

II. *MODUS OPERANDI*

From early age I have been familiar with the Bible. Hardly a day passes by but I quote it or read it. Indeed, it is part of my make up and the very texture of my thinking. My learned and wise father, Isaac Benjamin Ezekiel Volvada, taught us—my younger brother Solomon, my two elder sisters, and myself—the whole Old Testament when we were children. My brother Solomon and I learned the New Testament by stealth from a Hebrew translation in my father's private bookcase.

For years the distant biblical past was vividly present in my mind; I actually lived in it within sight of the Pyramids. So much so that, together with a passion for the Bible, I developed a natural animosity towards the Greeks and the Romans, on account of their cruelty to my persecuted ancestors, within our beloved land and outside it, the consequences of which are felt to this day. Strangely enough, that aversion did not extend to the Egyptians who were our hosts, as their ancestors had been the hosts of our forefathers during three periods of their history (De. 17, 8).

My feelings were so strong that it did not even occur to me to learn Greek, although I knew that it played an important rôle in our civilisation, and that it had influenced deeply post-biblical Hebrew. Nor could I bring myself to pick up more than the minimum of Latin necessary for my legal education and practice. They are forcibly expressed in the following passage:

«Ce qui le révolte comme insupportable dans ces passages idéologiques, ces vastes murs d'un temps glorieux, c'est que deux des trois colonnes parus [of the Capernaum synagogue] ont été profanées par des textes. L'un grec, d'une élégance d'écriture, l'autre latin, écrit vicieusement, tachés dans le corps des colonnes. Du grec et du latin — rien de plus insupportable! (Le Patriarcat Romain, p. 26, Targier, 1908.)

I still reread the inscriptions referred to, and consider them now—as I did when I first saw them over fifty years ago—as sheer vandalism. But not because they are in Greek and Latin; I would not react differently if by some misfortune the third column were similarly outraged in Hebrew. However, my feel-

ings towards the Greeks and the Romans have altered radically since. I realize now that our differences were fratricidal—as fratricidal as the siege of Troy—because I am convinced that the Jews are of Hellenic descent. This is how the revolutionary change has come about.

In the early thirties, after the publication of *Law and Life according to Hebrew Thought*, I began to be interested in biology as a hobby. In the course of my dilettante study of the subject, I came across a few Greek words which bore a striking resemblance to biblical Hebrew, and I jumped to the conclusion that the Greeks had borrowed them from us. So I toyed with the idea that one day I might make a systematic comparison between the two languages. In those days I was still under the spell of traditional scholarship and, like everybody else, implicitly believed that Semitic languages were Semitic and Aryan languages were Aryan, and that never the twain could mix. Yet I thought it would be interesting to compile and explain an exhaustive list of similar words, if only to show how little or how much Hebrew had influenced Greek before the advent of Alexander, seeing that the influence the other way about was considerable in the wake of his conquests. Little did I know what the actual results of my research would show.

I was so ignorant of Greek then that I only knew the first few letters of its alphabet, which I had picked up incidentally in the course of my elementary mathematics and geometry. I remember asking my friend, Mr. Gerald Emanuel, in a Cley tea-shop to write the full alphabet for me at the bottom of a partly used sheet of paper. This was in 1932-3.

The years rolled by during which the project remained in abeyance. But when I had published *New Biology and Medicine* (1951), I was able to devote my leisure hours almost entirely to the random links which I suspected existed between biblical Hebrew and Greek. After acquiring a smattering of grammar, I plunged straight into the Septuagint, relying exclusively on my memory of the original for the meaning of the numerous passages I selected to read. Then I read Homer in conjunction with the Bible: about one page of Greek and its translation, line by line and sentence by sentence, and a chapter from the Old Testament—starting with Genesis and the first book of the *Iliad*, and finishing up with the last book of the *Odyssey* and the Second Book

11. ANOTHER EXAMPLE

exchange with a general. This will actually be confirmed by data of the five homologies in the next example.

Thirdly, certain Greek letters dialectically exchange one with the other—e.g. α with η, ε with α, ε with β—a phenomenon reflected in the following Greek-Hebrew homologies: αἴμα (113) אֵם (114) αἶμα (115) אֵם (116) αἶμα (117) אֵם (118)

Lastly, mark the strange metamorphosis in the Hebrew words, whereby the suffix in Greek αἴμα αἶμα yields in Hebrew, e.g. אֵם (114) אֵם (116) אֵם (118) respectively from אֵם (113) and אֵם (115) אֵם (117).

Early in my research I looked for new words to check the accuracy of homologies and to assess their significance. As the number of tests discovered increased, so did the efficacy of their application and my confidence in my theory. From the beginning I learned heavily an Arabic; occasionally the Septuagint came in useful. Two examples will suffice here.

According to my phonetic rules, (119) is a safe homologue of אֵם. This is corroborated grammatically by the fact that the compound (120) is homologous with the compounds אֵם, אֵם, and אֵם. Yet what confirms these homologies beyond a peradventure, and at the same time lends strong support to my theory, is that אֵם means אֵם as well as אֵם, and that אֵם have the former meaning. The significance of this semantic homology lies in its semantic variation, coupled with phonetic similarity. But for their correlation to Greek (as advanced), there would be no reasonable explanation why these two words (119) and אֵם—so closely homophonous that they might well be taken for homonyms—should bear such different meanings, especially as they belong to two sister languages. Such confirmation and support are reduplicated by other combined homologies; one of them—אֵם (121)—is dealt with elsewhere in detail; another is אֵם (122).

Again, according to my rules of phonetics, (123) as well as its variant (124) homologous with אֵם, the genitive of אֵם, whose (125) is the true homologue of אֵם. Now the Septuagint renders (126) in Ge. 4. 5 by אֵם. This is justified by the usage of reduplication, as part of the general context. But it looks as if the translator read the word in Genesis (127) and

אֵם

off the trail, one is more likely than not to gain some incidental or admittive benefit. Indeed, often enough you look for China and discover America; philogiton may elude you, but you come upon oxygen; you are prospecting for diamonds and uncover a nugget. Occasionally, the process is precipitate, one genuine homologue leading to another with the succession of a chain reaction. Let me give an example which I vividly recall.

In my desultory reading of the Septuagint at random, I came across the phrase $\delta\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\iota\ \tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\eta$ for $\tau\omega\sigma\ \sigma\tau\tau\kappa$ (Zach 13. 4). It occurred to me—not for the first time or the last—that here was a word, $\delta\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\iota$, which approximated the Hebrew $\sigma\tau\tau\kappa$ so closely that the similarity must have struck the translators as odd. In fact, I had then and have time and again since wondered whether the authors of the Septuagint had sensed or known that a relationship of some kind existed between the two languages. However, as usual, I placed myself in their position and reached for *Handbook*, to find out the range of synonyms from which the translators had picked out this particular word. Which led me to $\delta\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\iota$. In a flash the passage in Esther 1. 6— $\sigma\tau\tau\kappa\ \tau\tau\ \sigma\tau\tau\kappa\ \sigma\tau\tau\kappa\ \sigma\tau\tau\kappa\ \tau\tau$ —sprang to mind. Without much delay, I formed the homologies: $\sigma\tau\tau\kappa$ *plaster*, $\sigma\tau\tau\kappa\ \tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\eta$, $\tau\tau\ \delta\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\iota$, $\sigma\tau\tau\kappa\ \gamma\acute{\alpha}\mu\mu\alpha$. Accordingly, some floors were paved with polished stone, others were matted or covered with rugs. This is far from the gaudy and fantastic emeralds and pearls of the Septuagint—even as far as factual reality can ever be from wild fiction—although the actual floor-coverings must have been as precious as any ever produced in Persia, to match the couches of gold and silver provided for the royal guests.

However, three out of the four homologies soon led to three other genuine homologies, and $\sigma\tau\tau\kappa$ in our context proved to be a variant of $\sigma\tau\tau\kappa$. That: $\sigma\tau\tau\kappa\ \gamma\acute{\alpha}\mu\mu\alpha$ automatically suggested $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\mu\mu\alpha$, $\sigma\tau\tau\kappa$ Pt 91. 4; the quasi-homophonous neighbour of $\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\eta$ yielded the homology $\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\eta$ Gn 41. 42; and when I looked up $\delta\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\iota$ in the Dictionary, I saw the phrase $\delta\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\iota\ \tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\eta$ which I preferred to $\delta\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\iota\ \tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\eta$ for $\tau\omega\sigma\ \sigma\tau\tau\kappa$, having regard to the homology $\delta\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\iota$ / $\tau\omega\sigma$ Lev 17. 7. So once more I corrected the Septuagint by the Septuagint!

Another example springs to mind. Once I discovered that $\sigma\tau\tau\kappa$, the homologue of $\phi\acute{\alpha}\gamma\gamma\alpha$, must have meant 'harp' in Ec

15. 22 and 27, I automatically and spontaneously leapt to the conclusion that the verbs לָחַם (Ib 15. 22) and לָחַט (Ib 15. 27) were homologues of $\phi\lambda\lambda\omega$. How could I react otherwise? All the ten verses of the passage concerned (19-28) deal exclusively with music, and nothing could be simpler or more natural than to conjure up strumming. Turning to the N.E.B., it is understandable that the translators should have found the phrases לָחַטְוּ לָחַט and לָחַטְוּ לָחַט 'obscure'. In fact, I offered to put my discoveries at their disposal, but the offer was not accepted.

To resume the narrative, the grammatical issue still eluded me. Gradually, I collected valuable data; for instance: that the dative case exists in Hebrew; that the masculine plural is the same in Hebrew and in Greek—save that in Hebrew it has a terminal ו , and the last syllable is pronounced as the diphthong ω as pronounced in modern Greek; that, generally, a Greek compound verb is a homologue to a Hebrew compound verb; that, generally, a verb ending in $-\zeta\omega$ is equivalent to a compound verb in Graeco-Hebrew homology, i.e. that the suffix $-\zeta\omega$ is equivalent to a prefixed preposition; that sometimes a verb in the Middle Voice is a homologue of a verb in the construction לָחַטְוּ ; and so on.

Suddenly, I realized that the MV existed in Hebrew. It struck me that, to indicate the reflexive character of the MV, its terminations in the singular ($-\mu\alpha\iota$, $-\epsilon\sigma\iota$, $-\tau\omicron\iota$) should read dialectally: $-\mu\alpha\iota$, $-\epsilon\sigma\iota$, $-\tau\hat{\epsilon}$ (for $\alpha\hat{\iota}\tau\hat{\epsilon}$), in conformity with the peculiar Hebrew phenomenon of occasionally adding to the verb the personal pronoun in the dative case. It then occurred to me that the terminal $-\mu\alpha$ might be a variant of $-\mu\alpha\iota$, as is ו in IIS 18. 12 a variant of וֹ (cf. Ib 18. 5). Another sudden realization was that the לָחַט in Hebrew is equivalent to the Aorist and the Imperfect in Greek, with the omission of the syllabic augment—as often happens in Homer.

But the real break through came when I discovered that many of the verbs beginning with ל are homologues to verbs in $-\mu\alpha$ or in the MV. This was followed by two interconnected discoveries: that the formation of the Future and the Construct is but an example of the suffix/prefix phenomenon which I discovered earlier; and that the Aorist exists in Hebrew—the לָחַט being the counterpart of the augment—since the structure of the

last syllable in the Aorist is similar to that in the Future, e.g. *ἀίω*, *ἔσσω*; *ΠΩΣ*/εὐρωίεω, *ΠΩΣ*-ἵε-ίεω.

In the meantime the homologies multiplied past counting, with parallel Arabic involvement; so that I now estimate that nine out of ten different words in the Bible have demonstrably sound Greek homologues. What consolidates the cumulative evidence afforded by their large numbers, is the quality of the homologies. Besides reinforcing each other, they resolve many puzzles and indicate that the Greeks and the Hebrews had in common some customs and some religious beliefs, while the Hebrew language emerges from these homologies much richer and even more beautiful than it is at present acknowledged to be. Yet the benefits of these homologies are by no means one-sided; for certain important advantages accrue to the language and history of Hellas. Actually, the whole complex is consistent and only consistent with two propositions, that is: that biblical Hebrew is Greek, and that the Hebrews were Asiatic Greeks. In fact, the outcome of my laborious, extensive, and elaborate research may be summed up in a brief sentence: Hebrew is Greek with a mask on.