶתְּוֹ, *ōthō*).

15. Ps. cvi. 20.—"They changed their glory."

This was originally "*My glory,*" (כְּבוֹדִי, *kevodee*, being changed to כְּבוֹדָם, *kevodam*). See Nos. 9 and 11.

16. Job vii. 20.—"Why have I become a burden to myself?"

This was originally "*unto Thee,*" (עָלַי, *alecha*, being changed to עָלַי, *alai*).

17. Job xxxii. 3.—"And yet had condemned Job."

The primitive text was, "and because they had condemned *God*" (אֱלֹהִים, *Elohim*, being changed to אִיּוֹב, *Job*).

18. Lam. iii. 20.—"And my soul . . . is humbled in me."

This was originally "*And thy soul will mourn over me*" (or condescend to me). (נַפְשִׁי, *naphshecha*, being changed to נַפְשִׁי, *naphshi*).

The R.V. reads, "My soul . . . is bowed down within me."

The following passages are noted by the Massorah, though they are not included in any of the special lists.

2 Sam. xii. 14.—"Thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme."

The received text really reads, "Thou hast greatly blasphemed the enemies of the LORD," but this is not sense. Hence the A.V. and R.V. have wrongly taken the Piel, פָּנַח, as causative; a sense which it never has.

The primitive text was, "*Thou hast greatly blasphemed the LORD.*" This was altered; to soften the sin of David; and gave rise to the difficulties of translators.

Ps. x. 3.—"The wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth (margin, *the covetous blesseth himself, he abhorreth the LORD*)."

The R.V. is no clearer. "And the covetous renounceth, yea contemneth the LORD" (and gives in the margin, "Or, *the covetous blesseth himself, he abhorreth the LORD*").

The primitive text was, "*And the covetous blasphemeth, yea abhorreth the Lord.*"

Here, as well as in 1 Kings xxi. 10, 13. Job i. 5, 11; ii. 5, 9, the word which was in the primitive Text was קָלַל (*kalal*), to curse, or גָּדַף (*gadaph*), to blaspheme, and to avoid having to pronounce these words in connection with God, the word בָּרַךְ (*berech*), to bless, was substituted, and a note to this effect was put in the margin. The meaning, however, is so transparent that the translators have rendered it *curse*, instead of the printed Hebrew Text, which is *bless*; and commentators, ignorant of the real fact of the emendation, have laboured to prove that בָּרַךְ (*berech*) means both *to bless* and *to curse*, which is not the case.

Ecc. iii. 21.—This is one of the emendations of the Sopherim, though it is not included in the official lists.

It is without a doubt that the primitive Text read and punctuated the ה as an interrogative: *i.e.*, Who knoweth whether the spirit of man goeth upward, and whether the spirit of the beast goeth downward to the earth? (The answer being *no one knows*.) The Chaldee, the Septuagint, the Syriac, the Vulgate, Luther, the Geneva (English) Version, and the Revised Version follow this reading.

But the A.V. follows Coverdale and the Bishops' Bible in adopting the reading of another school of editors; who, out of respect to the sensitiveness of some who listened to the public reading of the passage, endeavoured to remove the appearance of scepticism, or the psychological problem raised by the question, by punctuating the ׀ as the article pronoun, "that goeth upward . . . and that goeth downward": thus, by the Figure *Euphemy*, avoiding and evading the supposed difficulty.*

* See Ginsburg's *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 461-2.