

## PREFACE

At first sight to write a Hebrew (and Aramaic) dictionary of the Old Testament might seem an easy task; still there are some points requiring consideration.

The first thing to do is to arrange all words alphabetically. This is not so simple as it looks because a number of them are beginning with a prefix. The excellent Hebrew and English Lexicon of Brown, Driver and Briggs puts those words immediately after the word (root) they are derived from. But for beginners it is not always plain to find them there. Moreover the derivation sometimes is doubtful. Therefore the order of words in the present book will be strictly alphabetical, the derivations being also given with every root.

The second thing is to enumerate the occurring forms of a word. Not all forms are named (this would be a quite superfluous burden), but only those from which the other ones can be derived with safety, and in addition those which are rare or conspicuous or "irregular". To them often references to grammar are given.

The third thing to be expected is the list of quotations of the word concerned. As far as possible all quotations are given. Where their list would be meaningless on account of their great number statements are made concerning the frequency and the parts of the texts the word is to be found in.

As everybody will be aware even the strictest adherence to the traditional text cannot prevent from supposing mistakes in it. The suggested corrections of these cases, the so-called conjectures (signed with cj) are booked twice: in their proper alphabetical order and with the word they replace. Thus the number of quotations of both kinds surpasses considerably those of all existing dictionaries.

The main task of any dictionary of the Old Testament is to render exactly in modern language the meaning of the Hebrew words. From the beginning the texts were continually heard and read and readers and hearers gave them an understanding whatever that might be. Thus

a tradition of understanding came into existence and was handed down from generation to generation. Soon some words and notions were not clearly understood, and in some cases (נָבִיעַ Ir 35, 5; קִבְּעַת Js 51, 17. 22; the meaning of רֵאָה 1 S 9, 9 may be cited for examples) they have been interpreted by marginals. An expression might also be conceived by different readers in different ways and discussions not preserved may have arisen. Based upon these traditions the translations into Aramaic, Greek etc. have been made. Septuagint shows clearly how sometimes the Hebrew has been misunderstood.

Nevertheless tradition taken as a whole is a safe foundation valid in the bulk through all ages. The scientific study of the Old Testament coming up from step to step did not and could not content itself with that tradition. Asking for the reasons and for the correctness of the understanding of Hebrew words and phrases grew stronger and stronger. This asking is the mother of modern scientific lexicography. Nothing is accepted because it is tradition. Every statement demands proof. No tradition is refused because it is tradition, but no tradition is considered safe unless reasons for it are found as far as possible.

In the fulfilment of such scientific study there are two ways open. One way leads to the context or exegesis of the whole. A word is correctly translated if the translation makes plain sense and fits into the context.

The other way is that of linguistic reasoning. This way again has two lines. The most important part of linguistics is the comparison of languages. Along with the Hebrew there is a number of cognate idioms: Arabic, Aramaic, Ethiopian, Accadian, Ugaritic and—in considerable distance, but valuable especially for loan-words—Egyptian. One by one all these idioms have become known and studied. One by one they have been used by Hebrew lexicographers. To write the story of the relations and the light they have spent would be interesting and illuminating, but is not to be attempted here. The ground on which their students march does not want fallacies and dangers. To give a very simple instance: “burro” means in Italian “butter” and in Spanish it means “donkey”. Both words have nothing in common but spelling and sound, for the Italian is derived from βούτυρος “cow-cheese” and the Spanish from πῦρρος “red”. If one did not know Greek the puzzle would remain unsolved. Therefore in handling compara-

tive linguistics the keenest prudence and caution is needed. They have not always been used.

There is one thing more. We are still far from knowing the languages named above (and some more) as well as we would need and wish. The treasure of Arabic words for instance—immensely rich in number and therefore too obligingly yielding to prove anything—has not yet been treated as it ought to. Ugaritic although the results of its study are astonishing considered the short time we know something about it lacks the perspicacity of its structure and of the meaning of its words more than many will admit. In this regard restraint is the lexicographer's duty. When Ugaritic was still unknown it was the fashion to use Accadian as liberally as possible; no wonder as its texts mean such a rich harvest of new knowledge. But parallels and analogies might be deceiving. The Hebrew as every language has its own manner and life, its own world of things and thoughts.

The discovery of cognate languages affected Hebrew lexicography in a double way. It has enriched the Hebrew lexicon with many supporters of statements, with a heap of parallels. On the other side what we know today of the Accadian and Ugaritic lexicon would to a great amount be impossible without the Hebrew. At the same time the consequence of those discoveries has made the Hebrew dictionary a store-house of Semitic idioms. Whatever of similar roots, words, meanings has been found in any cognate idiom has been noted in the Hebrew lexicon, without considering whether in a given case there exists a historical contact or not between the peoples of those idioms. Thus upon the Hebrew lexicon has been loaden a burden not only dispensible, but which is even misleading beginners and average readers, all the more so as completeness never will be reached and the study of the different languages is on a very different level. One might ask whether the next dictionary to be compiled will not shorten these statements considerably.

Increasingly another part of linguistics has served lexicography. This is semantics. As the Old Testament in its prevalent parts contains theology, from the beginning the theological meanings of Hebrew words have been carefully noted. The rest has been treated in a rather casual way notwithstanding the fact that theological and farer reaching religious conceptions in many cases have grown out of

common conceptions. The deeper, the more spiritual, the truly theological meaning is not the beginning, it is the final result of a development of various shades a word might have. To this a proof might be the development of מְנַחֵם. The safe principle of modern semantics is to look first for the original meaning of a word (in many cases more concret and restricted than the secondaries) and from this to derive the word's more abstract and even more spiritual meanings. Today as a rule one endeavours to shape a genetical sequence of the meanings a word is apt to assume. That principle has as far as possible been followed in this dictionary. Of course it must be added that sometimes the ways a word's development has chosen are entangled and full of puzzles. Nowhere else all our study will for ever remain less satisfactory.

This lexicon is the work of about forty years done step by step, piece for piece. It is taken immediately out of the original texts. No statement is made which has not been carefully weighted. As far as possible all observations, remarks, assertions, arguments of the immense host of students have been earnestly considered. The years of two wars have made many things difficult, if not impossible. Those would be mistaken who, if their book, paper, remark, suggestion is not mentioned, would think that it has not been remarked. Never it was difficult to mention something. Always it was a pleasure to name an author. Often it was hard work to leave out. The supreme rule for any writer of a dictionary must be the regard for the reader. As short as possible, as plain as feasible, avoiding every prolixity is a duty full of pain, but never to be neglected. In the end the dictionary has to serve the study of the Holy Scripture. To keep its reader within its own contents would be no worthy aim.

I need not say that I am fully aware of the faults and wants of this book. It should be a pleasure to be its critic, not its author. Perhaps some of the critics will realize that in order to get the right point for fair criticism they themselves ought to work out a dozen pages of lexicon before starting to judge such an endeavour.

The last I wish to say is to express my thanks. With hearty thanks all of us think of Wilhelm Gesenius the master of Hebrew lexicography whose paramount merits will never be forgotten. My thanks go to generation after generation of students known and unknown upon whose contributions this dictionary rests. With fullest

thanks I name my friend and fellow Walter Baumgartner whose Aramaic part is a model of carefulness, exactness and completeness not to be reached by myself. During the last six years he has read all proofs and never ceased to contribute suggestions, corrections and additions.

The Stiftung für wissenschaftliche Forschung der Universität Zürich has granted me a considerable amount of money for the preparing of this book. The Minister of Education of The Netherlands has by conceding the necessary amount of paper for printing made possible the publishing of this work. It was my friend Professor P. A. H. de Boer at Leiden who took decidedly the initiative of its publication. The famous and venerable publishers E. J. Brill at Leiden, both their managers and their workers, did spare no effort to get it printed.

My deepest thanks turn to Him who gave strength and health and from day to day, from year to year fresh joy to work at this dictionary. May His blessing be with it and with all its readers.

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