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# The Jewish Quarterly Review.

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## ISAIAH XXXIV. AND XXXV.<sup>1</sup>

THE Hebraists of the hypercritical school are fond of acting like a literary jury, whose duty it is to pronounce sentence upon any offence committed by the Press. They eagerly seize upon any unusual words of an author in the hope of discovering whether his work is original or plagiarised. From the mere appearance of single words, this class of critics is able to fix the age of a Biblical book, just as geologists determine the age of certain strata by the appearance of stones or metals. They, however, frequently overlook the passages that are unmistakably connected with kindred sections elsewhere, and are of a different character to their immediate surroundings. This is what has happened to two chapters in the Book of Isaiah—xxxiv. and xxxv. The most recent expositors of this prophet, from Ewald to Dillmann (in his *Commentary*, 1890), take it for granted that these two chapters form a single whole, and they consequently conclude that both belong to the Exilic period, though not to the Second Isaiah. They try to fix their exact date, and discuss without reference to the Second Isaiah at what less or greater interval before the fall of Babylon they were composed.

And yet the deutero-Isaianic character of chap. xxxv. is so obvious that it is only the erroneous notion of its

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<sup>1</sup> The lamented death of Prof. Graetz has deprived this article of the advantage of the author's revision.

connection with the preceding chapter that has prevented this fact from being recognised. Not only is the last verse in chap. xxxv. word for word identical with II. Isaiah li. 11; but, what is more significant, the entire diction, the elevated style, and the picture of an ideal age are all characteristic of deutero-Isaiah. That vein of irony which the Babylonian Isaiah is so fond of introducing among other trains of thought is also perceptible in chap. xxxv. Thus, for example, when summoning the four corners of the earth to give up the sons and daughters of God, he interweaves the phrase, "Bring forth the blind people that have eyes and the deaf that have ears"<sup>1</sup> (xl.iii. 8). In speaking of the revolutions that were to take place in the joyful days after the redemption from Babylon, he does not fail to observe ironically, "And I will bring the blind by a way that they know not" (xlii. 16). Now the same ironical manner is also noticeable in chap. xxxv. 4. In the midst of his assurance that God will bring help to the weak and feeble, the author adds: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." If this is not a genuine verse of II. Isaiah, there is no such thing as critical recognition of authorship in literature. He who ignores this parallelism, and ascribes this phrase to another prophet, may indeed be well acquainted with grammar and lexicon, but is sadly wanting in literary taste and judgment.

I will not lay stress upon single points in this passage which also remind one of II. Isaiah, not even upon the word שרב, which some commentators explain to mean the mirage, and which occurs only in chap. xxxv., and in xlix. 9; nor upon the phrase נמדורי לב, that clearly points to the deutero-Isaianic period, and here possesses a peculiar signification.

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<sup>1</sup> The main passage to which this verse refers is of course xlii. 18, 19, where the reading כמשלתו, instead of the unintelligible כמשלם, is adopted by Cheyne, but not the further emendation of reading, instead of both times עֵזֶר, once הַזֶּרֶשׁ, although Jona Ibn Janach had already called attention to this *lapsus calami*.

Whilst, however, chap. xxxv. has an unmistakable deutero-Isaianic colouring, the preceding chapter shows no trace of it, but resembles rather Jeremiah chap. li. and lii., and the Exilic passage, Isaiah chap. xiii. and xiv. To unite these two accidentally juxtaposed chapters is an arbitrary act of exegetical violence. Chap. xxxiv. merely consists of an extravagant prophecy against Edom, and has no word of comfort for suffering Israel, which is the sole subject of chap. xxxv. It will afterwards be shown what period it really seems to indicate. For the present, let this be admitted, that chap. xxxv. is the genuine production of the Second Isaiah, spirit of his spirit.

The question now arises whether this chapter cannot be included among deutero-Isaiah's prophecies with which it has a whole verse in common. Let us look at the context of this verse in both places, in chap. xxxv. and in chap. li. In the former it runs: "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." It is a word of comfort, assuring the ransomed Jews that an ideal time is about to be begun for them which shall contrast with the dark sorrow that now fills their minds. The preceding verses also aim at arousing a confident hope in the near advent of happiness (verses 7 to 9). "And a highway shall be levelled for them in the wilderness—a holy way—upon which no ravenous beast shall go, but the redeemed shall walk there."<sup>1</sup> The Exodus from Babylon is predicted to take place under the most favourable auspices.

Chap. li., where the same verse occurs, is written in a very different tone. Here we find, not words of consolation, but anxious forebodings which dominate men's minds in

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<sup>1</sup> The words *והלכו נאולים* of verse 10 are joined to *ישובו* of verse 9. This should be compared with li. 10, 11, where the parallel words *דרך לעבור נאולים* and the then following *ישובו* do not refer to the Babylonian Exodus of the future, but to the Egyptian Exodus as an historical reminiscence.

spite of the glad tidings of salvation previously announced. This downcast attitude is portrayed in an imaginary prayer. May God reveal his wondrous power now as at the departure from Egypt. The beginning of this prayer runs: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake as in the ancient days." Then, still in prayer form, follow the words, "Thou didst divide the sea, and didst make the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over." The next verse, the counterpart of that in chap. xxxv., must also be read as prayer, "And *may* the redeemed of the Lord return, and *may* they return unto Zion with singing, and *may* sorrow and mourning flee away." With the same words with which, in the former passage, the certainty of the deliverance is *prophesied*, it is here prayed for. After this entreaty, which expresses the despondency of the righteous, the prophet continues (chap. li. 12-13): "I, even I, am he that comforteth you; who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die . . . . and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor." The prophet only introduced this prayer in order to represent as strongly as possible the needlessness of despondency. Manifold literary artifices were employed by him to awaken confidence in the hearts of the fearful. One and the same verse is thus used in different senses, once to convey a prophecy of an assured happy change, and then as the supplication of one who anxiously feels that such a prediction is, perhaps, after all, but a vain hope, seeing that the sad outlook of the present, "the fury of the oppressor," does not permit of such confidence in the future. If then, in chap. xxxv., the corresponding verse, with its context, is not merely borrowed from II. Isaiah, but used by him over again but in another sense, the chapter can be fittingly included among this prophet's orations. It belongs to chap. li. At the outset the prophet addresses those who are longing for the imminent salvation; let them remember Abraham and Sarah. Abraham was only one man, but God blessed and increased

his seed ; so will he also increase the small band of those who now seek the Lord : " He will comfort Zion and her ruins, will make her wilderness like Eden ; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody " (li. 3). This train of thought is continued by chap. xxxv., which is only a highly elaborated picture of the ideal future, so often delineated by II. Isaiah : " The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them ; and the desert (Araba) shall rejoice and blossom as the lily. The bank of the Jordan<sup>1</sup> shall also blossom and exult : the glory of the Lebanon, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon shall be given unto it." Then follows an exhortation to the feeble and timorous, with a description of the glorious metamorphoses of outward nature, the whole concluding with the verse under discussion, " And the ransomed of the Lord shall return." Thus, chap. xxxv. is altogether a part of chap. li., and its proper place is between verses 3 and 4. In the following verses, on the other hand, the prophet, with a bold transition, prays for the realisation of the advent which he had already prophesied as certain, " that the ransomed shall come unto Zion," etc. Chap. xxxv. has been taken out of chap. li., and misplaced. A small tablet upon which it was written, or a column of a scroll, strayed into the wrong place, just as an authentic piece from Jeremiah has erroneously become included in the Book of Isaiah (lvi. 9-12 ; lvii. 1-3).

This accident brought it into proximity with chap. xxxiv.

<sup>1</sup> About the awkward phrase *יששום מדבר*, the expositors and grammarians need not have spent such pains to prove its agreement with grammatical rules, as it can easily be explained by the fact of the *מ* of *מדבר* having been repeated, and the simple reading is *יששום מדבר וציה*. The incorrect passage *אף גילת ורנן* can also be made to express a poetical idea by a simple emendation, the clue to which is given by the Greek translation. Thus, the LXX. renders the word *ורנן* by *ρου ἱερδάνον*, suggesting the reading *גדות הירדן* instead of *גילת ורנן*. The sense, therefore, is that the banks of the Jordan, which form this prairie (Araba), will flourish at the time of these wondrous changes. No word is superfluous in this verse. The repetition of *פרח ונתגל* is justified by the adjoining *אף גדות הירדן*.

with which it has not the slightest resemblance in thought, but is rather diametrically opposed to it. Whilst II. Isaiah announces that all nations of the earth will acknowledge Israel's God, and wonder at his miracles, this fragment prophesies the annihilation of all nations. "Their slain shall be cast out, and their stink shall come out of their carcases." II. Isaiah, the prophet of salvation, hopes for the conversion of the heathen, while the author of chap. xxxv., a prophet of destruction, predicts their ruin. Besides the contents, the diction of the two chapters is entirely different. In chap. xxxiv. the prophet, though speaking of a universal judgment upon all nations, is thinking principally of the sentence against *Edom*. Wherein lay the importance of this petty nation — which, compared to the mighty empires of Assyria, Babylon and Egypt, was so utterly insignificant — that with *its* dissolution, the hour of salvation should begin? The expositors who defend the coupling together of these two heterogeneous chapters explain that Edom in the eyes of the prophet serves as the representative of all peoples hostile to Israel, and cite its perennial and constant enmity in support of this theory. They quote the short passage (Isaiah chap. lxiii. 1-7), where Edom also stands in the foreground. But the supposed parallel is based upon a false vocalisation of the text; chap. lxiii. 1, cannot mean, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah;" but the true rendering is, "Who is this that cometh with a *red garment* from the *vintage*:"<sup>1</sup> there is thus nothing about Edom. On the other hand, chap. xxxiv. speaks solely of Edom, not as a type, but with reference to itself, just as in Obadiah.

<sup>1</sup> Instead of **מֵאֲדוֹם בָּא מִי זֶה** we must certainly read **מֵאֲדוֹם**, and in the phrase **חֲמוֹץ בְּגָדִים מִבְּצֵרָה**, the word **בְּצֵרָה** means "the vintage," and is another form for **בְּצֵר**, the feminine of **בָּצַר**. The words that follow decidedly support this explanation, **מְרוֹעַ אֲדָם (ל) לְבוּשָׁךְ וּבְגָדֶיךָ**, **כְּרוֹרֵךְ בְּנֵת**. Although this emendation suggested by Lagarde is quite obvious, most expositors adhere to "Edom."

In truth, the rulers of the people of Judah had ample reasons for execrating Edom. From the time of their wandering in the desert till the destruction of Jerusalem, the Idumæans had pursued the Israelites with an implacable enmity, although the latter regarded them as kinsmen.

Already in the eighth century B.C. the prophet Amos mourned because Edom persecuted his brother Jacob with the sword, and still harboured a fierce hatred against him. At the downfall of Jerusalem this people lent a helping hand to the Chaldeans in their work of devastation, exclaiming: "Destroy, destroy, even unto its foundation!" They fought against the fleeing warriors in the breaches and crossways, and delivered them up to the foe. After the destruction of Jerusalem, Edom looked upon itself as the heir to desolate Judæa, and appropriated a portion of the land. It appears that even during the Babylonian exile the Idumæans kept possession of the ruins of Jerusalem. For these reasons, therefore, the author of chap. xxxiv. threatened Edom with a doom of annihilation much more severe than even Jeremiah and Ezekiel had proclaimed against it. His prophecy is of a later date than either Jer. l. li., or Isaiah xiii., xiv., because he depicts the impending destruction of Edom in much fuller detail. His diction, on the other hand, has neither the symmetry of the latter passage nor the fulness of the former. The 16th verse also seems to allude to Jeremiah's prediction of the judgment of Babylon. The words are: "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord and read; no one of these shall fail." What is the meaning of "the book of the Lord"? This expression does not occur anywhere else in the Bible. We hear, indeed, of "the book of the Law of God," or "the book of the Covenant," but not of any "book of the Lord," in which is to be found the threat of a coming judgment. Unless I am mistaken, the correct reading should be ספר ירמיהו instead of ספר ה', and the author probably intended to summon his contemporaries to con-

vince themselves with their own eyes that the sentence pronounced by Jeremiah against Edom or the nations had been literally fulfilled. The verbs in verses 16 and 17 are preterite, thus implying that the circumstances alluded to were susceptible of ocular confirmation. The passage is certainly not an exhortation to future readers, as if the author were expressing his assurance that in days to come people would be convinced of the fulfilment of his prophecy. According to this interpretation the contents of this passage would themselves be the "book of the Lord" referred to, a very improbable assumption.

Let this be as it may, the fact remains that the two adjoining chapters, xxxiv. and xxxv., do not belong to one and the same prophet; chap. xxxv. is a genuine portion of II. Isaiah, and the preceding chapter is the work of some one who lived at a later period. Chap. xxxv. has by accident been detached from chap. li., of which it forms a component part, and has been subjoined as an appendix to chap. xxxiv.

H. GRAETZ.

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