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## Contributions and Comments.

### The Meaning of ערף in Leviticus v. 8.

THE words מכול ערפו in Leviticus 5<sup>8</sup> have always offered difficulties to commentators. If ערף means 'neck' and מול means 'in front of,' what then is the sense of 'in front of the neck'? Which part is the front of the neck? The meaning of מכול is therefore given as 'off the front of, i.e. close in front of' (see Gesenius-Brown's *Lexicon*, p. 557). But מול means simply 'in front of,' 'facing.' The difficulties of the usual, forced interpretation of מכול ערפו are also reflected in the Rabbinic Literature (see Levy, *Neuhebräisches und Chaldäisches Wörterbuch*, vol. iii. pp. 135 and 136).

On reading again Lv 5<sup>8</sup> in connexion with *Hullin* 19<sup>b</sup> (in the Babylonian Talmud) it occurred to me that ערף in this verse might have a technical, an anatomical meaning, that it might denote a certain bone in the neck of the bird. This assumption, it seems to me, is very much strengthened by the translation of this word in the Septuagint. And I venture to suggest that the translation given in the Septuagint holds the key to the understanding of these two words. The Septuagint translate מכול ערפו by ἀπὸ τοῦ σφόνδουλου. The word σφόνδουλος occurs often in Hippocrates and has the meaning of 'a vertebra,' especially 'one of the cervical vertebræ,' properly the second (see Liddell-Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 1513). It is worthy of note that Lv 5<sup>8</sup> is the only passage in the OT where the Septuagint translate ערף with σφόνδουλος. In all the other places in the Bible, in which ערף occurs, the Septuagint translate ערף by other words, as αὐχὴν (several times), νῶτον (several times), and τράχηλος (many times). Only in Lv 5<sup>8</sup> the Septuagint give for ערף σφόνδουλος (see Hatch and Redpath, *A Concordance of the Septuagint*, p. 1327, s.v.). Why have the Septuagint given here the word σφόνδουλος? The answer seems to be simple. It is this: the Septuagint knew that ערף in this passage did not mean 'neck,' but 'a cervic vertebra' (probably the second vertebra). They knew that ערף had here a technical, an anatomical meaning. They knew that ערף here meant not αὐχὴν, νῶτον, or τράχηλος, but σφόνδουλος. And therefore they used the word σφόνδουλος. ערף here, therefore, does not mean 'neck,' but 'a cervic vertebra.'

Now the meaning of מכול ערפו is perfectly clear.

מכול has its ordinary meaning 'front of.' ערפו means 'in front of its cervic vertebra,' i.e. the flesh and skin in front of the vertebra. The flesh and skin in front of the vertebra form a part of the neck. The words מכול ערפו ומלק את ראשו מכול ערפו ולא יבדיל would therefore have to be translated: 'and he shall pinch off its head in front of its cervic vertebra (or neck-bone), but shall not divide it asunder.' Which cervic vertebra was meant was well known. It was probably the second cervic vertebra. About cervic vertebræ of birds, see Richard Owen, *On the Anatomy of Vertebrates*, vol. ii. (1866), pp. 39-41 (§ 127, Cervical Vertebræ).

It is possible that ערף originally meant only 'a cervic vertebra,' 'a neck-bone,' and afterwards was used for 'neck' and 'back.' The later general use of ערף for 'neck' caused the meaning of 'vertebra,' 'neck-bone,' to be forgotten in the course of time. The Septuagint still knew the real meaning of ערף in Lv 5<sup>8</sup>.

I venture to suggest that in the time of the *Sifra* and the *Mishna*, and probably also in the earlier period of the *Gemara*, the technical meaning of ערף in Lv 5<sup>8</sup> was still known. The *Sifra*, commenting on מול ערפו, says מול הרואה את העורף מול הרואה את העורף. 'The front that sees the neck.' Now if the Rabbis had meant here by עורף 'the neck,' 'the front that sees the neck' would give no sense. How can a part of the neck see the neck? But if the Rabbis took ערף to mean 'a cervic vertebra,' 'a neck-bone,' then the words of the *Sifra* are clear: 'The front that sees the (known) cervic vertebra.' All that part of the neck that sees the vertebra, that covers the vertebra, really faces the vertebra. מול הרואה את העורף is then an excellent definition of מכול ערפו.

I believe that in *Hullin* 19<sup>b</sup> in the *Gemara*, following the *Mishna* (6½ lines), the knowledge of ערף='vertebra,' 'neck-bone,' is implied. When the *Gemara* says ערף ממש it means 'really ערף,' namely, 'vertebra.' It would lead me too far to show here how the whole passage in *Hullin* 19<sup>b</sup> can be explained satisfactorily if we assume that this meaning was implied in the argument (I made this clear to my students during my lecture). I have no doubt that this tradition was still known then. Later it apparently was forgotten, and the scholars of post-Talmudic times and such great commentators as R. Gershom and Rashi did not know any more this tradition of ערף='vertebra.' Hence all the

difficulties in the later explanations of the two words מַמּוּל עַרְפּוֹ. But I venture to think that the explanation offered above removes the difficulties and makes the meaning of עַרְפּוֹ מַמּוּל perfectly clear.

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### 'The Mote and the Beam' and 'The Gates of Hades.'

IN the November number of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES (p. 91), Dean Webster attempts to revive Furrer's proposal that *eye* in Mt 7<sup>a-5</sup> = Lk 6<sup>41, 42</sup> is a mistake for the household *well*. Furrer supported his emendation thus: 'In all Semitic languages the word *eye* at the same time signifies *well*, because its fundamental idea is that of glimmering surface.'

Although it is true that the Aramaic sounds עֵינָא are used to denote both *eye* and *well*, it is uncertain whether we are dealing with homonyms from two distinct roots, or with one word in both a literal and metaphorical use. But if they are identical the two uses are related, not through 'glimmering surface,' but through 'fount of water.' For עֵינָא means *well* in the sense of *spring*, not of *cistern*—German *Quelle*, not *Brunnen*. This distinction is fatal to Furrer's reconstruction of the origin of the saying.

Incidentally, however, Dr. Webster supports another emendation suggested by Dr. Bernard in his *Studia Sacra*. In an article on 'The Gates of Hades' (previously printed in the *Expositor*, June 1916—and cf. Peake's Commentary, *ad loc.*), he suggested that all would be clear in Mt 16<sup>28</sup> if instead of *gates* we had some word meaning *waters* or *floods*. Rejecting the probability of a corruption between *πηγαί* and *πόλαι*, he adduced two Semitic words which (he claimed) had the required sense and might be misinterpreted to mean *gates* and so be mistranslated *πόλαι*.

In Dn 8<sup>2</sup> occurs the phrase וְאֲנִי הֵיחִי עַל אֹבַל אֱלָי, 'and I was by the river Ulai' (E.VV.). The word translated *river* (אֹבַל) recurs only in Jer 17<sup>8</sup> (as וְיַבֵּל; and cf. וְיַבֵּל, Is 30<sup>25</sup> 44<sup>4</sup>). In Daniel apparently Symmachus alone of ancient Greek translators understood the word; the LXX confused it with the Aramaic אֲבַלָּא, (*city*)-*gate*; and Bernard supposed that the same misapprehension might underlie our present Gospel text. He was inclined to admit that it is hazardous to assume a common use of this rarely attested word in the imperfectly known Aramaic of the first century (the reverse

confusion would at least have proved that it was familiar to the translator). But he overlooked a point of much greater importance—the real meaning of the word. It signifies not a natural stream of water (still less the *torrent* or *flood* which Bernard desiderated), but *conduit* or *canal*, a species of waterway of which the Ulai was a notable example. The Semitic root means *lead*, *bring*, and occurs frequently in Akkadian in connexion with the irrigation system. Bernard adduces abundant evidence of the ancient conceptions of the overwhelming floods of Hades; but where do we hear of its canals?

Alternatively, Bernard pointed out that in Is 28<sup>2</sup> several MSS and editions mistakenly read עֵשֶׁר, *gate*, for עֶשֶׂר, *storm*; and he suggested that the same 'trifling blunder of eyesight' led to the introduction of the word *gates* in Mt 16.

Apart from the improbability of its being a question of *eyesight* (the diacritical point is probably relatively late, and the blunder would therefore be one of *hearing* or *interpretation*), this remedy has two great weaknesses. First, we must not work with both a Hebrew and an Aramaic 'original' for the Gospels; with all their near kinship, these languages are distinct. Now Hebrew is a mixed language within which we can distinguish at least two layers—an older akin to Canaanite and Akkadian, and a younger in closer connexion with the later Semitic dialects including Aramaic. עֶשֶׂר, *storm*, belongs to the earlier, non-Aramaic stratum; it corresponds with the Assyrian *šānu*, and is elsewhere only found in New Hebrew. To assume its presence in Matthew would almost necessitate the supposition of a *Hebrew* original.

Secondly, although the 'root' is used of a storm at sea in Jonah 1<sup>11</sup>, its meaning is a storm, not of waters, but of *wind*. It belongs to a group of words apparently formed from an original biliteral Dar or Sar which appears in more than a score of Hebrew 'roots,' always with the ground-meaning of *move round*, *surround*, *enclose*—e.g., אָזַר, *gird*, *encompass*; חִצַּר, *surround*; הִרָר, *circle*, *ball*, etc. (For 'internal trilateralization' with ע, cf. רִעֵץ with רִשָּׁץ, רִבֵּץ, רִצָּח, etc., all = *shatter*, *crush*, from the biliteral Ras; and סִעֵף (?) *split*, *divide*, with חִישַׁב, *think*, from Shab, *split*, *discern*, etc.; and notice סִהַר, *go round about*, סִחָרָה, Ps 91<sup>4</sup>, *buckler*, and סִחָרָה, *corselet*.) The meaning of עֶשֶׂר is thus a *whirling storm*, or *cyclone*—*turbo* (Akkadian *šāru* means *wind*). To connect such a word with the *floods* of the underworld is highly precarious.

The hypothesis of an Aramaic original is a valuable adjunct to the exegesis of the Gospels;