SOME CONFLATE READINGS IN JOSHUA-JUDGES

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The fact of relatively wide variation in the text of the Qumran fragments means that at many points unrepresented in the scrolls, and long considered suspect, recensional differences will be reflected in the early versions 1). The same data bears on the plight of the ancient scribe. Because he could often compose the differences between his original copies by mere juxtaposition, the same professional caution which operated to preserve corruptions in the text also lead to the conflation of meaningful alternatives. Sometimes this happened so early that only subsequent corruptions survived. In many such cases, a solution may now be found by putting together the differences and noting a glaring haplography. Beyond the attempt to understand the differences, the search for the original may lead to something as uncomplicated as the ambiguity of an unpointed word without vowel letters. In other cases differences in word order will seem to point beyond the formation of archetype MSS to the pre-literary formation of narrative. But the fluidity of the text in late pre-Christian centuries combines with the scribal tendency to err on the side of caution, thus making conflation more readily detectable, while intentional glosses or editorial adjustments become increasingly evasive. On the whole, we are in a better position to see through certain obscurities where it has often seemed necessary either to emend or to suspend judgment.

Examples in this paper are drawn from Joshua-Judges, where differences between LXX “A” and “B”, and the Syriac, may often be traced to differing Hebrew prototypes. “Used judiciously, the versions can be of a greater importance than ever before” 2).

1) Among the most striking published examples of textual types represented alongside the proto-Masoretic text at Qumran, see F. M. Cross, Jr., on the Samuel fragments related to the LXX Vorlage (BASOR 132 [1953], pp. 15-27); Patrick Skehan on the Samaritan recension of Exodus (JBL LXXIV [1955], pp. 182-87) and a fragment of the Song of Moses in Deut. xxxii belonging to a type somewhere between MT and LXX (BASOR 136 [1954], pp. 12-15).

2) Thus Bleddyn J. Roberts in introductory comment to his discussion of “Text, OT” in ID IV (1962), pp. 580-594. The vexing question of the relation between the text types of Alexandrinus and Vaticanus is reopened in a new way.
The account of the Gibeah outrage and the Benjaminites War is clearly composite 1). When the assembly at Mizpah resolves to avenge the Gibeah outrage, the following resolution is adopted: "We will take ten of every hundred men of all the Israelite tribes (and a hundred of every thousand and a thousand of every ten thousand) to carry provisions to the force, la-¢affect le-bô¢am to g-b¢ of Benjamin according to all the wantonness that they have wrought in Israel".

While it has long been agreed that g-b¢ must here be read "Gibeah", there has been no clear solution to la-¢affect le-bô¢am, which has the support of Vaticanus 2). The other Greek recension, with some Syriac support, reflects inverted word order and reads lab-bä¢im in place of the infinitive. Whether all differences were to be derived from one parent text, or the differences distributed among editors or "sources", la-¢affect le-bô¢am has defied explanation. Thus C. F. Burney in his classic work on Judges finally decided to strike le-bô¢am, of which he considered lab-bä¢im to be a later correction 3). He could not explain MT itself, except as a dubious corruption.

However, if the inverted word order and mutilation of "Gibeah" are taken seriously, we can see approximately what happened. According to one recension, the quartermaster corps would carry provisions to the force, that is, lab-bä¢im la-¢affect, "for those going forth to do" retribution, where another recension read the infinitive, "for their going forth...." 4)

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1) Repeated source analysis has yielded a certain consensus in Judges xix, but analysis by equally competent scholars diverges widely in chs. xx-xxi, so that there appears to be no way to determine whether the signs of redaction point here to "sources" or to "midrashic expansion". Thus Jacob Myers in IB II (1953), pp. 814 ff.


3) The chapters are marked by a number of loose appositional constructions, many of which must have had their origin in a comparable merging of textual differences. E.g.,

xx 2 pinêt kol hâ¢am kol šibê yišrâ¢el
xx 22 way-yitḥaqeq hâ¢am ti yišrâ¢el
xx 26 kol benè yišrâ¢el w¢ kol hâ¢am

Note similar juxtapositions in xix 4, 9 — "his father-in-law, the girl’s father" —