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BIBLE STUDIES.

BY

M. M. KALISCH, PH.D., M.A.



PART I.

THE PROPHECIES OF BALAAM:

(NUMBERS XXII. TO XXIV.)

OR

THE HEBREW AND THE HEATHEN.



LONDON:

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

—
1877.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY WERTHEIMER, LEA AND CO.,
CIRCUS PLACE, FINSBURY CIRCUS.

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BIBLE STUDIES.



PART I.

P R E F A C E.

ALMOST immediately after the completion of the fourth volume of his Commentary on the Old Testament, in 1872, the author was seized with a severe and lingering illness. The keen pain he felt at the compulsory interruption of his work was solely relieved by the undiminished interest with which he was able to follow the widely ramified literature connected with his favourite studies. At length, after weary years of patience and 'hope deferred,' a moderate measure of strength seemed to return, inadequate indeed to a resumption of his principal task in its full extent, yet sufficient, it appeared, to warrant an attempt at elucidating some of those numerous problems of Biblical criticism and religious history, which are still awaiting a final solution. Acting, therefore, on the maxim, '*Est quodam prodire tenus, si non datur ultra,*' and stimulated by the desire of contributing his humble share to the great intellectual labour of our age, he selected, as a first effort after his partial recovery, the interpretation of that exquisite episode in the Book of Numbers which contains an account of Balaam and his prophecies. This section, complete in itself, discloses a deep insight into the nature and course of prophetic influence; implies most instructive hints for the knowledge of Hebrew doctrine; and is one of the choicest master-pieces of universal literature. Love of such a subject could not fail to uphold even a wavering strength, and to revive an

often drooping courage. The author is indebted to these pursuits for many hours of the highest enjoyment, and he feels compelled to express his profound gratitude for having been permitted to accomplish even this modest enterprise. If strength be granted to him, he is anxious, in continuation of the same important enquiry, still further to elucidate the mutual relation, according to the Scriptures and the Jewish writings, between the Hebrew and the Heathen, by commenting on the Book of Jonah, of which he proposes to treat in a Second Part of these Bible Studies.

The author would fain hope that the main portions of the work may be found of some interest not only to theologians and Biblical students, but to a wider circle of readers, since the possibility of a general diffusion of critical or historical results is the only decisive test of their value.

In the Translation and the Commentary he has adhered to the same principles which guided him in his previous volumes, and for the convenience of Hebrew scholars he has here also inserted the original Text.

Although he has neglected no available source of information, and has endeavoured to utilise, for the illustration of his subject, both the most ancient traditions and the most recent discoveries and researches, he is well aware how much his effort stands in need of indulgence; but he believes that he will not appeal in vain to the forbearance of those who realise the impediments and difficulties under which he has laboured.

M. KALISCH.

London, August, 1877.

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HEBREW TEXT.—NUMBERS XXII. TO XXIV.



I.—THE PROPHET AND HIS PROPHECIES.

1. SUMMARY.

THE contents of that portion of the Book of Numbers which we propose to examine, may be thus briefly summarised.

On their way from Egypt into Canaan, in the fortieth year of their wanderings, the Hebrews had advanced to the plains of Moab, on the east of the Jordan.^a Alarmed by the proximity of such large hosts, which had just discomfited powerful opponents in the same districts, Balak, the king of Moab, after deliberating with the chiefs of Midian, resolved to summon, from Pethor on the Euphrates, the far-famed Balaam, the son of Beor, and to request him to pronounce upon the Israelites a curse, by virtue of which he hoped to vanquish them in the expected conflict.^b When the elders of Moab and Midian, who were selected as envoys, had arrived at Pethor and delivered their errand, Balaam bid them stay, till he had ascertained the will of God; and when he learnt, through a vision, that God disapproved of the journey and the curse, since the Israelites were a blessed nation, he declined to accompany the messengers.^c On hearing their reply, Balak sent a second and still more weighty embassy, promising Balaam the highest distinctions and rewards, if he yielded to his wishes. But Balaam declared to the nobles, that no treasures or honours,

^a Num. xxii. 1.

^b Vers. 2-6.

^c Vers. 7-13.

however splendid, could induce him to act against the command of God, whom, therefore, he would again consult. This time he received permission to proceed to Moab, on condition, however, that he should strictly adhere to God's suggestions; after which he entered upon the journey together with the ambassadors.^a

Yet when he had set out, God was greatly displeased, and sent His angel with a drawn sword to oppose him. The prophet's ass, but not the prophet himself, beheld the Divine apparition. The terrified animal first retreated from the road into the field; next pressed, in anguish and perplexity, against a vineyard wall in a narrow path; and at last, unable to withdraw either to the right or the left, fell down on the ground, all this time angrily beaten by the vexed rider. 'Then the Lord opened the mouth of the ass,' who complained to Balaam of his harshness, and reminded him that she had never before behaved so strangely. 'Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam,' and the angel, now perceived by the seer, rebuked him for his cruel treatment of the faithful beast, and declared that he had come to resist the journey, since he deemed it pernicious. Balaam, mortified and penitent, readily offered to return, but the angel commanded him to go with the ambassadors, yet scrupulously to abstain from saying anything but what the Lord should prompt.^b

On the frontier of Moab, Balaam was met by Balak, to whom he announced at once that he could speak nothing of his own mind, but was bound to obey the voice of God alone.^c Hospitable entertainments followed; preparations were made for the prophecies; and then, standing on an elevation, from where a part of the Hebrew people could be surveyed, Balaam, in the pre-

^a xxvii. 14-21.

^b Vers. 22-35.

^c Vers. 36-38.

sence of Balak and his chiefs, uttered a speech, inspired by God, in which he extolled Israel as a nation beloved and specially elected by the Eternal, exceedingly numerous, and happy through righteousness.^a The annoyed king took Balaam to another place where, after due preliminaries, the prophet pronounced a second Divine oracle, affirming that the blessing once bestowed on Israel was irrevocable, since they were a pious people guided by the Lord, victorious by their prowess, and inapproachable in their strength.^b Balak, troubled and amazed, once more made a determined attempt, but again Balaam proclaimed the praises of Israel, glorifying the beauty, extent, and fertility of their land, the prosperity and splendour of their empire, and the terrible disasters they inflicted upon their enemies.^c In pain and rage, Balak now commanded the seer forthwith to flee to his own country. But before departing, Balaam spontaneously added a prophecy foreshadowing the subjugation of Moab herself by an illustrious king of the Israelites;^d and to this he joined, moreover, oracles on the future destinies of the Hebrews in connection with Edom and Amalek, the Kenites and the Assyrians.^e Then Balaam and Balak separated, each returning to his home.^f

2. UNCERTAIN TRADITIONS.

It is necessary for our purpose to notice the other Biblical accounts with respect to Balaam, and, first of all, to consider the following passage of Deuteronomy:^g ‘An Ammonite and a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord . . . because they did not meet

^a xxii. 39–xxiii. 10.

^d Vers. 10–17.

^f Ver. 25.

^b Vers. 11–24.

^e Vers. 18–24.

^g Deut. xxiii. 4–6.

^c xxiii. 25–xxiv. 9.

you with bread and with water on the way, when you came forth out of Egypt, and because he (the Moabite) hired against thee Balaam, the son of Beor, of Pethor in Mesopotamia, to curse thee. But the Lord thy God would not listen to Balaam, and turned the curse into a blessing for thee, because He loves thee.^a Hence the Deuteronomist evidently followed a tradition very different from that embodied in the narrative of Numbers. According to the former, Balaam, when 'hired' to curse Israel, really pronounced curses which, however, God, in His merciful love of Israel, disregarded, and, annulling their intended effect, transformed into benedictions; in correspondence with which, Nehemiah, quoting and epitomising Deuteronomy, records that 'The Moabite hired Balaam against Israel, to curse them, but our God turned the curse into a blessing.'^b A process so indirect and artificial is wholly at variance with the plain simplicity of the story before us. Here Balaam never evinced the least disposition or made the slightest attempt to hazard execrations which, levelled against the elect of God, would have been hardly less than blasphemous. Nor did he allow himself to be 'hired' in the sense in which Balak wished to engage him; but he submitted unconditionally to the direction of the Lord, who would not permit an alien to call down upon His people imprecations, however empty and transitory. Micah, living in the eighth century B.C., alludes to the tradition concerning Balaam in a context, which leaves no doubt as to its spirit and tendency. For among the

^a The change from the plural (קִרְמוֹ) to the singular (טִכְרָ), without the introduction of a new subject, is indeed strange and incongruous, but hardly a sufficient reason

for regarding, with some critics, the second part of verse 5, like the following verse, as a fragmentary addition.

^b Neh. xiii. 2.

signal favours bestowed by God upon His people, as their deliverance from Egyptian slavery and their safe guidance under leaders like Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, the prophet mentions this also: 'O my people, remember now, what Balak, king of Moab, schemed, and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him . . . in order that you may know the kindness of the Lord.'^a Balaam's 'answers' manifestly did not satisfy the king; they were blessings and praises of the Hebrews; and Micah is, therefore, in harmony with Numbers, not with Deuteronomy.

We come to another point, in which tradition wavered. The Book of Joshua, closely connected with Deuteronomy, states that Balak actually 'waged war against Israel.'^b But the Book of Judges writes distinctly, 'Did Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab, strive against Israel? did he fight against them?'^c And so, according to Numbers likewise, Balak's sole enterprise against Israel was his employment of Balaam. For, however eager he might have been to expel the dangerous invaders by resolute combat,^d he desisted from the hopeless struggle when Balaam's co-operation had proved fallacious. Our account concludes with the words, 'And Balaam rose and went away and returned to his place, and Balak also went his way';^e and soon afterwards we find the Hebrews and Moabites not merely living in peace but in friendship,

^a Mic. vi. 5. By a strange misconception, many (as Bishop Butler, Lowth, and others) understood this passage in Micah (vi. 5-8) as 'a dialogue between Balaam and Balak.'

^b Josh. xxiv. 9, וילחם בישראל, which cannot mean, 'he intended to wage war, the intention being deemed equivalent to the deed' (*Kimchi*); or, 'he fought by counsels and stratagems' (*Kether Torah* of Rabbi

Aaron);' or, 'not with the sword, but by imprecations' (*Keil*), which 'the writer calls war' (*Rosenmüller*); or, 'he showed a hostile feeling' (*Biur* and others); and it is gratuitous to assume 'small attacks' (*Knobel*), of which no mention is made in the Old Testament.

^c Judg. xi. 25.

^d Num. xxii. 6, 11.

^e xxiv. 25; see notes in loc.

and readily exchanging their religious views and practices.^a

But the most important fluctuation is the following. The Book of Joshua^b clearly describes Balaam as a 'soothsayer' (קוֹסֵם), and adds, moreover, that he was, among other enemies, slain by the Hebrews in their war against the Midianites, on whose side he fought. A subsequent portion of the Book of Numbers not only repeats this latter statement, but charges Balaam, besides, with the heinous crime of having, by infamous counsels, enticed the Israelites to the grossly licentious worship of Baal-Peor, and of having thus caused a fearful plague, which fell upon the people as a Divine chastisement.^c It was naturally, and perhaps excusably, supposed that, in the section under consideration, Balaam is regarded in the same light—namely, as a common magician and a fiendish tempter; and starting from this view, theologians and interpreters, in ancient and modern times, have drawn a picture of Balaam's character which is truly awful. There is hardly a vice which they did not think themselves justified in attributing to him. They uniformly discovered that our author represented the foreign seer, above all, as swayed by the two master passions of ambition and avarice to a degree almost amounting to actual madness.^d But in delineating his other numerous blemishes, they differed very considerably. They variously described

^a xxv. 1-4. The words in the Book of Joshua, which follow upon those above referred to, although probably coinciding with the conception of Deuteronomy, וְלֹא אֲבִיתִי לִישְׁמוֹעַ וְלֹא אֲבִיתִי לִישְׁמוֹעַ (Josh. xxiv. 10), may yet be considered as forming a transition to that of Numbers with respect to the first discrepancy pointed out; for they may

either mean that the curses pronounced by Balaam were turned into blessings, or that he indeed pronounced curses, but was also compelled to utter blessings.

^b xiii. 22.

^c xxxi. 8, 16; comp. xxv. 1-9.

^d Freely applying to him the line of Sophocles: Τὸ μαρτυκὸν γὰρ πᾶν φιλάργυρον γένος (Ant. 1055).

him as proud, insolent, and inflated, and yet cunning and hypocritical; as false and ungrateful; mendacious and treacherous; wavering, yet obstinate; diabolically wicked and mischievous; the primary type of all artful seducers of God's people; cruel and passionate; a sordid trader in prophecy and a mercenary impostor—the Simon Magus of the Old Testament; a sacrilegious trickster and blasphemous dissembler; an unhallowed idolater and a lying sorcerer; a profane reviler and sanctimonious scoffer.^a Indeed not a few writers have produced veritable masterpieces of exegetical ingenuity.^b

Justice, however, requires that, before expressing a decisive opinion, we should at least endeavour to understand this narrative by itself and apart from other Biblical notices. This 'Book of Balaam'—as we shall henceforth briefly call it—is in every way complete. It is pervaded by religious and historical conceptions presenting the most perfect unity. We shall, therefore, try to reproduce the figure of Balaam from this portion with all possible fidelity.

3. THE CHARACTER OF BALAAM.

THE key to Balaam's whole conduct lies in the words, 'I cannot go against the command of the Lord to do either good or bad of my own mind.'^c The same significant term 'of my own mind,' is, in the Pentateuch, employed on another and no less remarkable occasion. When Moses announced the miraculous punishment to

^a This *florilegium*—which is only a short specimen—has not been compiled at random, but we could quote authorities of repute for each individual epithet, and shall hereafter have occasion to do so to some extent.

^b As Calvin, Michaelis, Hengstenberg, Baumgarten, Kurtz, Keil, Reinke, Lange, Koehler, and others who have influenced the interpretation of these chapters.

^c מִלְּבָבִי, xxiv. 13.

be inflicted upon Korah and his associates, he said: 'Hereby you shall know, that the Lord has sent me to do all these works, and that I have not done them of my own mind.'^a As Moses is the mouthpiece of God's behests and His instrument, so is Balaam. The greatest of the Hebrew prophets and the heathen seer here introduced are equals in this cardinal point, that all they say and do is not ordinary human speech and deed, but the expression of the Divine will, which, renouncing their own volition, they are ready or compelled to obey.^b Can a stronger proof than this parallel be conceived of the high position and dignity which the author assigns to Balaam? From this central view everything else is easily surveyed and illustrated. Never, under any circumstances, does Balaam forget that he has no independent power, but that he is the servant of God, whose visions he beholds and whose spirit comes upon him, whose direction he seeks and whose revelations he utters.^c

Balak's messengers arrive, and, in accordance with custom, bring him rewards for his expected services as an enchanter. But neither does the royal embassy, consisting of the chiefs of two nations, flatter his ambition, nor do the presents, no doubt considerable, tempt him into covetousness. When he hears the king's request, he represses both his inclination and his judgment. Not even by the slightest allusion are we informed to which side that personal disposition was leaning, since it is of no consequence or importance whatever. Declining to return an answer on his own account, he asks the messengers to wait till he has ascertained the Divine will, and when God commands him not to go to Moab to

^a כִּלְבִי, Num. xvi. 28; comp. Jude 11.

^b See Comm. on Lev. vol. i. p. 706.

^c xxii. 18, 19, 38; xxiii. 3-5, 12, 15, 16, 26; xxiv. 4, 13, 16: which passages are distinct and emphatic.

curse the Hebrews, he simply communicates to the envoys this injunction, which to him is final.^a

Ere long, he is visited by a second and still more brilliant embassy, empowered to make, in the king's name, the most alluring offers: 'I will honour thee greatly, and whatever thou sayest to me that I will do'^b—offers of a kind which it is almost beyond human nature to regard with indifference, and which only the rarest force of character can succeed in resisting. But Balaam remains unshaken. He may, indeed, for a moment, have been agitated by an inward struggle, which the author, with the subtlest psychological art, intimates by Balaam's hyperbolic declaration, that not even the king's 'house full of gold and silver' could alter his resolution. But the temptation is no sooner felt than it is warded off, and for ever banished from his heart. He protests with greater decision than before, that he 'cannot go against the commandment of the Lord to do a small or great thing,'^c and only after having received God's distinct permission, does he consent to accompany the princes to Moab.^d

Balak, ready to prove that he had not spoken empty words when he promised to Balaam the highest honours, goes out to meet him at the frontier of his kingdom.^e But undazzled by this distinction, most flattering according to Eastern notions,^f the prophet courageously and almost bluntly warns the anxiously expectant king against too confident hopes. For, without speculating whether God's repeal of the previous prohibition of the journey involved or foreshadowed also a repeal of the prohibition of the curse, he tells Balak: 'Behold, I am

^a xxii. 8, 12, 13. ^b Ver. 17.

^c Ver. 18. ^d Ver. 20.

^e Ver. 36. In this survey, we pass over xxii. 22-35, for reasons which

will soon be apparent; see *infra*, sect. 'Original Form.'

^f Comp. Gen. xxix. 13; xlv. 29; Exod. xviii. 7, etc.

come to thee; have I now any power at all to say anything? the word that God puts in my mouth, that I shall speak.’^a The next day, after having duly prepared himself, he awaits the Divine inspiration,^b and having obtained it, he joins Balak, who, surrounded by his nobles, was standing at the altar and his sacrifices; and here he announces, in enthusiastic speech and without fear or hesitation, the direct opposite of what the king, as he well knew, expected of him and longed to hear.^c He meets Balak’s indignant remonstrances again merely by affirming that he dare not contravene the commands of God.^d A new appeal for Divine direction results in similar utterances, followed by the same reproofs and the same unflinching confessions.^e A third attempt differs from the former transactions only in this point, that Balaam no more goes out to secure a special revelation. For he is now certain that ‘it pleases God to bless Israel.’ He is convinced that he may safely surrender himself to the impulse of the moment. Indeed, when he beholds the vast camp of the Israelites stretched out before his view, he exalts their prosperity and power, their fame and triumphs, with a solemnity and fervour he had not even attained before; and he concludes with declaring, that if anyone should presume to curse Israel, it is on himself that the curse would recoil.^f The king, struck by the pointed and ominous allusion, listens to those bursts of prophetic fire with increasing rage and consternation; but Balaam remains calm and unawed. He is now a hateful guest in Moab, and is bidden to ‘escape;’ but, regardless of the danger to which he exposes himself, he not only, with imperturbable tranquillity, reminds the

^a xxii. 38.^b xxiii. 3.^c Vers. 7-10.^d Ver. 12.^e Vers. 15, 16, 25, 26.^f xxiv. 1-9.

monarch of his former assurance, that not even all the golden treasures of a palace could move him to utter oracles 'of his own mind,'^a but, rising to new enthusiasm, he announces to Balak, unrequested, the future fate of his own land, proclaiming that, like many other kingdoms, it was doomed to be subdued and crushed by the very people which, at that moment, was causing him dread and horror.^b And then the author concludes his account of the seer, simply and quietly, 'And Balaam rose and went away and returned to his place.'^c

It would not be easy to find, in the epic compositions of any country, a delineation of character more clear or more consistent than that of Balaam in this incomparable section. Firm and inexorable like eternal Fate, he regards himself solely as an instrument of that Omnipotence, which guides the destinies of nations by its unerring wisdom. Free from all human passion and almost from all human emotion, he is like a mysterious spirit from a higher and nobler world, which looks upon the fortunes of the children of men with an immovable and sublime repose.

4. BALAAM'S RELIGION.

To test and to confirm this view, it will be desirable to enquire whether Balaam is, in this portion, portrayed as a true Hebrew prophet, or whether and in what respects he is marked as a heathen.

First, it is important to notice, that the God of Balaam is undoubtedly the God of the Hebrews. He is introduced with nearly all His Biblical names—*Jahveh*, *Elohim*, *El*, *Shaddai*, *Elyon*—and no other deity is men-

^a xxiv. 12, 13.

^b Vers. 14-17.

| ^c Ver. 25. — The passage xxiv.
| 18-24 must here also be excluded.

tioned throughout the entire Book. The most frequent by far is the appellation of *Jahveh* (יהוה), and it is not a little significant, that Balaam uses predominantly that holy and specifically Hebrew name of Revelation and the Covenant, both in the narrative and in prophetic speech; ^a a few times only he employs *El* (אל), ^b and once, respectively, *Elohim* (אלהים), *Shaddai* (שדי), and *Elyon* (עליון). ^c Wherever the author relates in his own name, *Jahveh* and *Elohim* are introduced promiscuously; ^d but it would not be possible, without resorting to artificial expedients, to establish a principle and design in this change or alternation. For as *Jahveh* puts the words into the seer's mouth and grants him revelations, ^e so does *Elohim*, ^f whose 'spirit comes upon Balaam.' ^g It is true that, in the account of the first embassy, *Elohim* is, with remarkable uniformity, used by the author, and *Jahveh* by Balaam; ^h but this affords only a new and striking proof of the writer's art and care, who desired to impart to the prophet's speech the most solemn emphasis possible,

^a xxii. 8, 13, 18, 19; xxiii. 3, 8, 12, 21, 26; xxiv. 6, 13.

^b xxiii. 8, 19, 23; xxiv. 4, 8, 16, 24.

^c xxii. 38; xxiv. 8, 16; comp. אֱלֹהִים, xxiii. 21. How can we suppress a feeling of astonishment at finding, that this very circumstance—the constant use by Balaam of the name of *Jahveh*—has been urged as a conclusive proof of Balaam's sanctimony and arrogance, of his frauds and selfish wiles? (*Hengstenberg*, *Authentic des Pentateuchs*, i. 407, 411; similarly *Baumgarten*, *Reinke*, *Beitraege*, iv. 227; comp., however, *Stachelin*, *Kritische Untersuchungen*, pp. 36, 37.)

^d The former in xxiii. 5, 16;

xxiv. 1; the latter in xxii. 9, 20; xxiii. 4; xxiv. 3.

^e xxiii. 5, 16.

^f xxii. 9, 20, 38; xxiii. 4.

^g xxiv. 3.—Particularly instructive is xxiii. 3–5: Balaam expects, that יהוה will meet him (ver. 3), in reality he is met by אלהים (ver. 4), and יהוה suggests to him the prophecy (ver. 5). The distinctions that have been attempted (*Hengstenb.* l. c. pp. 409–411; *Baur*, *Alttestamentliche Weissagung*, etc., i. 334; *Ewald*, *Jahrbuecher*, viii. p. 18; *Keil*, *Commentar zu Numeri*, p. 297, etc.) are not satisfactory or convincing.

^h xxii. 9, 10, 12, 20; and vers. 8, 13, 18, 19.

while preserving the greatest simplicity in his own words.^a But we are not left to deduce, from uncertain inference, that the God of Balaam is no other than the God of Israel, the Eternal, the Unchangeable. This is unmistakably expressed. Balaam speaks of Jahveh as 'my God,'^b just as he says with reference to Israel, that Jahveh is 'his God ;'^c and that term 'Jahveh my God'^d is not 'merely the Hebrew designation of Balaam's monotheism,'^e but involves and demonstrates the absolute identity of Balaam's monotheism and that of Israel.^f

5. THE GOD OF BALAK.

A CLEAR light is thrown upon the subject by considering it in conjunction with *Balak's* religious notions.

The king sends messengers to the seer with the general charge to come and curse the Hebrews.^g He does not specify the deity in whose name he desires the curse to

^a By what perversion of judgment, was it possible to discover in this circumstance also 'a silent accusation of hypocrisy against Balaam, who so boastfully spoke of his Jehovah (der sich mit seinem Jehova so breit machte), constantly crying *Kúpte Kúpte*, although in reality he was only in connection with Elohim.'! (*Hengstenb.* l. c. pp. 409, 411; *Lange*, *Bibelwerk*, ii. 368, 311, 'an ostentatiously displayed belief in Jehova... ..as if he knew the God of salvation.' In the passage xxii. 22-35 also, the name יהוה prevails, whether Jahveh Himself (vers. 28, 31) or, more frequently, the 'angel of Jahveh' (vers. 22-27, 31, 32, 34, 35), while יהוה occurs but once (ver. 22).

^b אלהי, xxii. 18.

^c אלהי, xxiii. 21; comp. 1 Ki. xviii. 39, יהוה הוא אלהים; Ps. vii. 2, 4; xviii. 7, 29; Hos. ii. 25; viii. 2; Zechar. xiii. 9, etc.

^d יהוה אלהי.

^e *Knoke*, *Numeri erklärt*, p. 131.

^f It is, therefore, not sufficient to say, that 'Balaam's religion was probably such as would be the natural result of a general acquaintance with God not confirmed by any covenant' (*Smith*, *Dictionary of the Bible*, i. 163): Balaam's acquaintance with God was precisely that possessed by the highest minds among the Hebrews in the author's time.—About the question, how the Mesopotamian Balaam obtained a knowledge of Jahveh as the God of the Hebrews, see notes on xxii. 5-14.

^g xxii. 5, 6.

be pronounced. It is enough for him to know that Balaam's blessing and curse are potent and irresistible. Does he, in the author's view, mean the God of the Hebrews and Him alone? This cannot be assumed; for if he had deemed this point essential, he would not have failed to insist upon it in his explicit message. He evidently knew nothing of Jahveh, or he did not heed Him. He had heard of the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt, but he speaks of their deliverance as of an ordinary event, without alluding to Jahveh's assistance or intervention^a—in striking contrast to Balaam, who repeatedly attributes it to the power and mercy of Israel's God.^b How should he indeed expect an efficient execration from a soothsayer inspired by a strange god against his own chosen people? When Balaam, following the Divine directions, announced to the elders of Moab, 'The Lord (יהוה) refuses to give me leave to go with you;'^c in what form did the elders bring back this answer to Balak? They simply said, 'Balaam refuses to come with us.'^d They omitted to mention Jahveh, obviously because to them and to the king He was an unfamiliar god. If Balak had specially desired that the Hebrews should be cursed in the name of Jahveh, it would have been of the utmost importance to him to learn that it was Jahveh Himself who forbade Balaam to journey forth. But the envoys and the monarch alike were concerned about nothing except the bare fact of Balaam's non-compliance.

The second embassy was despatched with the same indefinite message, no particular god being named.^e However, when Balaam at last arrived in Moab, he said to the king, 'I will go; perhaps the Lord (יהוה) will

^a xxii. 5.

^b xxiii. 22; xxiv. 8; see notes on
xxii. 5-14.

^c xxii. 13.

^d Ver. 14.

^e xxii. 15-17.

come to meet me; and whatsoever He will show me, I will tell thee.^a Then was Balak, for the first time, made clearly aware that Balaam was in the service of Jahveh, and then he might easily have informed himself about His nature and His relation to Israel. Again and again, he thenceforth heard the same name from Balaam's mouth, both in the interviews and the prophetic speeches;^b and when he, therefore, saw Balaam the second time return, prepared for uttering an oracle, he asked, in anxious suspense, 'What has the Lord (יהוה) spoken?'^c He had learnt, that it was from Jahveh, the God of the terrible Hebrews, that he must expect his safety or destruction. But he had also learnt, that this Jahveh is *the* God or *Elohim*; ^d and, consequently, when he requested Balaam to make a new attempt in another place, he added, 'Perhaps it will please *Ha-Elohim*, that thou mayest curse me them from there.'^e Yet when, this time also, Balaam pronounced a blessing and not a curse, the frenzied king, dismissing the prophet from his presence, exclaimed, 'I thought to honour thee, but, behold, the Lord (יהוה) has kept thee back from honour'^f—thus mingling with his rage a derisive sarcasm, taunting Balaam's God as delighting to deprive of honours and rewards His most scrupulous worshippers; and with those defiant words, Balak, the type of blind and worldly paganism, so skilfully placed in juxtaposition to Balaam, for ever discards that Jahveh, to whom he had turned for a moment through fear and selfishness.^g

^a xxiii. 3.

^b Vers. 8, 12.

^c Ver. 17.

^d xxii. 38; comp. xxiii. 21.

^e xxiii. 27.

^f xxiv. 11.

^g Balak's disposition and views

will be more fully unfolded in the Commentary. Even Jewish tradition admits, that Balak was a more superstitious idolater than Balaam; *Midrash Rabb. Num. xx. 7*, בלק היה בעל קסמים ובעל נחיש יותר מבעלם ש'היה נמשך אחריו כסומא.

G. BALAAM THE PROPHET.

WE shall approach still nearer to a right estimate of Balaam's character by enquiring how he received Jahveh's revelations—whether in the manner of Hebrew prophecy or in connection with heathen rites?

When Balaam hears, from the first ambassadors, the king's demand, he desires them to remain till the next morning, and promises a reply in accordance with God's injunction.^a He is, therefore, sure of a Divine communication. How is it conveyed? Certainly in the night—as is not only clear from the context, but is expressed in distinct terms;^b and evidently in sleep, for God orders Balaam, 'Rise and go with the men,' after which the author adds, 'And Balaam rose in the morning . . . and went with the princes of Moab.'^c He received, therefore, his communications in dream visions, and these were deemed by the Hebrews one of the legitimate and valued modes of Divine revelation.^d Again, God speaks to Balaam, and Balaam speaks to God;^e He 'shows him' words,^f 'puts words into his mouth,'^g or gives him 'commands';^h in fact 'the spirit of God comes upon Balaam';ⁱ phrases which we find constantly applied in the Old Testament to the true seers of Israel.^k Balaam's speech or address is indeed, on account of its poetical character, generally

^a xxii. 8.

^b Ver. 20.

^c Vers. 20, 21.

^d Num. xii. 6; Gen. xx. 3; xxxi. 11, 24; xlvi. 2; Job iv. 13–16, etc.; see Commentary on Genesis, pp. 608, 640.

^e xxii. 8–12, 19, 20; xxiii. 26.

^f xxiii. 3.

^g xxii. 38; xxiii. 5, 12, 16.

^h xxii. 18; xxiv. 13.

ⁱ xxiv. 2; see notes in loc.

^k Comp. Deut. xviii. 18; 2 Sam. xxiii. 2; Isai. li. 16; lix. 21; Jer. i. 9; Ezek. xxxiii. 7, etc. Balaam, says Lange (Bibelwerk, ii. 309), with a refinement we are unable to realise, had 'Verkehr' with God, but not 'Umgang:' the distinction is certainly not essential.

designated as 'parable,'^a but also as 'Words of God,'^b or simply 'utterance'^c of Balaam, which is the specific term for prophetic communication.^d

However, some circumstances are mentioned which seem at least doubtful. We may here briefly pass over the fact that the king sent Balaam 'wages' or 'rewards of divination.'^e Supposing even that Balaam accepted them, he deserves no censure. For according to the notions of those times, no one ever consulted a seer without offering him a present, either in money or provisions, although the most trifling gift contented the simplicity of Hebrew prophets,^f and the assertion^g that the 'men of God' did not receive or take such presents is unfounded, though in some cases they may have had special reasons for refusing them.^h—But preparations, apparently considered indispensable, are made for the predictions—altars are erected and sacrifices offered, at which the king is bound to stay.ⁱ As these arrangements proceed from Balaam, we are justified in presuming that the sacrifices are presented to none else but Jahveh; at the time when this section was composed,^k altars and sacrifices, not yet restricted to one central sanctuary, were lawful at any place;^l and although prophecies were generally pronounced without

^a מִשְׁפָּל, xxiii. 7, 18; xxiv. 3, 15; see notes on xxiii. 7-10.

^b אִמְרֵי אֱלֹהִים, xxiv. 4, 16.

^c נְאֻם בַּלְעָם.

^d xxiv. 3, 4, 15, 16; comp. אִיעֶזֶר, xxiv. 14; see notes in locc.

^e xxii. 7, קֶסֶם, see notes on xxii. 5-14.

^f Comp. 1 Sam. ix. 7, 8; 1 Ki. xiii. 7; xiv. 3; 2 Ki. viii. 8, 9; see Mic. iii. 5.

^g Joseph. Ant. VI. iv. 1; X. xi. 3.

^h 2 Ki. v. 15, 16, 26; comp. Gen. xiv. 22, 23.

ⁱ xxiii. 1, 4, 6, 14, 15, 17, 29, 30.

^k See *infra*, 'Date.'

^l See Comm. on Levit. i. 17-19. The 'Moabite Stone' (line 18) mentions 'vessels of Jahveh' (כְּלֵי יְהוָה) taken from the Hebrews, at Nebo, by Mesha, king of Moab, and presented to his god Chemosh. There were, therefore, evidently in his time still (about B.C. 890) legitimate sanctuaries of God in the east-Jordanic districts (comp., on the other hand, the very different spirit in the long account of Josh. xxii. 10-34).

such expedients, various analogies are not wanting,^a music especially being used as a favourite auxiliary to prophetic inspiration.^b—The spot from which the oracles are delivered is repeatedly altered.^c These changes are indeed suggested by Balak, who shrinks from new disclosures at a locality which had once proved inauspicious; but as traces of similar views were entertained by pious Hebrews also,^d Balaam's compliance cannot be interpreted to his disparagement.—In order to secure the efficacy of his utterances, Balaam must actually see at least a part of those who formed the subject of his speeches. The king, therefore, chooses the places accordingly, and Balaam is invested with the Divine spirit only when beholding the Israelites in their camps.^e But this circumstance also involves nothing which would appear strange in a true Hebrew prophet, as is proved by the close parallels which may be adduced;^f and it is certainly not surprising in the comparatively early age to which this Book of Balaam belongs.

But, lastly, we have to mention a point which is not without difficulty, and must be considered decisive on the present enquiry. How are we to understand the repeated statement, that Balaam went out 'to meet God,'^g which seems to have been a current technical term, and was intelligible even in the still briefer form 'to meet?'^h Whenever Balaam thus goes out, he makes it essential to go *alone*; and it would almost seem that his main object

^a Comp. 1 Ki. xviii. 23, 24, 30–33, etc.

^b 1 Sam. x. 5; 2 Ki. iii. 15. Elisha requested, 'Bring me a minstrel (יָגֵן)', and it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him'; 1 Chr. xxv. 1, 3, where the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, are said to

'prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals' (הַנְּבָאִים בְּכִנּוֹרוֹת).

^c xxii. 41; xxiii. 13, 27.

^d See notes on xxiii. 11–17.

^e xxii. 41; xxiii. 13; xxiv. 2.

^f See notes on xxii. 41–xxiii. 6.

^g xxiii. 3, יִקְרָה יְהוָה לְקִרְאָתִי.

^h xxiii. 15, אֶקְרָה.

in occupying Balak with his sacrifices was to prevent the king from following him.^a This might seem suspicious. But in whatever manner the author may have represented to himself the process of Divine inspiration, he naturally, in connection with it, regarded solitude as pre-eminently appropriate, because most favourable to concentrated thought and the undisturbed communion with the source of revelation. Love of retirement is a common and conspicuous trait in genuine Hebrew prophets. They like to dwell in caverns and on summits of mountains.^b They seek above all the desert which, in its awful grandeur, its vastness, and silence, seems particularly calculated to elevate and inspire the Eastern mind;^c and Moses himself received his first Divine manifestation in the burning bush of the wilderness.^d There is, therefore, nothing questionable in the circumstance that Balaam 'went to a solitude.'^e Now why did Balaam withdraw into the lonely desert? If we follow an apparently unequivocal statement of the text, he went, the first and second time, 'to seek enchantments.'^f Here we seem suddenly to be transferred from the sphere of a pure religion to the darkest paganism; for the *nechushim* (נְחוּשִׁים), wherever mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, are supposed to refer to obnoxious artifices of fraud and jugglery, and are forbidden in the Law among the most detestable of criminal practices.^g So, then, Balaam would really be

^a xxiii. 3, 15: in the latter passage the distinction between Balaam and Balak is expressed in the pronoun בָּנִי with some emphasis; the third time, when Balaam refrained from going apart, he did not, as on the two previous occasions, request Balak to 'remain by his burnt-offering' (comp. xxiii. 29; xxiv. 2).

^b 1 Ki. xix. 9; 2 Ki. i. 9; ii. 16, 25; comp. Jer. xv. 17.

^c 1 Ki. xix. 8; Matth. xi. 7, 9.

^d Exod. iii. 1 *sqq.*

^e xxiii. 3, וַיֵּצֵא יְהוָה; see notes in loc.; comp. בָּה, ver. 15.

^f לְקַרְאֵת נְחוּשִׁים, xxiv. 1.

^g See Commentary on Levitic. i. pp. 375, 401.

nothing else but an idolatrous deceiver, and the author would have erected a laborious structure with infinite art, in order to overthrow it with a single blow? But some considerations rise at once to warn us at least against rashness in our judgment. In his second speech, Balaam himself described it as one of the greatest glories of Israel, that 'there is no enchantment in Jacob, nor divination in Israel,'^a and represented this absence of superstitious rites as one of the chief sources of their prosperity and happiness. Should he, at that very time, be himself guilty of such devices, and thus, double-tongued, palpably falsify his own prophecies? Again, we read that the third time 'he did not go out as the first and second time.' Now, what was his object in going out? Let us only recollect that the narrative observes, in the first instance, 'I will go, perhaps the Lord (יהוה) will come to meet me;'^b and in the second, 'I will go to meet,'^c after which 'the Lord (יהוה) met Balaam.'^d It is, therefore, Jahveh, the holy God of Israel, whom he goes out to seek, and not 'enchantments.' We may, with the utmost confidence, balance those repeated statements against a single and isolated expression strikingly at variance with the tenor and spirit of the entire composition; and if we cannot prove that the term *nechashim* was, in earlier times, employed in a less offensive sense,^e we are justified and even compelled to consider that word in the passage under discussion^f as a corruption of the original text, whether it crept in accidentally or was ventured by one of Balaam's ancient detractors, and to alter it either into יהוה or, what is easier, from the greater similarity

^a xxiii. 23, נְחָשִׁים and קְסָמִים.

^b יִקְרָה, xxiii. 3.

^c אֶקְרָה.

^d xxiii. 15, 16.

^e Comp. notes on xxiii. 25-xxiv. 2; also on xxii. 5-14.

^f xxiv. 1.

of the letters, into אלהים, from whom, no less than from יהוה, Balaam expected revelations.^a If it had been 'enchancements' or 'auguries,' for which Balaam went out, he would have adhered to them the third time as scrupulously as he had done before, because, according to heathen conceptions, they were the most important element of the procedure; whereas the circumstance that, previous to his final and most solemn speech, he abstained from going to meet God, is a necessary feature in the author's skilful design.^b If, on the other hand, Balaam really received revelations from Jahveh by virtue of those enchantments, no reproach would fall upon Balaam, but it would argue so rude a conception of the Deity as no enlightened Hebrew entertained at the time when this remarkable Book was written.^c

We may, therefore, state, as a safe and well-founded result, that the Hebrew author represents Balaam, the heathen, in every respect as a true and noble prophet of Jahveh, and thus makes him participate in the highest and holiest privileges of the elect of the elected people.^d

^a xxii. 38. Considering the graphic completeness of the narrative, it is a gratuitous assumption that in xxiii. 3, 4, and 15, 16, 'the intermediate link of looking out for auguries' is, for brevity's sake, not mentioned (*Ewald*, Jahrb. x. 47).

^b See *supra*, p. 10.

^c As regards the view of Balaam's gradual development from a heathen seer into a prophet of Jahveh, see notes on xxiii. 25-xxiv. 2.

^d It can, therefore, not be allowed, that Balaam is meant to personify 'the ideal wisdom of the world, or secular prophecy and poetry, in their antagonism to the theocratic people' (*Lange*, Genes. p. lxxviii.): Balaam's

prophecy is not described as simply human, and his position to Israel is not hostile. Nor can it even be admitted, that 'the obnoxious traits of Balaam's character are, in these chapters, but slightly touched upon, because the author did not wish to weaken the force and impression of the prophecies' (*Herzog*, Real-Encycl. ii. 237): a fair construction of the author's words will never discover the slightest allusion to an obnoxious trait. Compare, on the other hand, the admirable remark of a living English theologian: 'It is one of the striking proofs of the Divine universality of the Old Testament, that the veil is, from time

7. MISREPRESENTATIONS.

We feel a great reluctance to disturb the contemplation of so exquisite a production by any expressions of regret. Yet it will not be unprofitable to point out the traditional and still too common views of Balaam's character and life as an instance of the deplorable confusion which is possible in Biblical interpretation. It is not, indeed, our intention to attempt a complete history of those misconceptions. The endless task would be without a corresponding advantage. We must be content with introducing—*instar omnium*—some ancient specimens: from these, as from a common parentage, all subsequent errors have sprung, which, though infinite in number, bear all a striking resemblance—*qualem decet esse sororum*.

Continuing in the path of the later Books of the Hebrew Scriptures,^a the Jews developed the character of Balaam more and more in a spirit of depreciation, and we consequently find it, in the *New Testament*, drawn in no attractive colours. Those 'that cannot cease from sin, whose heart is exercised in covetous practices, cursed children,' these are the people 'who follow the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor (Beor), who loved the wages of unrighteousness,^b but was rebuked for his iniquity.'^c The wicked 'run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward,'^d and he is placed on the same level of iniquity with Cain, Korah, and Jezebel.^e Very remarkable are the allusions made to this subject in the Revelation of

to time, drawn aside, and other characters than those which belonged to the chosen People appear in the distance, fraught with an instruction which . . . far outruns the teaching of any peculiar age or nation' (*Stanley, Jewish Church, i. 187*).

^a See *supra*, p. 6.

^b Ὁς μισθὸν ἀδικίας ἠγάπησεν.

^c 2 Pet. ii. 14-16.

^d Τῇ πλάνῃ τοῦ Βαλαάμ μισθοῦ ἐξέχθησαν.

^e Jude 11; Rev. ii. 20, which reference will soon be explained.

St. John. Under the peculiar name of ‘Nicolaitans,’^a a sect or class of people is introduced, whose teaching is denounced as utterly pernicious and fatal to salvation.^b It cannot be doubted that the term ‘Nicolaitans’ is meant to be identical with ‘Balaamites;’ for Nicolaus in Greek, as Balaam in Hebrew, was understood to signify ‘destroyer of the people.’^c Whether this term ‘Nicolaitans,’ as is not improbable, points, with designed obscurity, to Paul and his followers, who by their bold rejection of the ceremonial law, had drawn upon themselves the bitter animosity of Peter and his party,^d or whether the Nicolaitans formed some other objectionable community, this much is certain, that they were held in deep aversion and hatred, which their enemies intended to signify, in the strongest and most intelligible manner, by associating them with the detested seer Balaam.^e

Similar is the account of *Josephus*, which bears the usual character of his Biblical paraphrase, being legendary yet frigid, minute yet inaccurate, and revealing little of the spirit and beauty of the original. *Josephus* regards Balaam, indeed, as a ‘prophet’ (*μάντις*),^f evidently even

^a *Νικολαῖται*.

^b Rev. ii. 6, 14, 15, 20–24.

^c See notes on xxii. 2–4.

^d St. Paul’s abrogation of the dietary and the exclusive marriage laws of the Pentateuch seems, by his Christian opponents, to have been considered equivalent to Balaam’s alleged seduction of the Hebrews to idolatry and incest (*supra*, p. 6); hence the two chief ‘stumbling-blocks’ in the ‘doctrine of Balaam’ are described by St. John to have been ‘eating the flesh sacrificed to idols, and committing fornication’ (Rev. ii. 14, *φαγεῖν ἐὶς ὠλόθυστα καὶ πορνεῖσαι*.)

^e *Comp. Comm. on Lev. ii. 114; Heug’s emb., Gesch. Bileam’s, pp. 22–25; Rénan, Saint Paul, pp. 268 sqq.; Vitringa, Obs. Sacr. IV. ix. 25–34, pp. 934–938, where Balaam, like the Nicolaitans, is described as ‘doctor vagarum libidinum carnalium;’ Witsii, Miscell. i. 690, ‘Balaamitas et Nicolaitas vel eodem vel consimiles certe haereticos,’ etc.; Buddens, Miscell. i. 220, 221, classifying Balaam among the ‘typici peccatores,’ etc.; Herzog, Real-Encycl. x. 338–340; J. R. Oertel, Paulus in der Apostelgeschichte, 1868; J. W. Lale, Paul, the Disowned Apostle, 1876.*

^f *Antiq. IV. vi. 1.*

as a prophet of the God of Israel, 'who had raised him to great reputation on account of the truth of his predictions,'^a and his speeches are referred to 'Divine inspiration.'^b But he is, in the first place, at least inexact, when he calls him also 'the greatest of the prophets at that time;'^c for he certainly did not mean to rank him above Moses. It can, therefore, hardly be doubted that he assigned to him some intermediate position between the Hebrew prophets and the common heathen diviners. This is confirmed by the circumstance that Balaam's sympathies are represented as being strongly on the side of Moab and Midian. He declares to their messengers, again and again, that he eagerly desired to comply with their request;^d and, after his first speech, he assures the king himself that it had been his earnest prayer that he might not disappoint him in his wishes by being compelled to invoke blessings upon his enemies. He offers the sacrifices in the hope that 'he might observe some sign of the flight of the Hebrews;'^e and then from him, and not from Balak, proceeds the proposal of another attempt at execrating Israel—'that I may see,' he says, 'whether I can persuade God to permit me to bind these men with curses.'^f Thus Josephus destroys the wonderful impartiality and repose of the original, which attributes to the seer absolutely no other will than that of the God of Israel. Balaam is indeed made to say that he is not 'in his own power,'^g but 'is moved to speak by the Divine spirit,' which does not allow him to be silent, and 'puts into his mouth such speeches as he is not even conscious of.'^h But all this is merely intended to enhance

^a Antiq. IV. vi. § 2.

^b Ἐπιθείάζειν.

^c Antiq. IV. vi. 2, μάντις ἄριστος τῶν τότε.

^d *Ibid.* §§ 2, 3.

^e *Ibid.* § 4, ὡς τροπήν ἰδεῖν σημαινομένην.

^f *Ibid.* § 5.

^g Ἐν ἑαυτῷ.

^h *Ibid.* §§ 2, 5.

the glorification of Israel, and thus to strengthen the barrier between Hebrew and non-Hebrew, contrary to the spirit of the Book of Balaam. To complete his misapprehension, Josephus connects this narrative with the iniquitous advice which a different tradition imputes to Balaam, and on which he dwells with elaborate fulness and many fanciful adornments; and, advancing to the very opposite of the Biblical story, he lets Balaam say to the king and the princes, ‘I must gratify you even *without the will of God!*’^a A conception of clear and noble outlines has thus been confused and almost effaced.^b

A still more decided step in the same direction was made by *Philo*, who could touch no subject without enlarging and deepening it by imagination and enthusiasm. He bestows upon Balaam a variety of appellations applicable only to a heathen soothsayer—‘diviner by the flight of birds,’ or ‘an observer of birds,’ ‘a searcher for prodigies,’ and ‘a wily magician.’^c In all these arts, Balaam was a consummate master. He foresaw the most incredible events, as heavy rain in the height of summer and burning heat in the midst of winter. He predicted plenty and famine, inundations and pestilence, and also foretold their cessation. But he was dishonest, avaricious, and blasphemous. Pretending to have communion with God, he mendaciously told the first envoys that it was the Lord who forbade him the journey; and as falsely he assured the second ambassadors, by whose costly presents

^a Χρὴ γάρ με καὶ παρὰ βούλησιν τοῦ θεοῦ χαρίσασθαι ὑμῖν, §§ 6, 13.

^b Various other discrepancies between the account of Josephus and that of our section will be pointed out in the Commentary.

^c Besides *μάντις* and *μαντεία* (Vit. Mos. i. 48), Balaam and his avoca-

tion are called *οἰωνόμαντις* (De Confus. Ling., chap. 31), *οἰωνοσκόπος* and *οἰωνοσκοπία* (Vit. Mos., loc. cit., De Mutat. Nom., chap. 37), *τερατοσκόπος* (De Confus. Ling., l. c.); *σοφιστεία μαντική* (De Mut. Nom., l. c.; Vit. Mos. i. 50) and *μαγική* (*Ibid.*).

he was allured, that he went with them impelled by Divine dreams. For this base deceit and presumption he was punished by not being allowed, for some time, to see the angel on the road, which 'was a proof of his obtuseness; for he was thus made aware that he was inferior to a brute, at a time when he was boasting that he could see, not only the whole world, but also the Creator of the world.' It is true that he enquired of the angel whether he was to return home, but this was mere hypocrisy, justly calling forth the angel's wrath, 'for there was no need to ask questions in a matter so self-evident.' In delivering his speeches before the king of Moab, his soul was indeed free from cunning and artful divination, but this was not his merit, 'for God did not allow holy inspiration to dwell in the same abode with magic.' Balaam 'was like the interpreter of some other being, who prompted his words,' and he derived no real benefit from the inspiration thus exceptionally imparted to him.^a Unable to take a warning from the first two prophecies which had been put by God into his mouth, Balaam, 'more wicked than the king,' still 'most eagerly desired in his heart to curse the Israelites.' A third time baffled in his nefarious intentions, since God's invincible power 'changed his base into good coin,'^b and violently upbraided by the king, he offered him 'suggestions of his own mind,' recommending that he should ensnare the Hebrews by the beauty of the Midianite women, and thus adopt the only possible means of success; and this scheme is set forth with embellishments similar to those devised by Josephus.^c Therefore, whenever Philo has occasion to mention Balaam—and he employs him frequently as a

^a De Mut. Nom., chap. 37.

^b De Confus. Ling., chap. 31; comp. De Mut. Nom. l. c.

^c Comp. *Philo*, De Vit. Mos. i. 48-53, Opp. ii. 122 *sqq.*; see also *Targ. Jonath.* on xxiv. 25, and notes in loc.

convenient illustration—he alludes to him in no terms of sympathy or regard. He calls him ‘the symbol of vain people;’ a ‘runaway and deserter;’^a a ‘child of the earth and not an off-shoot of heaven;’^b a man ‘misled by a mighty torrent of falsehood;’^c ‘an empty mass of contrary and conflicting doctrines;’^d since the very name Balaam means emptiness;^e in a word, a creature finally overthrown and swallowed up by his ‘insane iniquity,’ because ‘he meant to stamp the Divinely inspired prophecies with his deceitful jugglery.’^f

Thus a complex and unreal character was constructed, in which neither the human nor the Divine elements have form or distinctness—a chaotic incongruity, half man, half demon.

The same features were worked out by *Jewish Tradition* with its own tenacious ingenuity. A glimmer of the truth lingered long in isolated sayings of liberal teachers. The words of Deuteronomy,^g ‘There arose thenceforth no prophet in Israel like Moses,’ were thus commented upon: ‘Not in Israel it is true, but there arose one among the other nations of the world, namely Balaam.’ Nay, several and not unessential points were enumerated, in which Balaam’s prophetic endowment was held to be superior to that of Moses himself, since the former, but not the latter, was described as ‘knowing the knowledge of the Most High.’^h This remarkable pre-eminence of a heathen is explained and justified by

^a De Cherub. chap. 10, μάταιον λαὸν ὄντα, and ἀσπράτευτον καὶ λειποτάκτην.

^b Γῆς θρέμμα, οὐκ οὐρανοῦ βλάστημα.

^c Quod. Deus Immutab. chap. 37, Opp. i. 299, πολλῶ τῶ τῆς ἀφροσύνης χρησάμενος ρέματι κτλ.

^d Quod Deter. Potior. Insid., chap. 20, Opp. i. 205.

^e De Confus. Ling., chap. 31, Opp. i. 429, καὶ γὰρ μάταιος ἐρμηνεύεται Βαλαάμ.

^f De Mut. Nom., chap. 37.

^g xxxiv. 10.

^h xxiv. 16, ידע דעת עליו.

urging that God desired to deprive the pagan nations of every possible excuse, lest they should say: 'God has kept us at a distance from Himself,'^a and if He had given us a prophet like Moses, we should readily have served Him.' For a similar reason, God granted them also great kings and sages, though all these, unlike the Hebrew prophets, kings, and sages, brought to their peoples no blessings, but destruction; on which account, after the time of Balaam, the Divine spirit was for ever withdrawn from the Gentiles.^b And again, Rabbi Abba bar Cahana, a scholar of the third Christian century, is reported to have said: 'There never were such philosophers in the world as Balaam, the son of Beor, and Eunomos, the weaver.'^c The former proved the depth of his wisdom by the answer he gave to 'all the nations of the earth,' when they came to him enquiring, whether it was possible for them to rival the Hebrews, upon which he replied: 'Never, as long as you hear the lisping of their young children in the schools and the houses of prayer.'^d

But already in the Mishnah, Balaam, 'the wicked,' is very distinctly contrasted with the pious Abraham; his disciples are described as notorious for the signal vices of 'envy, haughtiness, and arrogance';^e and, like their master, they inherit hell, and are hurled into the pit of

^a אתה רחקתנו.

^b *Midrash Rabba*, Num. Sect. xiv. §§ 25, 26; xx. init.; *Yalkut Shimoni*, §§ 765, 771; *Sifre*, last Sect. *sub fin.*, fol. 150, ed. Friedmann; *Midrash Tanchuma*, Sect. Balak § 1, etc.

^c אבנימוס הגרדי. Neither the name nor the surname of this philosopher is certain, and he has been variously identified with Oinomaos of Gadara, Numenius the Neo-Platonician of Apamea, and others. He

was a contemporary and friend of Rabbi Mair, and lived, therefore, about the middle of the second century, A.C. Comp. *Midr. Rabb.* Exod. xiii., *init.*, and on Ruth i. 8, p. 60 Edit. Stett.

^d *Midr. Rabb.* Genes. lxx. 10, and Lam. *init.*, אם התינוקות מצפצפין, בקולן אי אתם יכולים להם.

^e רוח גבוה, עין רעה, נפש רחבה, strangely deduced, respectively, from Num. xxiv. 2; xxii. 13 /כי מאן וכ/; and xxii. 18.

destruction.^a This text is, in the Talmud, the Targumim, and Midrashim, worked out with the utmost zest and relish. Balaam, accordingly, is not only 'the wicked' *par excellence*,^b but he is stamped as the permanent type both of human depravity and of the enmity of the impious against Israel as a nation. He is, therefore, either identified, or in some manner connected, with many of the most hateful personages of the Old Testament. His very name is supposed to testify to his pernicious nature; for he was truly a 'devourer' or 'destroyer of the people,'^c not only because 'he devised means to swallow up the people of Israel,' and, by this abominable scheme, actually occasioned the massacre of twenty-four thousand Hebrews,^d but because his despicable jugglery, and the evil example of his life, drew the people, far and wide, into an abyss of moral and spiritual perdition.^e His father—so assert the Rabbins, with that supreme disregard of chronological probability, which makes their treatment of history an engaging play of kaleidoscopic combinations—his father Beor was the Mesopotamian oppressor of the Israelites, Cushan Rishathaim,^f who, again, was the same person as the Aramean Laban.^g Yet Balaam himself was identified with Laban,^h whom old Jewish writers credit with every vice of cunning and fraud.ⁱ He was detestable like Cain and Doeg, Abitophel, Gehazi, and Haman.^k He was among those counsellors of Pharaoh who advised the

^a *Mishna*, Avoth v. 19; compare *Midr. Rabbah*, Num. xx. 4; *Yalk. Shim.* § 765; *Bechai*, Comment. on xxii. 13, etc.

^b הרשע, *passim*; comp. *Targ. Jon.* Num. xxiii. 9, 10, 21, רשעא.

^c *Talm. Sanhedr.* 105a, בלעם = בלע עם; *Targ. Jon.* xxii. 5; *Aruch* s. v., ישעין עצות לבלע עם ישראל, and various other expositions.

^d Num. xxv. 9.

^e See notes on xxii. 2-4.

^f Judg. iii. 7-10.

^g *Talm. Sanhedr.* 105a.

^h *Targ. Jon.* xxii. 5.

ⁱ See *Comm.* on Genes., pp. 465, 466; comp. *Maimon. Mor. Nevoch.* ii. 41, etc.

^k *Talm. Sanh.* 105a; *Midr. Rabb.* Num. xx. 1 *fin.*

murder of every new-born male child of the Hebrews, in order thus to destroy their expected deliverer, and he stimulated the Egyptian people to cruel resistance against the oppressed strangers.^a He was the instructor of those impious 'chiefs of sorcery,' Jannes and Jambres, who incited the Egyptian king to the same ruthless measure, who tried to imitate the miracles of Moses by their secret arts,^b and who, at the head of forty thousand of the foreign rabble,^c induced Aaron to make the golden calf.^d These two disciples accompanied him on his journey to Moab.^e For his trade was witchcraft and interpretation of dreams, and after having once temporarily enjoyed the gifts of true prophecy, he immediately returned to that trade for ever afterwards.^f All the circumstances of his life were inquired into. Thus we read in the Talmud, that a certain Sadducee^g asked Rabbi Chanina, whether

^a *Talm. Sanh.* 106a; *Sot.* 11a; *Targ. Jon. Exod.* ix. 21.

^b *Targ. Jon. Exod.* vii. 11.

^c *Exod.* xii. 38.

^d *Targ. Jon. Exod.* i. 15, רִישֵׁי חַרְשֵׁי, vii. 11; *Midr. Touch.*, Sect. ט"ו תיבא, § 19, p. 316, Ed. Stettin; comp. 2 *Tim.* iii. 8; see *Comm. on Exod.*, p. 114. It has been conjectured that Jannes and Jambres coincide with the two men, יוֹחָנָן וְיָמְבְרֵס (in *Talm. Menachoth* 85a), who reproached Moses with having brought new kinds of enchantment into Egypt, a country itself rich enough in magical superstitions; and that the first—יוֹחָנָן—is no other than John (Ἰωάννης, יוֹחָנָן) the Baptist, and the second Jesus (since מוֹמְרָא means apostate, *Talm. Horay.* 4a), who is also said to have introduced Egyptian arts (*Talm. Shabb.* 104b, where the son of Sada—סַטְרָא, or Mary—is supposed

to be again Jesus; comp. *Lery*, Chaldaisches Woerterbuch, i. 31, 337). Whatever foundation there may be for these conjectures, there is no doubt that Jesus and Balaam were, in Talmudical and Rabbinical writings, often brought into mutual relation, although some, probably, go too far in their surmises (as *Geiger*, *Jüd. Zeitschr.* vi. 34–36, 305, referring to Christ also *Mishn. Avoth* v. 19; *Sanhed.* x. 2; *Midr. Rabbah*, *Num.* xiv. 25, 26, where, however, 'Balaam' is described as a non-Israelite, etc.; comp. *Talm. Gittin* 57a, where Balaam and Christ are clearly distinguished.)

^e *Targ. Jon. Num.* xxii. 22.

^f *Talm.*, *Sanhedr.* 106a; *Midr. Rabb. Num.* xx. 2, 9; *Yalkut Shim.* § 765; *Midr. Tanch.* Balak, § 4.

^g צְרוּקֵי, that is, probably, a Jewish convert to Christianity (comp. *Avoth R. Nath.* chap. 5).

he knew how old Balaam was at the time of his death. The Rabbi replied, there was nothing written on the subject, but he believed he was justified in concluding^a that Balaam reached an age of thirty-three or thirty-four years, upon which the Sadducee exclaimed, 'Thou hast spoken rightly, for I have myself seen the chronicle of Balaam,^b in which it is recorded that Balaam, the lame, was thirty-three years old, when he was killed by Phinehas, the robber.'^c So much is certain, that Jewish tradition draws Balaam as disfigured by every conceivable physical and moral defect. He was lame on one foot and blind on one eye.^d He was a pitiless knave, who, without provocation, burnt to exterminate millions of souls, and a fiendish tempter, who strove to overwhelm a pious people by sin and crime; a base hypocrite, who simulated repentance, when he was trembling in dastardly fear,^e and a cunning deceiver, who, under the guise of fervent blessings, artfully veiled the bitterest curse and hatred; an incarnation of evil, endeavouring, by insincere and excessive praise, to hurl the Hebrews into moral ruin, whereas Moses, and all the other true prophets, earnestly dwelt on their trespasses, and compassionately exhorted even the heathen to righteousness; a hollow boaster, who promised much and performed little; an impostor, whose 'knowledge of the Most High' chiefly consisted in being able to discover the seasons when God is disposed

^a With reference to Ps. lv. 24.

^b פִּנְחָסִיָּה דְבַלְעָם.

^c לִיסְטָאָה, *Talm. Sanhedr.* 106*b*.

This passage also has been supposed to imply a hidden allusion to Jesus, who, according to Jewish legends, was lamed by falling from an elevation (comp. *Talm. Sotah* 10*b*), 'the chronicle of Balaam' being taken as one of the gospels, and 'Phine-

has, the robber,' as Pontius Pilate, (פְּלִיסְטָאָה); comp. *Perles*, in Frankel's *Monatsschrift*, 1872, pp. 266, 267).

^d *Talm. Sanhedr.* 105*a*, 106*a*; the one is deduced from 'טֵפִי' (xxiii. 3), the other from 'שְׂתַם הָעֵינַי' (xxiv. 3, 15), in the well-known manner of allegorical exegesis; see notes in locc.

^e Comp. xxii. 24.

to wrath and judgment; a man puffed up by silly conceit, though, with all his pagan wisdom, unable to rebut the censure of his ass; insatiable in greed of honour and riches; unnaturally immoral even in his sorceries; an implacable foe, who betrayed the malignant joy of his heart at the expected execration of the Hebrews by the impatient eagerness with which he hastened the preparations for the journey;^a refractory against God, who was compelled to force him to his duty, as a man forces an animal by bit and bridle; and so reckless in his contumacy, that he defied Heaven itself and its immutable decrees.^b

Now if we consider this terrible array of accusations, which, as we have observed, have been repeated in numberless modifications by patristic and scholastic writers, by commentators in the middle ages and even in our own time;^c and if we enquire after the sources from which all these reproaches are derived, we reasonably expect that they are founded on reliable authorities. But we may well be astonished to find that they are simply inferred from the few and scanty allusions in the last two

^a Comp. xxii. 21.

^b Comp. *Talm. Sanhedr.* 105; *Be-rach. 7a*; *Midr. Rabb. Genes.* xciii. 11; *Num. xx. iuit.*, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10; *Yalkut Shim.* §§ 765-771; *Midrash Tanchum. Balak*, 1-15; *Targ. Jonath. Gen. xii. 3, xxvii. 29*; *Num. xxii.-xxiv., passim*; *Ebn Ezra* on *Num. xxii. 28*: as is his wont in difficult questions, he speaks of a 'deep mystery' (סוד), which he cannot reveal; 'the part cannot change the part, but the destination of the whole changes the destination of the part,' etc.; *Rashi* on *xxii. 8*; *Bechai* on *xxiii. 4*, 'God came to Balaam in the night—as He did

to other wicked men, like Pharaoh, Laban, Nebuchadnezzar — כאדם הולך אצל פלגישו בהחבא'; also on *xxiv. 3*, Balaam is called נִבְרָךְ, that is התרנגול *cock*, because התרנגול מכל העופות, and for other similar reasons; and on *xxiv. 4*, Balaam's gift of prophecy by no means equalled that of the patriarchs, and certainly not that of Moses—thus contesting the more liberal view of earlier Rabbins; etc.

^c Comp. *Calmet, Dictionnaire de la Bible*, vol. I., pp. 718, 719; and about the fables of the Mohammedans, *D'Herbelot, Biblioth. Orient.*, pp. 180, 181.

Books of the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua.^a It is entirely out of the question to assume the support of other and independent traditions. For the original and primitive accounts, after having been fluctuating and even contradictory at least down to the seventh century, cannot, after the lapse of protracted periods, suddenly have received trustworthy additions all tending in one direction. The more actively the subject occupied and interested the popular mind, the more surely it was liable to modification and distortion. But what Hebrew prophet would have ventured to make such impure lips pronounce the most solemn oracles in the name of Jahveh, the Holy One? How should the Hebrew reader have expected benefit and advantage from the blessings of so depraved a heathen?

Even this, however, is not the most important point to which we would advert. How can it be imagined or justified, that all those hateful inventions have been considered and employed as a natural illustration of this 'Book of Balaam,' to which, in spirit and in every detail, they are diametrically opposed? How can it be explained, that so many thousands have, from this section, constructed, in the person of Balaam, the vilest and meanest caricature of human nature? Is it possible to repress a feeling of deep pain at finding that the Book which should be 'a lamp to our foot and a light to our path,' the Book which should 'make wise the simple,' and 'illumine the eyes,' has been doomed to promote the most perplexing confusion in the minds of even pious men who prize the truth? Is there any other work, in connection with which such deplorable perversion of judgment, if at all conceivable, would be so long and so persistently upheld?

^a See *supra*, pp. 3-7.

S. DETERIORATION.

FOR the progress of our enquiry, it is essential to ascertain which of the two divergent views taken in the Hebrew Scriptures of Balaam's life and mission is the older one, and how the change of tradition arose. We have, indeed, but slight materials available for guiding us in this investigation, but they are sufficient to lead at least to an approximate result.

In the words of Micah, above referred to,^a 'Remember now what Balak, king of Moab, schemed,^b and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him,'^c the 'scheme' of King Balak is placed in clear juxtaposition to the answer of Balaam; but as there can be no possible doubt about Balak's intention, there can be none about Balaam's reply. The latter opposed the heathen king and was on the side of Israel. He did not curse but he blessed, and this was brought about, as the prophet adds, that the Hebrews 'might know the kindness of the Lord.' Balaam, therefore, felt himself guided by Jahveh, the God of Israel. He recognised His power and uttered praises in His name. Since Micah is thus in complete accord with this portion of the Pentateuch, we are justified in concluding that, in his time still, or in the eighth century B.C., the seer Balaam was not only held in honour, but was remembered with proud gratification as one who had so splendidly testified to Israel's greatness and their privileged position. In our 'Book of Balaam,' stress is indeed laid on the fact of his being a Gentile, but none on his being a heathen. From the lips of the stranger, Israel's glorification was to come with greater force and significance; but the author of this beautiful narrative knew, with

^a Page 5.

^b יָצָא.

^c Micah vi. 5.

respect to religion, no hard line of demarcation between Israelite and pagan. He considered both alike capable of knowing Jahveh, of receiving His revelations, and of delivering His oracles. It is true, the principle of Israel's election is the leading idea of Hebrew prophecy, the watchword of which may be described to be: 'Jahveh, the holy—the God of Israel; Israel, the righteous—the people of Jahveh.' But, for many ages, the higher minds among the Hebrews were by this abstract idea never prevented from breaking through the narrow barriers. Mindful of the primeval traditions of a common origin of mankind, they were eager to enlarge the kingdom of God by including within its pale the noble spirits of all nations. Melchizedek, the Canaanite, was priest of the 'Most high God.' Jethro acknowledged the omnipotence of the God of Israel. Jonah exhorted the proud people of Nineveh in the name of Jahveh, and found among them a more ready obedience than any prophet ever found in Judah or Israel. Isaiah hoped that the three great hostile empires of his time, after having effected a *political* union, would also adopt a common *religion*, when 'the Lord of hosts would bless them, saying, Blessed be Egypt, My people, and Assyria, the work of My hands, and Israel, My inheritance.'^a Nay, the prophet desires to see the time, when all nations shall congregate together on the mountain of the Lord's house.^b Zephaniah beholds in his mind that happy future, when God will pour out over every people a pure tongue, and His worshippers beyond the rivers of Ethiopia will bring gifts to Jerusalem.^c A Psalmist praises in lofty strains

^a Isa. xix. 25; comp. vers. 18–24, 'there shall be an altar to the Lord in the land of Egypt,' etc.

^b Isa. ii. 2, 3; Mic. iv. 1, 2; comp. Isa. lxvi. 23.

^c Zeph. iii. 9, 10.

the glorious promises vouchsafed to Zion, God's beloved abode: 'I call Egypt and Babylon My adorers; Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia are born there'—all nations, marked and numbered by God, have in His city their home, their peace and salvation.^a The great prophet who wrote towards the end of the exile, is inexhaustible in developing these magnificent hopes. God does not confine, he teaches, His truth and protection to Israel; but Israel, His servant, is to be 'the light of the nations to the end of the earth;' for he is appointed as mediator of a universal covenant with God, as the deliverer of all those who are in the bonds of darkness and error. Even 'the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord' in love and obedience, shall be reckoned among His people, and their sacrifices on the holy mountain shall be graciously accepted; 'for My house,' says God, 'shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.'^b And as the same prophet clearly says of Cyrus, the Persian, that he invoked the name of Jahveh, and traced to Him every success and triumph,^c so our author represents Balaam, the Aramæan, as enjoying a communion with Jahveh more constant and more familiar than any Hebrew prophet enjoyed, with the exception of Moses alone. Though this beautiful and enlightened toleration may, in a great measure, be attributable to the highmindedness of the author himself, it prevailed, as a matter of history, only in those older and happier times, when the free and pure spirit of prophecy, unfettered by fixed codes of ceremonial laws, was still breathing in the land, and when Micah was

^a Ps. lxxxvii. 2-6.

^b Isa. xlii. 6, 7; xlix. 6; lvi. 1-8; lx. 3; lxvi. 18-23; comp. Am. ix. 11, 12; Joel iii. 1, 2; Zech. viii. 20-23; xiv. 16; Mal. i. 11.

^c Isa. xli. 25, 'I have raised him up and he came, . . . him who calls upon My name; comp. Ezra i. 2; see also Isa. xlv. 28; xlv. 1; xlv. 11; xlviii. 14.

permitted to convey the whole sum of human duties in those simple words, which may well be regarded as the most important of all prophetic utterances: 'The Lord hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'^a

But that free spirit disappeared too soon, and Deuteronomy was compiled, which, though still pervaded by something like the old prophetic buoyancy and freshness,^b insists upon the fatal injunction, 'You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor shall you take away from it,'^c and enforces the severest measures with respect to heathen tribes and their extirpation.^d Though this rigour, in the progress of time, effectually shielded the bulk of the people against the powerful allurements of idolatry, it proved, for the nobler minds, a check and a restraint, which, by inflexibly maintaining a uniform level, could not fail gradually to stifle all lofty and original aspirations. The promulgation of the Book of Deuteronomy was the first heavy blow dealt to the work of Hebrew prophets. That Book, accordingly, alludes to Balaam in a context and a spirit betraying a strong contrast, if not a deep-seated enmity, between Israel and the stranger, culminating in the harsh command respecting the Ammonite and Moabite, 'Thou shalt not ask their peace nor their welfare all thy days for ever.'^e The kindred Book of Joshua stamps the seer distinctly as a *kosem*, or a false and fraudulent soothsayer, who, for sordid reward, pronounces against Israel malignant, though impotent,

^a Mic. vi. 8, see *supra*, pp. 4, 5.

^b Comp. Deut. x. 12, 13; v. 26; vi. 4, 5; xxx. 6, 11-14, 20.

^c Deut. iv. 2, 5-8; xiii. 1; comp. Josh. i. 7, 8; Prov. xxx. 6.

^d Deut. vii. 1-5, 22-26; xx. 16-18, לֹא תִהְיֶה כָּל נִשְׁמָה; xxiii. 3, 4; xxv. 19; comp. Josh. x. 28, 30-40; xi. 8, 14, 15, etc.

^e Deut. xxiii. 4-7.

imprecations ;^a till finally, the latest portions of the Pentateuch could venture to charge him with the blackest crimes, finding a just retribution in the wicked seducer's ignominious death.^b

9. CONCLUSIONS.

It is, therefore, most natural to suppose, that the portion before us originated at a comparatively early date ; that, complete in itself, it was preserved as a small book or scroll from generation to generation, till it was ultimately embodied in the great national work, the Pentateuch, as one of its most precious ornaments. How the last redactor of that complex Book could, side by side, incorporate two entirely contradictory versions, and how he considered they might be reconciled, these are no easy questions, the solution of which has exercised, and is still exercising, the zeal and sagacity of hundreds of interpreters, which, however, like the efforts of harmonising the double accounts of the Creation and the Flood, of Korah's rebellion and other events, and of many laws, must, perhaps, always remain open problems. It is enough to know that the compiler deemed an agreement possible, and it will not be without interest, in the exposition of the text itself, to search for his probable view. Nor shall we, in this place, do more than mention a few devices, by which the rest may be estimated. 'It is indeed certain,' observes a great critic, 'that an intrinsic identity of history or form is out of the question ; but in a higher sense, such wavering and contradiction are quite possible in a heathen, that is a lower, prophet, who momentarily may be filled with a purer spirit, and may, at such a time, speak and prophesy beyond the capacity of his

^a Josh. xiii. 22 ; xxiv. 9, 10. ^b Num. xxxi. 8-16 ; comp. xxv. 1-18.

nature, but who, being in his own mind very far behind the Divine spirit, may easily, when those transitory moments have passed, yield to very different impulses.^a That a man like Ewald should have rested satisfied with so equivocal an explanation, is hardly less astonishing than the difficulty which the explanation is meant to remove. Acumen and truthfulness led Lessing to recognise in Balaam 'acts of the strictest honesty, and even of an heroic submission to God,' and yet Balaam's character was to him a riddle—'a curious mixture,' in which 'many excellent qualities' were allied with 'the utmost baseness and iniquity.' Balaam must indeed appear an inexplicable mystery to all who fail to separate the two antagonistic traditions. Had this been carefully done, earlier and recent writers would not, in troubled embarrassment, 'have wondered at the strange inconsistency and complexity' supposed to mark the seer's character; at 'the subtle phases of his greatness and of his fall;' at 'the self-deception which persuaded him that the sin which he committed might be brought within the rules of conscience and revelation;' at 'a noble course' degraded by 'a worldly ambition never satisfied;' or at 'the combination of the purest form of religious belief with a standard of action immeasurably below it.'^b Had the sources been examined, we should not find Balaam described 'as a prophet of the true God, and a most detestable type of unredeemed wickedness;'^c as 'an extraordinary nondescript between the Divine messenger and a soothsayer operating with the arts of heathen sorcery;'^d nor

^a *Ewald*, Jahrbuecher, viii. 39.

^b *Butler*, Sermons, vii.; *Newman*, Sermons, iv.; *Arnold*, Sermons, vi.; summarised by *Stanley*, Jewish Church, i. 188.

^c *Michaelis*, Anmerk., pp. 51, 52.

^d *Riehm*, Handwoert., i. 190, 'als merkwürdige Zwittergestalt zwischen dem echten Jehovapropheten' etc.; *Lergerke*, Kanaan, i. 585, 594.

as any other of those impossible beings, which the fancy of able and learned men has so abundantly conceived.*

We have shown that the 'Book of Balaam' is in complete accordance with the earlier phases of Hebrew prophecy. But we believe it is possible to establish the date of the composition with much greater accuracy.

With this view it will be necessary, first to consider whether the three chapters, as we read them in the traditional text, really represent the form in which they were originally written.

10. THE ORIGINAL BOOK OF BALAAM.

AN attentive and impartial analysis incontestably proves that this portion includes several important interpolations, of which it is for our present purpose sufficient to point out the following two:—

1. When Balaam, after the arrival of the second em-

* Comp. *Deyling*, *Observatt.*, iii. 102–117; *Clarke*, *Comm.*, p. 714 (although, on the whole, judging of Balaam with remarkable moderation and justice, and even defending the evil counsel he is said to have given by supposing that 'he desired to form alliances with the Moabites or Midianites through the medium of matrimonial connections'), *Beard*, *Dict. of the Bible*, i. 123; *Smith*, *Dict.*, i. 162; *Davidson*, *Introd. to the Old Test.*, i. 331, 332; *Herzog*, *Real-Encycl.*, ii. 237; *H. Schultz*, *Alttestam. Theol.*, ii. 35; *Reinke*, *Beitraege*, iv. 215, 232; *Lange*, *Bibelwerk*, ii. 307–309 ('the dogmatic Balaam' must be taken in connection with 'the worldly politician and tempter Balaam; we have before us not 'a settled character, but one

still changing and struggling'); etc. Correctly, however, two different and irreconcilable traditions are admitted by *De Wette*, *Kritik der Israelit. Geschichte*, i. 362; *Vater*, *Pentat.*, iii. 118–120, 457; *A. G. Hoffmann*, in *Ersch and Gruber's Encycl.*, x. 184; *Gramberg*, *Religions-Ideen*, ii. 349; *Lergerke*, *Ken.* i. 582; *Oort*, *Disputatio de Pericope Num.* xx. 2–xxiv., p. 124; *Bunsen*, *Bibelwerk*, v. 599, 600; *Noeldeke*, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 87, 90; *Colenso*, *Pentat. and Book of Joshua*, Parts v., vi.; *Fuerst*, *Gesch. der Bibl. Liter.*, ii. 228, 230; *Krenkel*, in *Schenkel's Bibel Lex.*, i. 456; *Riehm*, l. c.; etc. But many of these writers either do not attempt at all to fix the mutual relation of the two versions, or fix it hazardingly.

bassy, consulted God again, he received the answer: 'Rise, and go with the men.'^a Yet when, following this distinct direction, he had entered upon the journey, we read that 'God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the Lord placed himself in the way to oppose him,' for 'the journey was pernicious in his eyes.'^b No ingenuity, no dialectic skill, will ever succeed in harmonising these two statements. They are simply antagonistic. Therefore, the whole passage in which this contradiction occurs^c must be considered as interpolated; the more so, as that passage interrupts the thread of the narrative, destroys the unity and symmetry of the conception, and is, in spirit and in form, as a whole and in its details, strikingly different from the main portion.^d

2. Balaam was called by Balak, that he might by imprecatory utterances assist him in the anticipated struggle between Israel and Moab. Therefore, both the glorification of Israel, and the prediction of Moab's future subdual,^e fall fitly within the author's plan. But everything else^f must be regarded as inappropriate, and would, from this consideration alone, be marked as unwarranted addition. But other arguments lead to the same conclusion. After having finished his oracles on Israel, Balaam says to Balak, 'Come, I will tell thee what this people is destined to do to thy people in later days.'^g After this clear introduction, we have merely to expect a prophecy

^a xxii. 20, see *supra*, p. 2.

^b Vers. 22, 32.

^c xxii. 22-35.

^d See notes on xxii. 22-35. Some modern writers have justly perceived the incongruous character of these verses; as *Granberg*, l. c., ii. 348; *Oort*, l. c., p. 120; *Beard*, Dict. of the Bible, i. 123; *Krenkel*,

in *Schenkel's Bibel-Lexic.*, i. 457; and others; comp. also *Hoffmann*, in *Ersch and Grub. Encycl.* x. 184, who considers that this passage is 'not indeed an interpolation, but borrowed from a different source.'

^e xxiv. 14-17.

^f xxiv. 18-24.

^g xxiv. 14, העם הזה לעמך.

on Moab. But besides this, we find vaticinations, peculiar in language and rhythm, in tone and tendency, on Edom and Amalek, on the Kenites, the Cyprians, and Assyrians.^a Again, throughout the portions we have before discussed, the principle is maintained that the prophet must see those on whom he pronounces prophecies;^b for the Moabites also he beholds in their chief representatives, the king and the princes. But that characteristic principle is disregarded, at least with respect to some of the nations just mentioned, if not to all. Thus the firm framework of the narrative is loosened, and the admirable completeness of the picture destroyed.^c

Now if we consider the section before us with the exclusion of these two passages,^d we may arrive at a safe result as to

II. THE DATE OF THE COMPOSITION.

The following points seem evident:—

1. All the tribes of Israel are described as inhabiting the land in security and prosperity.^e The date of the Book is, therefore, neither before Joshua, nor after the reign of the kings of Israel, Menahem and Pekah (B.C. 770—740), when the first Assyrian deportations took place under Pul or Tiglath-pileser.^f

2. The people are constituted as a monarchy.^g The

^a Vers. 18-24.

^b See *supra*, p. 18.

^c See notes on xxiv. 18-24. Some other passages, apparent, in our opinion, as interpolations or corruptions, but without importance for establishing the date of the Book, will be pointed out in their due places; as xxii. 3, 4 (see notes

in loc.); the word גחציים, xxiv. 1, probably for אלהים or יהוה (see *supra*, pp. 19-21).

^d Viz., xxii. 22-35, and xxiv. 18-24; see Appendix.

^e xxiii. 9, 24; xxiv. 2, 5.

^f 2 Ki. xv. 19, 20, 29; 1 Chr. v. 26.

^g xxiv. 7, 17, וקם ישבט מיישראל.

section belongs, therefore, to a time not anterior to Samuel.

3. *One* king rules the country, and Jacob and Israel are identical.^a There is no trace of an allusion to the disruption of the kingdom, the whole people forming one commonwealth, irresistible through their unity. The piece can, therefore, have only been written in the time of the undivided kingdom, under Saul, David, or Solomon.

4. The Moabites are mentioned as utterly vanquished and humbled.^b They were, indeed, defeated by Saul, but his success was neither brilliant nor decisive, and is, in the Hebrew records, but cursorily stated, together with other military advantages.^c Moreover, the power of the Hebrews and their position among the nations were, in Saul's time, not of that eminence upon which these chapters dwell so emphatically. There remains, therefore, only the alternative between the reign of David and that of Solomon. But

5. This section breathes, on the whole, a warlike spirit. The country is still compelled to remain fully prepared against watchful adversaries: 'Behold, it is a people that riseth up as a lioness, and lifteth himself up like a lion; he doth not lie down till he eateth his prey, and drinketh the blood of the slain';^d or Israel 'devoureth the nations, his enemies, and crusheth their bones and pierceth with his arrows.'^e Such descriptions do not harmonise with the peaceful times of king Solomon.

The Book of Balaam was, therefore, most probably written in the latter part of David's reign (about B.C. 1030),

^a xxiv. 5, 7, 17.

^b xxiv. 17, וּמֹאבִי פִּאֲתֵי מוֹאָב.

^c 'So Saul fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon,

and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines,' 1 Sam. xiv. 47, 48.

^d xxiii. 24.

^e xxiv. 8; comp. 9a, 17.

when it was inspired by those glorious triumphs over the Moabites and other rebellious foes, which the last prophecy introduces with such peculiar power and pride.^a Although we possess no details of David's wars against Moab, we know thus much, that they were carried on with the bitterest animosity and left a deep impression behind.^b

Of which of David's great contemporaries would this exquisite masterpiece of epic and lyrical composition be unworthy? Indeed, in some passages, it recalls the energetic sweetness of the Davidic Psalms, while, in others, it breathes their heroic force.^c However, it would be vain to fix, by conjecture, upon a name which men would have delighted to hold in immortal honour.

There is nothing in the genuine parts of the section which points to a time later than David. For what does the author know of the Hebrews and their history? They are a blessed and a pious people, worshipping Jahveh, and protected by His love.^d They have come out of Egypt.^e On their way from this country into Canaan, they encamp near the territory of the Moabites, who consider them as hostile and dread them.^f They have acquired beautiful and extensive abodes, which they enjoy in comfort and abundance, and where they form a very populous kingdom.^g But they keep apart from other nations, since God has assigned to them a peculiar position and vocation.^h They are divided in tribes, all of which are mutually at peace.ⁱ Their monarchy has already distinguished itself by many feats of arms,^k and they have thus obtained very considerable

^a xxiv. 17, וקרר כל בני ית.

^b 2 Sam. viii. 2; see notes on xxiv. 3-9, 15-17.

^c Comp xxiv. 8 and Ps. xviii. 38-43.

^d See *infra*, Sect. 14.

^e xxii. 5; xxiii. 22; xxiv. 8.

^f xxii. 3-6, 11.

^g xxiii. 10; xxiv. 5-7.

^h xxiii. 9, הן עם לברך ייטכן.

ⁱ xxiv. 2, ישראל יטכן לשבטיו.

^k xxiv. 7b, ותנישא מלכתו.

power, which they exercise with stern determination and unbending energy.^a They are particularly illustrious through an exalted and far-famed king, who, besides discomfiting other contumacious foes, has humbled and crushed the Moabites.^b

There is, therefore, in this portion, no feature which leads beyond the rule of David, and which would not even accord with the time of Saul, if this king could be deemed sufficiently distinguished to be compared to a 'star.' If the words, 'A people that dwelleth apart, and is not reckoned among the nations,'^c imply an allusion to Israel's theocratic constitution, the result is not altered. For that idea was familiar to the people even in the period of the Judges. It was clearly conveyed in Gideon's answer, when he refused the offered crown;^d and it was by Samuel insisted upon even with a certain vehemence,^e although after the actual establishment of the monarchy, it naturally suffered various and essential modifications.^f

Those who fail to separate the later additions from the original Book, are naturally unable to arrive at a well-established conclusion. This fundamental neglect alone could have misled one of the most keen-sighted and appreciative scholars so far as to find in our section 'a spirit bent down by the people's misery,' and 'the picture of an empire grievously harassed and imperilled by enemies near and distant,' and, for this reason, to place the Book in the eighth century.^g Where, throughout the whole of the Old Testament, is there a spirit so joyous and hopeful, so confident and resolute?^h It could

^a xxiii. 24; xxiv. 8, 9.

^b xxiv. 17.

^c xxiii. 9, ובגוים לא יתחשב.

^d Judg. viii. 22, 23.

^e 1 Sam. viii. 6, 7; x. 18, 19.

^f See notes on xxiii. 7-10; comp. Comm. on Exod., p. 330.

^g Ewald, Jahrbuecher, viii. 21, 22, 24, 28.

^h See *infra*, Sect. 14.

not escape that scholar's fine literary taste, how materially the terse and almost epigrammatic precision of Balaam's utterances differs from the flowing fulness of prophetic speech in the time of Isaiah; but drawn by that original error into the most singular assumptions, he ventures the opinion that the author designedly imitated that older manner of 'brief, abrupt, sharply defined words:' as if Balaam's prophecies were 'imitations' in any sense, and not rather among the freest and purest creations ever produced by an original mind. Nor is there, in the authentic parts of the piece, any indication that Balaam 'announces Israel's military achievements from David to Hezekiah;'^a for it would be strange indeed if the author had treated, with copiousness and ardour, the time of the early monarchy, which for him would have been in the remote past, while alluding to his own age in an appendix, and with a few obscure if not incoherent words, little worthy of the momentous events of the Assyrian period. And yet it is the Assyrian period to which, for the untenable reason stated,^b most critics have assigned the Book of Balaam, as if that age alone could have produced a work of art so perfect in form and matter.^c

^a *Knobel*, Numeri, 121, 127.

^b *Comp.* xxiv. 22, 24.

^c So *Gramberg*, Religions-Id., ii. 348-356 (in 'the reign of Hezekiah'); *Bohlen*, Gen., p. cxxxv.; *Lengerke*, Kanaan, i. 582 (about B.C. 720); *Vaihinger*, in Herzog's Real-Enc., ii. 238; *Schultz*, Alttestam. Theol., ii. 3; *comp.* i. 472, 473; *Hitzig*, Gesch. d. Volkes Isr., i. 226; *Fuerst*, Bibl. Liter., ii. 227, 230 ('in the early part of Uzziab's reign,' even naming as the author that king's counsellor, Zechariah; *comp.* 2 Chron. xxvi. 5, where, however,

דריש אלהים, which is the explanation of 'הבין בראת אל', is, in the Chronicler's view, a priestly and not a prophetic function; moreover, Uzziab cannot be the 'star' of xxiv. 17, see notes in loc.); *Davidson*, Introd. to the Old Test., i. 337, 338 (in 'the first half of the eighth century,' when 'traditional matter had become incorporated with the historical groundwork'); *Kuenen*, Religion of Israel, i. 102, 181, 208, etc.; but according to *Oort*, l. c., pp. 81-118, on uncertain conjectures, under Jeroboam II.

No less open to objections is the view which places the Book in a time anterior to David; those who try to uphold this opinion are compelled not only to disregard all intrinsic evidences above pointed out,^a but to have recourse to the most strained interpretations, contrary alike to language and history.^b But least of all is it possible to maintain that this section was written in the age of Moses.^c For if so, how shall we understand the mode of its composition? Assuming an historical foundation of the narrative, however slight, that is, assuming that a heathen seer, at the express request of a heathen king, pronounced some such blessings and prophecies as we read in the Book; how did those utterances find their way into a national work of the Hebrews? It has been seriously asserted that the whole of this account^d was written by Balaam himself with a view of setting forth his claims upon Israel's gratitude, or by his immediate disciples, whom he instructed in magic, and that it was by Moses, or the compiler of the Pentateuch embodied in his work just as he had received it.^e Certainly, unless, as ancient interpreters did not hesitate to do, refuge be taken to a direct and literal inspiration, this portion, as it now lies before us, cannot possibly have been composed without the co-operation of Balaam.

^a Pp. 42, 43.

^b F. i., *Bunsen*, Bibelwerk, v. 597-609: 'the kernel of the epic' (xxii. 2-xxiv. 9) was compiled in Shilo, in the time of Joshua or a little later, prompted by the first enthusiasm and popular elevation of the young republic; which conjecture the author supports by an impossible conception of the words וִירָם מֵאֲנֵי מִלְכּוֹ (xxiv. 7; see notes in loc. However, the passage xxiv.

10-17 is placed by Bunsen in the time of David, and xxiv. 20-24 in that of Sennacherib and King Hezekiah, b.c. 701).

^c Comp. *Oort*, l. c., pp. 48-81.

^d Num. xxii.-xxiv.

^e So *Steudel*; see *Hengstenberg*, Geschichte Bileam's und seine Weissagungen, pp. 18, 214; *Fabricii* Pseudepigraph. Veter. Testament., ii. 105; and similarly *Justi*, *Hezel*, and others.

Omitting, for the present, the incident on the road,^a in which, besides the angel, no one was concerned except Balaam and his beast, since his servants and the ambassadors are not noticed in the transaction; there remain the questions to be answered: Did Balaam write down the speeches after their delivery, since they were not prepared by him, but are represented as Divine suggestions of the moment, almost independent of the prophet's spontaneity? Or were they transcribed by some Moabite or Midianite present, having retained them in his memory with all but miraculous fidelity? Again, in which language were they delivered? In the classical Hebrew in which we possess them, or in some Mesopotamian or Aramaic dialect? And how did one who was not a Hebrew attempt and contrive to write in a spirit so thoroughly and so distinctively Hebrew?

Some of these questions engaged even Jewish writers in early times, without, however, being by them advanced towards an acceptable conclusion. Thus Josephus characteristically praises Moses for his impartiality and truthfulness in not appropriating to himself this beautiful composition, as he might easily have done without fear of detection, but setting it down in the name of Israel's enemy, and thus securing for Balaam eternal fame. But then the historian dismisses the matter with the wavering remark: 'Let everyone think of these points as he pleases.'^b Philo, likewise touching hardly more than the outskirts of the subject, evidently supposes that Balaam pronounced his speeches in Hebrew, for he believes—and this view has been gravely repeated by later writers in a hundred forms—that 'Balaam, *without at all understanding the words which he uttered*—spoke

^a xxii. 22-35.

^b *Josephus*, *Antiq.*, IV. vi. 13.

everything that was put into his mouth;’ for ‘God throughout guided his speech and governed his tongue, so that his own words were unintelligible to him.’^a This expedient is still more clearly insisted upon in the Talmud and the Midrashim by maintaining that God directed Balaam’s language ‘as a man directs animals by attaching an iron bit to the bridle, and forces them to go wherever he pleases;’^b it has been repeated by many modern writers, who pointedly observe that ‘God controlled Balaam’s articulation of speech not otherwise than He managed those of his ass;’^c and it has been eloquently developed by high-minded critics and scholars into such doctrines as these: ‘The prophet, even if humanly intent upon a perversity, is compelled by God to say the very opposite, so that God, after His own will, turns the word in his mouth;’^d or expressed with more subtle delicacy: ‘The Divine message, irresistibly overpowering Balaam’s baser spirit, and struggling within him, was delivered in spite of his own sordid resistance.’^e Leaving this matter to the verdict of reason and common sense, we must further ask: Who, in the time of Moses, furnished a copy of Balaam’s speeches to the Hebrews, from whom, it might be supposed, they would have been kept with the most scrupulous care, as nothing could so powerfully stimulate their courage in the warfare supposed to be imminent? The same difficulty applies to the suggestion, that Moses borrowed the whole piece from the ‘Annals of the Moabites.’^f How were these documents accessible to

^a *Philo*, Vit. Mos., ii. 49, 51, Opp. ii., pp. 123, 125.

^b *Talm.*, Sanhedr. 105b; *Midr. Rabb.*, Num. xx. 8, 10, עיקם פיו כאדם שנותן כלינום, ופיקמו וכי בפני הבהמה וכי. *Shim.*, § 767; *Rushi* on Num. xxiii. 16. ומה היא השימה הזאת וכי, etc.

^c With reference to Ps. xxxii. 9.

^d *Ewald*, Jahrbuecher, viii. 16, ‘so dass Gott ihm wie im Munde noch das Wort umdrehe.’

^e *Stanley*, Jewish Church, i. 193.

^f *Jerusalem*, Betrachtungen über die vornehmsten Wahrheiten der Religion, iv. 1, pp. 382, sqq., and others.

just what he indicates in a

Moses? and were they written in Hebrew? for no one will seriously contend that Balaam's oracles, in which every shade of expression is important, are translations. A great divine^a has endeavoured to answer the question, 'How did Israel hear of the prophecy?' by the counter-questions, 'Was it not heard in Moab, and was not Israel encamped before Moab? Did not Balaam live in the eastern mountain? And did he not perish by the hands of Israel?' But all this does not touch the difficulty. No Moabite would have communicated those oracles to the Hebrews, and these had no intercourse with Balaam. Yet even this has been confidently asserted and speciously supported, and conjecture has reared the following structure. When Balaam, it is urged, found his ambition and avarice unsatisfied among the Moabites, he tried his chances with the Hebrews, to whose gratitude he believed he had acquired a right. He made his way into their camp, but was coldly received by Moses, who thoroughly understood his impiousness. He gave, however, to the elders of the Hebrews, every information necessary for the composition of the whole of this section. Or combining several anterior hints, some surmise, as an alternative, that Balaam, filled with intense hatred against the Hebrews, who had caused him to lose signal honours and rewards, repaired at once into the camp of their enemies, the Midianites, and fell fighting on their side: thus his prophecies came into the possession of the Israelites, and were, from the foreign tongue in which they were written, rendered by Moses into Hebrew. It is indeed admitted that these circumstances are nowhere alluded to in the Bible, but they are maintained to possess 'the highest moral or psychological probability,' since Balaam would surely not have allowed an oppor-

^a Herder, *Geist der Ebraischen Poesie*, ii. 184.

tunity, apparently so promising, to pass without profit to his selfishness.^a Is it necessary to assail aerial fabrics, which a breath suffices to demolish? It is enough to point out, that they rest upon the imaginary foundation of Balaam's wicked ambition and avarice. Why should Moses have coldly received a man who had spoken of Israel with such sincere enthusiasm, had, for their sake, renounced rewards and distinctions, and had braved the fretful king's vexation and anger? And would not the Hebrews, in acknowledgment of his services, have taken every care to shield him from injury?

12. THE AUTHOR.

THE only possible conclusion is, therefore, that the Book of Balaam is the production of some gifted Hebrew, who, availing himself of popular traditions, employed them as a basis for conveying his views regarding Israel's greatness and mission by means of prophecies skilfully interwoven with the story transmitted from earlier ages.

It is not unlikely that these chapters were composed as part of some larger conception. Like many other prophets, the author may have devoted himself to historiography, and his work may, with the exception of this precious fragment, have been lost like the histories of the prophets Nathan, Gad, and Isaiah, and the prophecies of Ahijah the Shilonite and Iddo the seer,^b and many other books.^c

But the author is not the Jahvist, nor the Elohist, nor the 'theocratic' writer, and certainly not the final compiler or redactor of the Book of Numbers, who blended

^a *Hengst.*, Bil., 217 *sqq.*; *Baumgart.*, Pentat., ii. 378; *Kurtz*, Gesch. des Alt. Bund., ii. 503; *Vaihinger* in Herzog's Real-Enc., ii. 237; *Reinke*, Beitræge, iv. 218, 219; *Langé*, Bibelwerk, ii. 308, 310, 317;

Can. Cook's Holy Bible, on xxii. 28; *Koehler*, Lehrbuch der Bibl. Gesch. des Alt. Test., i. 326; etc.

^b 1 Chron. xxix. 29; 2 Chron. ix. 29; xii. 15; xxvi. 22.

^c See Comm. on Gen., p. 85.

and harmonised the Levitical narrative with the Levitical legislation.^a All the ordinary criteria fail in the present instance, and if mechanically applied, lead inevitably to erroneous inferences.^b This portion, which is *sui generis*, was by the compiler of the Book found in circulation; he saw that it admirably illustrated his own ideas concerning Israel's election and glorious destiny; and he had no difficulty in assigning to it a place in the great work of Hebrew antiquities.^c For as true art, free from conventional restrictions and narrow tendencies, and rising into the sphere of a common humanity, finds everywhere a ready welcome, and is enjoyed by all pure minds alike, the story of Balaam and Balak is not strange or incongruous even as a part of the specifically national and priestly Book of Numbers.

13. BALAAM'S IDENTITY.

We may pause for a moment to refer to a subject, to which some have, perhaps, attached too much importance.

^a Even Knobel (l. c. p. 127) admits that, though many arguments point to the Jahvist, the latter cannot be considered as the author, since the piece 'abounds in peculiarities both of matter and style.'

^b Thus they have given rise to the almost paradoxical opinion that the tradition concerning Balaam, upon which this section is founded, was the later one, while the more unfavourable accounts given in subsequent portions of Numbers are of earlier date (so Knobel, l. c., pp. 125-127, and many others): we have tried to prove the contrary from the natural laws of historical development (see *supra*, pp. 34-38). If, indeed, the statements in Num. xxxi. 8, 16, are from the Elohist, this would, according to the most recent

results, only be an additional proof of their later date. Some (as Schultz, *Alttestamentliche Theologie*, i. 88, 89), seem disposed to attribute both accounts indiscriminately to the Elohist—that is, to Ewald's 'Author of the Book of Origins,' the alleged foundation of the present Pentateuch and of the Book of Joshua—which is an abandoned view; while Ewald himself traces this section to 'the fifth narrator of the *Urgeschichten*,' the author of Isaac's blessing (*Gesch. des Volk. Isr.*, ii. 219, *sqq.*; *Jahrbuecher*, viii. 3, *sqq.*; see notes on xxii. 5-14; comp. also Schrader in Schenkel's *Bibel-Lexic.*, ii. 455; *Kuenen*, *Relig. of Isr.* ii. 158, 182-200; etc.).

^c See, however, notes on xxii. 2-4, *Phil. Rem.*

Whether the Biblical Balaam is an historical personage or not, appears to be of very subordinate moment. Apart from the literary and historical value of his prophecies, our interest centres chiefly in the fact that, inspired by Israel's God and pronounced in His name, those speeches are put into the mouth of a pagan seer. The identity of this favoured man does not concern the essence of the Book of Balaam, although we are justified in supposing that the author's genius, which is throughout so wonderfully manifest, doubtless chose a fit character for his oracular utterances. Unless a free and absolute fiction is assumed, such a character could only be considered suitable, if his name and life, familiar to the people through old tradition, were in their minds associated with famous displays of prophetic oratory going back to remote ages. That the seer was a contemporary of the author cannot be allowed, as in this case the unhistorical character of the story would at once have been betrayed. But this objection applies to the hypothesis which has repeatedly been proposed of late, that Balaam is identical with the well-known Arabic fabulist Lokmân, of whom the Koran remarks, that 'God bestowed wisdom' on him, and whom it credits with the purest form of monotheism;^a who is said to have written ten thousand maxims and parables, 'each of which is more precious than the whole world;' and in reference to whom the Arabic adage is still current, 'Nobody should presume to teach anything to Lokmân.'^b This writer is considered to have lived in David's time, and was, therefore, coeval with our author; for all that is related of another and much earlier Lokmân, an Arabic diviner of the tribe of Ad, who is supposed to have reached an age of seven times eighty years, and to have been a nephew

^a *Koran*, xxxi. 11, 12, 'Give not a partner unto God,' etc.

^b Comp. *Freitaqii* Proverbia, i. 235, 250, 401; ii. 698.

or cousin of Job, or a great-nephew of Abraham, is nothing but idle legend. It cannot be denied that several plausible coincidences seem to lend some support to the conjecture of Balaam's identity with the younger Lokmân. The name^a signifies in Arabic 'the devourer,' as Balaam does in Hebrew;^b for it is narrated that the former was not more conspicuous for wisdom than voracity.^c Lokmân's father was *Bâura*,^d as Balaam's father was *Beor*.^e Lokmân is by Arabic writers counted among the descendants of Nahor, Abraham's brother, who lived in Mesopotamia, as Balaam did; although he is more generally described as an Abyssinian slave who, sold into Canaan during David's reign, was in personal intercourse with this king, adopted the religion of the Hebrews, and was buried in Ramlah or Ramah, amidst seventy prophets of Israel. In a Hebrew Book of Enoch,^f the statement is found that, in the language of the Arabs, Balaam was called Lokmân.^g However, all these analogies are not conclusive. The basis on which the conjecture mainly rests, is the assumption that, as the Koran mentions 'nearly all' the persons named in the Pentateuch, it is not likely to have omitted Balaam, and that, as Balaam and Lokmân have etymologically the same meaning, they are really the same person.^h It is needless

^a لقمان.

^b See p. 29.

^c According to Wahl (Koran, p. 385), however, لقمان means 'shrewd observer and counsellor.'

^d باعورا.

^e בעור.

^f ספר חנוך; comp. *Sengelmann*, *Mischle Sandabar*, 1842.

^g For the word לוקמין, which occurs in that Book, is supposed to

be a corruption of לקמן. Comp. *D'Herbelot*, *Biblioth. Oriental.*, pp. 516-518; *Roediger*, *Hall. Liter. Zeit.*, 1843, No. 95, pp. 151, *sqq.*; *Derenbourg*, *Fables de Loqman le Sage*, pp. 5-10, and *Journ. Asiat.*, xi., 1867, pp. 91-94; *Wahl*, *Koran*, pp. 385, 692; *Knobel*, *Numeri*, p. 126; etc.

^h Comp. *Derenb.*, *Fables de L.*, pp. 6, 7: Bal. is 'la sagesse humaine qui voudrait renier la révélation Divine.'

to point out the precarious nature of the inference drawn from the silence of the Koran;^a and as to the etymology, it is difficult to see an affinity between a great seer and 'a voracious eater.'^b The same traditions which make Lokmân a contemporary of David, represent him also as a contemporary of Pythagoras and the teacher of Empedocles, and even make him identical with Æsop.^c They record, moreover, expressly and all but unanimously, that he is to be regarded as a sage (*hakim*), but not as a prophet (*nabi*);^d and yet, if any point of comparison between the Hebrew and the Arab is at all to be insisted upon, it is the reputation of prophet enjoyed by Balaam—of a prophet so eminently endowed with supernatural gifts, that the king of Moab could say: 'I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed;'^e and that a great Hebrew writer could attribute to him sublime utterances describing events of a distant future.^f

^a However, Mohammedan doctors generally refer to Balaam that much discussed passage in the Koran (vii. 174, 175), 'Relate to them also the history of him to whom we gave our signs, but who departed from them, wherefore Satan followed and seduced him . . . he inclined to the earth and obeyed his own desires: he was like a dog who always puts out his tongue, whether you drive him away or let him alone' (comp. *Sale*, Koran, p. 135). These remarks would certainly not apply to Lokmân, but agree fully with the spirit of the interviews concerning Balaam.

^b About the probable meaning of the name בַּלְאָם see notes on xxii. 2-4. Hitzig (*Gesch. des Volk. Isr.*, i. 226), with his usual delight in uncommon combination, considers

Lokmân—or Balaam—an *Indian*, identifying the name with the Etruscan *Lucumo*, which is the Sanscrit *Lokamâna*, the seer.

^c Comp. *Maxim. Planudes*, Æsop.

^d Comp. *Beidhawi*, *Comm. on Koran*, l. c.

^e Num. xxii. 6.

^f If we may estimate Lokmân's abilities from the little collection of Arabic fables which bear his name, and which, doubtful in origin and date, are indifferent and comparatively late imitations of Æsop and Syntipas, he little deserves the distinction, so eagerly claimed for him, of being considered capable of composing prophecies like those of Balaam. It is enough to mention two curious suggestions—one very old, that Balaam is the Elihu of the

14. ISRAEL AND THE BOOK OF BALAAM.

It is true, no other Hebrew prophet ever spoke of Israel in terms of such unalloyed approval and enthusiasm. All public teachers, from the earliest down to the latest, inveighed bitterly against Israel's vices and misdeeds, their idolatry and constant rebellion.^a Is there among them one who calls the Hebrews, without reserve and without qualification, a people all of whom are 'righteous?'^b Is there one who declares, without mingling with his praise a shade of reproach, 'God beholdeth not iniquity in Jacob?'^c The Hebrew nation is, in this Book of Balaam, indeed idealised. It is so beloved by God, that it resists all imprecations, which recoil upon those who dare to utter them;^d while blessings once pronounced are unchangeably beneficent, and bless those also by whom they are invoked.^e The Hebrews require no arts of soothsaying and magic, since they receive from God Himself all needful revelations.^f Thus placed under His watchful protection, they are without an equal upon the earth, and to be compared to no other nation.^g They enjoy peace and comfort and abundance.^h Undaunted and unconquerable,ⁱ they form a well-established kingdom, ruled by glorious sovereigns, triumphing over mighty

Book of Job; and the other recently proposed, that he is the first king of Edom, Bela the son of Beor (Gen. xxxvi. 32; so *Noeldeke*, Untersuchungen, p. 87, who has 'not the slightest doubt' as to the correctness of his conjecture, because Jerome mentions, in Moab, two towns *Dannaba*, supposed to correspond with דַּנְבָּה, the residence of Bela: but the Balaam of our Book is a Mesopotamian or Aramaean, and neither an Edomite, nor a Moabite, nor a

Midianite, as has been variously assumed to support some pre-conceived theory.

^a See notes on xxiii. 7-10, 18-24.

^b xxiii. 10, יִשְׂרָאֵל.

^c xxiii. 21.

^d xxiii. 8; xxiv. 9b.

^e xxiii. 19, 20.

^f xxiii. 23.

^g xxiii. 9, 21; xxiv. 1, 19.

^h xxiv. 5-7.

ⁱ xxiii. 24; xxiv. 9.

foes, and rising through their fall.^a In a word, no stranger can wish for himself a more enviable lot than to share that of Israel.^b

There are, indeed, in other prophetic works also, glowing descriptions of a time when the Hebrews 'shall not do evil nor act perversely,' and when they shall live in undisturbed prosperity and the full knowledge of God under a wise and powerful monarch.^c But all those descriptions refer to a future more or less remote, or are presented as 'Messianic' hopes, with which faithful patriots desired to comfort their contemporaries in times of despondency and oppression. The Book of Balaam, on the contrary, portrays a happy present. God's love and the people's piety, the power of the nation and the happiness of individuals, are realities; they are not objects of sanguine expectation, but of secure possession; and no shadow of grief or lament darkens the joyous serenity and brightness in the picture of Israel's privileged destiny. Not merely does the Hebrew writer, with peculiar fitness, put into the foreign seer's mouth only praises of the Hebrews, to show that, however grave and numerous the failings may be which their own leaders are compelled to reprove, they are spotless in the stranger's eye; but they are indeed spotless, because they are God's chosen people, and deserve their election by their virtue and righteousness. Our author is not singular in distinguishing between the real and the ideal Israel. Another and much later prophet exalts in the 'servant of God' that nobler portion of the people, which proves worthy of its great mission.^d But drawn in a time

^a xxiv. 7b, 8b, 17. ^b xxiii. 10.

^c Comp. Isa. ix. 5, 6, 9; xi. 1-10; Jer. xxiii. 5, 6; Hos. ii. 20-25; Ze'h. iii. 8-10; etc.

^d Isaiah xli. 8-20; xlii. 1-4; xlix. 1-4; lii. 13-14; liii. 12, etc.; comp. *Gesenius* and *Knobel* in loc.; see *Comm.* on Levit. i. pp. 296, 297.

of political misfortune, this servant of God, persecuted and suffering, bears the guilt of many; whereas in this Book, the whole of Israel participates alike in the fear of God and in worldly happiness.^a How great and remarkable must have been the age which could produce such a work! The proud consciousness of a special mission was possible without engendering a baneful exclusiveness. The guides and teachers, while cherishing the hope that a pure worship of Jahveh was taking root in the people's hearts, considered that other nations also knew and revered Israel's God. Secure in His grace and direction, they were certain that He did not confine His revelation to them alone, but readily granted it to the pure and noble of all races. And in addition to this freedom and largeness of mind, they enjoyed a political existence well-guarded and honoured, and an intellectual culture which had almost attained that highest standard which blends simplicity and elevation.

15. ANALOGY OF THE BOOK OF RUTH.

CONSIDERABLE light is thrown upon this story of Balaam by an analogous and hardly less remarkable work of the Old Testament—the Book of Ruth. In literary excellence, both may, on the whole, be regarded as equal. The Book of Ruth is perhaps as decidedly the most perfect idyl of antiquity, as the Book of Balaam is the most skilful combination of epic composition and prophecy ever achieved. Both in the one and the other, the scene is partially laid in Moab, and some of the principal figures are Moabites. And lastly, both works originated about the same time, and, what is more important still, *both breathe the same spirit*. Is this indeed the case, it

^a See notes on xxiii. 7-10; 18-24.

might be asked in surprise? Does not the tendency of both appear wholly antagonistic in the cardinal point? Are not, in this section, Israel and Moab arrayed against each other in strong hostility,^a whereas the Book of Ruth exhibits them in completest harmony? The reply is, however, obvious: that circumstance is *not* the cardinal point; for that concerns the two countries merely in their external and ever changing political relations, which depended on multifarious accidents in the distribution of power and the personal disposition of rulers. The most prominent feature is that spirit of liberty and equality which pervades the Book of Ruth as it pervades the Book of Balaam. The distinction between Hebrew and Gentile is, in both, all but effaced. In the one, a pious and affectionate Moabite woman is delineated with the same impartial love and truth, as, in the other, a highly-gifted and God-inspired Mesopotamian prophet. It is the object of the Book of Ruth to trace the origin of Israel's most glorious king from the devoted Moabitess, of whom the Hebrew women in Bethlehem said, that she was better to her bereaved Hebrew mother-in-law than seven sons.^b The author lived at a time when marriages with foreigners were not yet considered an abomination,^c and when surely it would have been impossible to frame or to enforce the rigorous command: 'An Ammonite and a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to their tenth generation shall they not enter for ever;'^d for King David was the third in descent from Ruth.^e We are

^a xxii. 3, 6, xxiv. 14-17.

^b Ruth iv. 15.

^c See Comment. on Levit. ii. pp. 354 *sqq.*

^d Deut. xxiii. 4.

^e iv. 17, 21, 22. Jewish tradition makes Balak the ancestor of Ruth

through Eglon, the Judge, whom it regards as the grandson of that king (*Talm. Sanh. 105b*), so that, according to that conception, David would still more fully and more strikingly represent the union of the Moabite and the Hebrew.

inclined to conclude that the Book of Ruth was written *before* David's terrible war against the Moabites. These had been subdued by Saul,^a and appear, after that time, to have long lived with the Hebrews in amicable intercourse. Their king certainly was well-disposed towards David, who, when compelled to flee before Saul, entrusted to him his parents for protection.^b Besides Moab, Bethlehem is exclusively the scene of the Book, which neither mentions nor alludes to Jerusalem. The descendants of Ruth and Boaz, on the other hand, are not enumerated beyond David, since the list does not include even his illustrious son Solomon. The Book may, therefore, have been composed at the period when David was still dwelling in Hebron as the king of Judah, and yet was already sufficiently famous and conspicuous to call forth such a genealogical narrative. But even *after* his sanguinary victories over the Moabites, a work like that would by no means have been impossible. Conquered tribes in those times recovered their strength with incredible rapidity, and political feuds were often forgotten within the same generation. Indeed we find among the later military chiefs of David, besides other foreigners, also 'Jithmah the Moabite.'^c

We are thus justified in considering the Book of Ruth, like the Book of Balaam, as a testimony to that lofty spirit of toleration and common brotherhood which, in the youthful and vigorous times of David, animated Israel, and which, supported and nourished by that literary genius and refinement manifest in both works, might have led to the fairest fruits of a universal humanity, had not, too soon afterwards, national com-

^a 1 Sam. xiv. 47.

^b 1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4.

^c יִתְמָה הַמֹּאבִּית, 1 Chron. xi. 46 ;
comp. *Noeldeke*, *Die Amalek.*, p. 20.

plications and calamities tempted and led the minds of the people into a different and more solitary path.^a

16. FAME AND CHARACTER OF THE BOOK.

IT is not surprising to find that the Book of Balaam soon attained a great celebrity, and was ever respected as a high authority. In the last address of Jacob,

^a It is difficult to understand how the conjecture could gain ground that the Book of Ruth was written at a very late period, at a time 'when the national life of Israel had already ceased,' during the exile, or even in the age of Nehemiah (so *Ewald*, *Bertheau*, *Geiger*, *Ursehrift*, pp. 49-52, 299, *Meier*, *Schrader*, and others). The principal argument adduced by the advocates of this view is derived from the words in Ruth iv. 7, וְזֹאת לְפָנִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, which they translate, 'and this was formerly the custom in Israel.' But even if this version should be correct, and if the term לְפָנִים does here not rather mean 'already in' or 'from olden times,' so that the custom still existed in the author's age, as seems to be confirmed by the addition immediately following, וְזֹאת הַתְּעוּדָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, 'and this is the custom in Israel;' we might justly object that in the three or four generations which elapsed between the time of Ruth and the reign of David, customs may have considerably changed. However, even if the Book included many other obscure or ambiguous phrases besides this one, they would have no weight whatever in the face of that tone and spirit of antiquity which characterise every

single trait and incident of the story. It is enough to urge again the fact that marriages with foreigners are not held to be reproachful, and that there is, in the whole narrative, no vestige of an attempt at palliating such an alliance in the case of David's ancestors; in addition to which we may point to the markedly archaic character of the language (*e.g.*, נְעָרִים, in ii. 21, used instead of נְעָרוֹת, comp. vers. 8, 22, 23; the anomalous combination שְׂתֵיהֶם (i. 19), applying to Naomi and Ruth (see Grammar, § xxii. 1. 3, 6); though we would lay no stress on such forms as שְׂמִתִּי and יְרֵדְתִּי, iii. 3, 4, instead of שְׂמִתָּ and יְרֵדְתָּ, as they occur in later compositions also (comp. Gram., § xxviii. 1. a). Bleek, (*Einleitung*, p. 354) admits at least that the Book was written before the legislation of Deuteronomy, and Noeldeke (*Alttestam. Liter.*, p. 45) that it was composed during the rule of the house of David; while Keil (*Einleitung*, p. 437) places it in the reign of this king or shortly after it. [We may here remind the reader that, in references to our Hebrew Grammar, the common or Arabic numbers of sections point to the First Part, the Roman numbers to the Second Part of that work.]

written in the time of the divided kingdom,^a some passages are imitated, and some almost verbally incorporated; they are those which describe the people's strength and majesty, and are, in the later production, applied to Judah, then the most powerful tribe.^b Isaac's blessing,^c composed in the ninth century, seems altogether to have been constructed on the model of these prophecies, with which it coincides in the main idea of Israel's inalienable election, shielded by God's blessing for ever, and touched by no curse.^d In reference to Balaam's speeches, the prophet Micah is in full agreement with our author.^e Other prophets afford proofs how much their views on human life and happiness were moulded on utterances of Balaam.^f It is not improbable that the important and significant words in the Jahvistic records of the Pentateuch, 'I will bless those that bless thee, and curse him that curses thee,'^g are borrowed from this section.^h Jeremiah, in his oracle on Moab, reproduces Balaam's chief prediction with respect to the same people.ⁱ And lastly, considering the force and sublimity of these prophecies, 'the star' which 'cometh out of Jacob,' could not fail to be raised into a Messianic type.^k

And, indeed, this Book of Balaam is invested with an

^a See Comm. on Gen., pp. 722-724.

^b Comp. Num. xxiii. 24, xxiv. 9, and Gen. xlix. 9; Num. xxiv. 17, and Gen. xlix. 10.

^c Gen. xxvii.

^d See notes on xxii. 5-14.

^e Mic. vi. 5; see *supra*, pp. 4, 34; comp. also Mic. vii. 14, and notes on xxiii. 7-10.

^f Hab. i. 3, 13; see notes on xxiii. 18-24.

^g Gen. xii. 3.

^h xxiv. 9.

ⁱ Comp. xxiv. 17, and Jer. xlviii. 45, 47; see notes on xxiv. 15-17.

^k xxiv. 17; see notes on xxiv. 14-17; comp. also xxiv. 3, and 2 Sam. xxiii. 1, see notes on xxiv. 3-9; xxiv. 10-14, and Amos vii. 10-17, see notes on xxiv. 10-14; xxiv. 18, 19, and Obad. 17-19; xxiv. 21, and Obad. 3, 4, Jer. xlix. 16. It would, therefore, be hardly correct to maintain that Balaam—that is, the author of these prophecies—'left no enduring mark on the history of the Jewish Church.'

uncommon originality, which takes a powerful hold upon all readers, and for which there is no exact parallel in the whole of the Old Testament. The functions of Hebrew prophets were sufficiently multifarious, but no seer of Israel was ever employed for such an office as Balaam. We have instances of prophets being consulted with regard to the issue of military expeditions,^a and we have many instances of pious men interceding for others by prayer, or pronouncing blessings and curses, the effects of which were considered infallible.^b But there is no other example of a prophet who, requested to pronounce a definite and prescribed speech, is forced, 'heav'n controll'd,' to express the very opposite again and again. There is, in the whole tenor of the Book, something peculiarly mysterious, which may perhaps be best described by the Greek term *δαιμόνιον*. That singular impression is strengthened, if it is not partly created, by the disposition and conduct of Balak. To him the Pharaoh of the Exodus, among all the Old Testament characters, bears the greatest resemblance. The king of Egypt rises against the God of Israel, the king of Moab against Israel, God's people. Both employ magicians; the former, to prove his own gods of equal power with the God of the Hebrews; the latter, to overcome the Hebrews by any god the enchanter might choose to invoke. The one asks, at the beginning of the struggle, 'Who is the Lord whose voice I should obey to let Israel go?'^c and is finally annihilated by His power; the other, imagining that he can vanquish God's elected people by sorcery, is fated to hear, from the lips of his own chosen instrument,

^a See 1 Ki. xxii. 5-28; 2 Chron. xviii. 5-27; 2 Ki. iii. 11; comp. 1 Sam. xxiii. 2, 4, 10, 11; xxx. 8; etc.

^b See notes on xxii. 5-14; Comm. on Gen., pp. 720-722; on Levit. i. p. 301.

^c Exod. v. 2.

that they are invincible through their extraordinary relation to that omnipotent God. In either case there are arrayed, on the one side, defiance and despair, and on the other, an awful power which shatters all resistance. But while Pharaoh's contest is accompanied by terrible trials and catastrophes, a grand repose is spread over this Book, in which even the subjugation of Moab is seen as an event of 'the distant future.'^a The one is intended as an historical picture, to represent a single though momentous episode; the other is designed to shadow forth, as it were typically, how God's love constantly watches over His people, demolishes the malignant schemes of their enemies, and by His immediate interposition even converts contemplated imprecations into unalterable blessings. It comprises the whole mission of Israel as the author had conceived it, and the whole career of Israel as far as he was able to survey it in his time. It is not history, but a wonderful amalgamation of poetical grace and prophetic fire.

17. LIMITS.

BUT *μηδὲν ἄγαν*. We would fain preserve calmness of judgment, even in the fervour of admiration; lest we resemble that Roman historian, who felt that, while relating ancient events, 'somehow his mind became antique,'^b so that he was inclined to accept reports simply because they were old.^c In our opinion, the main charm of the Book of Balaam lies, apart from the beauty of form, in that sincere universality, which, not satisfied with teaching the unity of all races theoretically, as it is taught often enough, makes it a living reality.

^a xxiv. 14, 17, באחרית הימים, |
see on this term notes in loc.

^b Antiquus fit animus.

^c Liv. xliii. 13.

But what is the *intrinsic character* of the religious notions pervading this section? How far do they stand the test of philosophic examination? In a word, how far have they permanent and absolute truth? We shall try to answer these questions plainly and impartially.

The Hebrew mind, however richly endowed, had its limits. Hebrew literature, however remarkable, is not free from grave deficiencies. The Hebrew mind was wanting in that 'dry light' of reason, which, undimmed by fancy or enthusiasm, penetrates into the depth and nature of things with sober discernment. The Hebrews, therefore, never advanced beyond the first rudiments in any science. They did not even produce a truly pragmatic history patiently tracing effect to cause. Unable to emancipate themselves from the charmed circle of theocratic conceptions, they knew no other standard of historical probability than the mechanical principle of retribution.^a The work which approaches nearest to philosophical speculation—the Book of Job—concludes with the negative result that man can fathom nothing;^b and the work which displays the greatest independence of thought—the Book of Ecclesiastes—moves in a scepticism so empty and incoherent that a later time deemed it necessary to supplement its teaching by some positive ideas, though these again remain within the old and narrow boundaries.^c The prophetic writings, which exhibit the Hebrew intellect in its brightest glory, reveal no less prominently its shades and failings. They are indeed unequalled for ardour and sublimity, noble aspiration and single-minded patriotism. But all these beautiful

^a See Comm. on Levit. ii. pp. 609, 610.

^b Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from

evil, that is understanding; Job xxviii. 28.

^c Eccles. xi. 9b; xii. 7, 13, 14, have been proved to be such additions.

qualities are blended with an alloy of self-illusion which, in a great measure, neutralises their value. The prophets did not hesitate to come forward as workers of miracles.^a Instead of offering their counsels and exhortations on their own authority, they represented them—not figuratively but literally—as the direct emanations of God, with whom they believed they had personal communion. They, consequently, described visions, to which it is impossible to attribute any reality.^b They had too much earnestness to introduce merely as an artistic creation what to them appeared *objective* truth, and they were not sufficiently prepared to appreciate the eternal reality of *poetic* truth. In their grandest vaticinations they indeed applied the teleological law, which, with far-reaching sagacity, connects means and end, and beholds in each epoch of history an organic link in the great chain of human development. They composed, therefore, predictions reflecting their ideal of the ultimate happiness of their own people and of mankind. But these prophecies were, for the most part, no more than soaring hopes and anticipations, magnificent and incomparable if presented as poetical pictures, but questionable and misleading when set forth as Divine utterances, and, severed from the safe ground of experience and reflection, involving a reversion

^a 2 Ki. ii. 19-22 ; iii. 17 ; iv. 32-35, 42-44 ; v. 10 ; vi. 6 ; etc.

^b See Comm. on Lev. i. pp. 439, 455. Not even the cautious theory of a recent critic (*Kuenen*, *Relig. of Isr.*, i. pp. 203-207), who grants that 'the conviction of being interpreters of Jahveh forced itself upon the prophets in a moment of ecstasy,' but supposes that their ecstasy was, as a rule, confined to that one occasion of installation, can materially alter the view above taken ; for if the

effects of one moment of visionary enthusiasm remained at work for years, the result is practically the same as if that state of transport had been permanently continued or constantly renewed. The visions, however, are distinct from symbolical acts, some of which were actually carried out (as Jer. xix. 1-13, etc.), while others were meant and understood as fictitious (as Hos. i. 2-9 ; Jer. xiii. 1-7 ; xxv. 15-29 ; Ezek. iv. v., etc.

of the order of nature. The hazy halo in which they are enveloped is rendered more perplexing and dangerous by their very grandeur and elevation ; and if we survey the history of the last three thousand years, as far as it was influenced by prophetic and Messianic writings, we are, in candour and truthfulness, compelled to admit that the dim indistinctness, which speaks as with a higher sanction, has cast many a gloomy shadow on the path of mankind—steep and rugged at best—and has, perhaps more than any other obstacle, contributed to delay that universal peace, goodwill, and brotherhood, which formed the noblest hopes of those noble minds.

Applying these tests to the Book of Balaam, we shall find that, as it is distinguished by all the admirable characteristics of prophetic literature, so it shares nearly all its doubtful features. The narrative professes to be simple history, and yet is charged throughout with superhuman elements ; and it describes, with infinite skill, the time of David, and yet takes every possible care to make the reader believe that it is describing the time of Moses. The author is evidently a man of the most earnest piety, and yet he does not scruple to make Balaam utter words which he contends were put into the seer's mouth by God. Balaam has constant intercourse with God as with a familiar, though superior, Being ; for ' God comes to Balaam ' in dreams, and Balaam ' goes to meet God ' by day in solitude ; God asks Balaam, in distinct words, special questions, and Balaam receives from God directions in terms equally explicit.* It is difficult to see how a pure conception of the spiritual nature of the Deity can thus be maintained. And, lastly, a prophet who, in the time of Moses, was able to

* xxii. 9-12, 20 ; xxiii. 3, 4, 15, 16 ; xxiv. 1.

predict a king to be born four centuries later, might as well be considered capable of predicting a teacher to be born after fourteen or fifteen centuries; and hence the 'star' that was to come out of Jacob, and the 'sceptre' that was to rise out of Israel in the distant future,^a were interpreted in the Messianic sense, and applied to one who surely did not 'smite the sides of Moab,' nor 'destroy all the children of tumult.' We need not, in this place, point out the strange devices which were rendered necessary to bring those terms of actual warfare and bloodshed into harmony with the most peaceful life and career;^b yet they are only a very small portion of the injury that has been wrought by the studied obscurity and deceptive form of these and other prophecies.

The highest boon of mankind is the calm balance of reason—the holy *Σωφροσύνη*—and no performance, however skilful, no genius, however dazzling, can counter-balance the fatal mischief which may be inflicted by straying from that Divine light.

18. ISRAEL AND MOAB.

IN conclusion we shall briefly sketch the relations between Israel and Moab down to David's time.

When the Hebrews, entering upon their expedition of conquest, advanced from the desert northward and westward, they doubtless intended to settle exclusively in Canaan proper, in the west of the Jordan.^c They desired to pass through the territory of the Amorites 'on the royal road,' in order to reach that point of the river where they meant to cross it. King Sihon's un-

^a xxiv. 17.

^b See notes on xxiv. 15-17.

^c Comp. *Joseph. Antiq.* IV. vi. 2.

Καὶ γὰρ οὐδ' ἐπέπυστο (Βάλακος) γῆν ἄλλην πολυπραγμονεῖν τοὺς Ἐβραῖους, ἀπηγορευκόςτος τοῦ Θεοῦ κ.τ.λ.

friendly refusal forced them to resistance; in the war that ensued they were victorious, and obtained large districts, to which, ere long, the land of the king of Bashan was added; and then all these provinces, abounding in excellent pastures, were assigned to the cattle-breeding tribes of Reuben and Gad as their permanent abodes,^a although it is very probable that, in the east of the Jordan as well as in the west, the heathen population was never expelled completely or from every part of the country.^b But the Hebrews neither made any acquisition in the territory of the Moabites, nor in that of the Ammonites and Edomites. On this point tradition was unwavering and uniform,^c although it fluctuated in some subordinate details.^d However, the proximity of the Israelites was by the Moabite king regarded with such terror,^e that he requested a strange seer to curse them.^f A hostile encounter was avoided,^g and the contact between the two nations seems to have been most fatal to the Hebrews themselves who, too easily tempted into the licentious habits and degrading worship of the Moabites, thenceforth tenaciously clung to the iniquities of Baal-Peor and Chemosh.^h

Not long after the occupation of Canaan, the Hebrews—or at least the southern and trans-Jordanic tribes—were

^a Num. xxi. 21–35; xxxii. 1–35; Deut. ii. 26–37; iii. 1–20; Josh. xiii. 7–31.

^b Comp. *Hitzig*, Die Inschrift des Mescha, p. 6. Gesenius (Commentar über den Jesaja, i. 503) calls the distribution of the east-Jordanic country among the Hebrew tribes, ‘to some extent, a dominion *in partibus infidelium*.’

^c Judg. xi. 15, 18; Deut. ii. 5, 9, 19, 37; comp. 2 Chron. xx. 10.

^d Comp. Deut. ii. 29 with xxiii. 5

and Judg. xi. 17, 18: according to the first passage, the Moabites allowed the Hebrews to pass through their land, and readily sold them provisions, according to the last two, they denied them both the one and the other.

^e Comp. Exod. xv. 15; Num. xxii. 3, 4; Deut. ii. 25.

^f Num. xxii. 5, 6, etc.

^g See *supra*, p. 5.

^h Num. xxv. 1, 2; Judg. x. 6; 1 Ki. xi. 5, 8.

attacked by Eglon, king of Moab, in conjunction with the Ammonites and the Amalekites. Overcome and made tributary, they bore the yoke for eighteen years, but were then delivered by the stratagem and valour of Ehud.^a Almost during the entire period of the Judges, the intercourse between Israel and Moab seems to have been both active and amicable, and frequently resulted in matrimonial alliances, as is sufficiently evident from the Book of Ruth. At the end of that period, however, the Moabites seem to have incurred the enmity of the Hebrews, for we learn that Saul attacked and defeated them.^b Nevertheless the king of Moab, not long afterwards, accorded to David's parents a secure asylum, since he favoured David either as the descendant of a Moabitess or as the rival of his adversary Saul.^c But this friendship was not of long duration. David, when king of Israel, found it necessary or advisable—the historical records are silent as to the cause—to undertake against the Moabites a military expedition, after the successful termination of which he treated them with excessive rigour, and imposed upon their country a heavy tribute.^d It is at this time that the Book of Balaam was probably composed.^e Up to that epoch nothing had happened to call forth a feeling of exceptional bitterness between the two nations. The Book, accordingly, although introducing Israel and Moab as foes, is free from that virulent hatred which suggested the repulsive legend of the origin of the Moabitish race, found in the Jahvistic narrative of Genesis;^f and it is

^a Judg. iii. 11–30; comp. 1 Sam. xii. 9.

^b 1 Sam. xiv. 47.

^c 1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4, 'אֲבִי דָוִד מוֹאבִּי וְאִמִּי מוֹאבִּי

^d 2 Sam. viii. 2, 12; comp. xxiii. 20; 2 Ki. iii. 4; Isai. xvi. 1; 1 Chr. xviii. 2.

^e See *supra*, p. 43.

^f Gen. xix. 37; comp. ix. 22.

equally free from that national aversion which is revealed in the injunctions of Deuteronomy, that not even in the tenth generation should Moabites be admitted into the Hebrew community.^a

It is beyond our present purpose to pursue the history of the Moabites further, and to show how, after having endured their dependence for more than a century, they rose against the increased oppression and new encroachments of Israel's kings Omri and Ahab, and at the death of the latter monarch (B.C. 897), revolted under their own ruler Mesha—to whom the inscription on the 'Moabite Stone' probably refers^b—and how, though not only maintaining their liberty against the united efforts of the Kings Jehoram and Jehoshaphat by a remarkable expedient, but wresting from the Israelites many towns,^c they were again reduced to subjection by Jeroboam II. (about B.C. 800), who restored the old boundaries of the kingdom; till, in the confusion of the Assyrian period, they completely re-established their freedom, as they were left unmolested by the eastern conquerors.^d Indeed the mutual animosity between Israel

^a Deut. xxiii. 4-7.

^b We say *probably*; for the differences between the account of the Inscription and that of the Bible are so great and striking, and the harmonising explanations that have been attempted are so little convincing, that a decided and final opinion can hardly yet be pronounced. The oppression and encroachments of Omri and his son are inferred from the Inscription, lines 4-6: עמרי מלך ישראל ויענו את מאב ימן רבן ויחלפה בנה ויאמר גם הא אענו את מאב . . . וירש עמרי את מהרבה וישב בה וכו'. This

state of tyranny, cannot, however, have lasted 'forty years,' since the period from the beginning of Omri's reign to the death of Ahab comprised hardly more than thirty years (B.C. 928-897); if the reading be correct, 'forty' must be taken as a round number, for 'many,' as is not unusual in Eastern literature (see Comm. on Gen. p. 185).

^c Moabite Inscription, lines 8-20.

^d 2 Ki. i. 1; iii. 4-27; xiv. 25; comp. 2 Chr. xx. 1-30; see Comm. on Lev. i. pp. 393, 394; comp. also Gesen. Comm. über den Jesa, l. c.

and Moab, which was exhibited in attack, insinuation, and invective, outlasted even the existence of the kingdom of Judah.^a Is it necessary to recall the severe menaces and judgments incessantly pronounced against Moab by the prophets from the ninth down to the sixth century, by Amos and Isaiah, Zephaniah and Jeremiah, Ezekiel and other seers in the time of the exile,^b and to prove that the subjection of Israel's enemies was never considered complete unless it included the humiliation of Moab?^c When the Hebrew tribes in the east of the Jordan were led away by Assyrian conquerors, the territory which they had inhabited between the rivers Arnon and Jabbok was eagerly seized by the exulting Moabites;^d and yet we find, after the return of the Jews from exile, that the two nations not only renewed their intercourse, but, more frequently than ever, concluded matrimonial alliances, which such earnest reformers as Ezra and Nehemiah found it necessary to check by the severest and most peremptory measures.^e Such were the difficulties of the attempt to separate the Hebrews, by distinctions of religion and law, from the neighbouring tribes, to which they were closely akin in race and language.^f

^a See 2 Ki. xiii. 20; xxiv. 2; Isai. xvi. 6; xxv. 11; Zephan. ii. 8, 10; Jerem. xlviii. 29, 30; Ps. lxxxiii. 7, etc. Comp. 2 Ki. xii. 21, and 2 Chr. xxiv. 26 (see *Geiger*, *Urschrift*, pp. 48, 49). See, however, Jer. xxvii. 3.

^b Amos ii. 1-3; Isai. xv., xvi.; Zephan. ii. 8-11; Jerem. ix. 26; xxv. 21; xlviii.; Ezek. xxv. 8-11; Isai. xi. 14; xxv. 10-12; comp. Ps. lx. 10; Dan. xi. 41.

^c Comp. Ps. lx. 6; lxxxiii. 7; Isai. xi. 14; xxv. 6-12.

^d Isai. xv., xvi.; comp. Jerem. xlix. 1-5.

^e Ezra ix. 1 *sqq.*; x. 1 *sqq.*; Neh. xiii. 1-3, 23. Comp. *Comm. on Genes.* pp. 424, 425; see also *infra*, notes on xxiv. 15-17.

^f Indeed, the Moabite dialect bore even a greater resemblance to Hebrew than the Phœnician, as is proved by King Mesha's Inscription, which, moreover, reveals many striking and surprising analogies of thought and conception common to the Moabites and the early Hebrews.

II.—TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY.

NUMBERS XXII.—XXIV.



I. INTRODUCTION. XXII. 1.

1. And the children of Israel removed, and encamped in the plains of Moab, on the other side of the Jordan, *opposite* Jericho.

Let us suppose that the Hebrews, continuing the course of their circuitous wanderings, had, in the fortieth year after their departure from Egypt, safely reached the region of Mount Hor on the *eastern* side of the mountain-chain of Seir, at last determined resolutely to advance to their final goal of Canaan proper from the east of the Jordan, by the only route that was open to them. In this district, where Aaron died, they were not separated by many stations from the highland of Mount Nebo, where Moses found his grave, and whence they hoped to reach the southern parts of the Promised Land without difficulty. Although the names of many of their resting places have disappeared, not a few have been preserved, which enable us to follow the track of the advancing people, in this last section of their journeys, with some accuracy.

Travelling from a point opposite Mount *Nebi Hôrân*, the Biblical *Hor*, northward, so as always to leave to the west the ridges of Seir, and consequently also the wonderful remains of *Wady Mûsa*, or Petra, the once renowned city of rocky caverns and tombs,^a we

^a Comp. Commentary on Genesis, pp. 478–481.

reach, in six or seven hours, the principal town of the district of *Esh-Shera*—*Shöbek*—which is situated on a hill presenting an extensive prospect, and doubly valued as a place of encampment on account of the abundant springs that rise at its base. Moving on in the same direction, and keeping by the old Roman road regularly paved with black stones and still in tolerable preservation, while in the east the pilgrims' way to Mecca (the *derb el-haulj*) is visible, we come, in another seven hours, to the ruins of *Ghurandel*, conspicuous by three volcanic peaks, and then, in about three hours more, to the village of *Buseira*, the *Bozrah* of the Bible, once an important Edomite settlement, now hardly comprising fifty wretched huts. After not much more than two hours, we reach, in a neighbourhood well watered and exceedingly fertile, the large hamlet of *Tufile*, probably the Hebrew *Tophel*, so eminent in early times that it was employed as a geographical landmark,^a and even at present distinguished as the residence of the chief of the district. Travelling from *Tufile* for four or five hours northward, past several villages and rocky heights, we come to the deep bed of the *Wady Siddiyeh* or *Gerali*, where begins the district of *Kerak*, or the territory of ancient *Moab*; and another journey of rather more than seven hours in the same direction leads us, through regions rich in springs and marked by picturesque variety, to the capital *Kerak* itself. This is the celebrated *Kir-Moab*^b or *Kir-Hareseth* of the Bible,^c both in earlier and in later ages the chief centre of the caravan traffic between Syria, Egypt, and Arabia, and, therefore, at all times an eagerly contested stronghold, as it was especially in the wars of the Crusaders, who occupied and fiercely defended it as the key of that country, till Saladdin brought it into his power after terrible sieges and assaults (A.C. 1188). From *Kerak*, the

^a Comp. Dent. i. 1.

^b Isai. xv. 1.

^c 2 Ki. iii. 25; Isai. xvi. 7; also *Kir-heres*, Isa. xvi. 11; xlvi. 31, 36.

northern path continues through a more open plain dotted by many ruins of old villages and towns, and after a four hours' stage, carries us to *Rabba*, the ancient *Rabbath Moab*, which, confounded with *Ar Moab*, was later called *Areopolis*. Always pursuing the Roman road, the mile-stones of which are, for the greatest part, still extant, and proceeding through a fertile country for about two hours northward, we behold, on our left hand, the isolated summit of *Djebel Shihân* and the village of *Shihân*, in which name it is easy to recognise that of the Amorite king *Sihon*, and in two hours more, passing through a highly luxuriant vegetation, we reach the rugged and most precipitous ravines of the *Wady Mâjib*, the Biblical river *Arnon*, where the present district of *El-Belka* commences, and beyond which, up to the *Wady Zerka*, the ancient river *Jabbok*, the early abodes of the Moabites had extended, before these districts were occupied by the Amorites. Advancing, for about one hour, in the north of *Wady Mâjib*, on a rough and difficult road, we arrive into a plain covered by piles of ruins which bear the name of *Arair*, the Scriptural *Aroër*, and then, in scarcely half an hour, we approach the northern extremity of the plain at *Dhîbbân*, the Hebrew *Dibon*, which was successively inhabited by Gadites and Reubenites, and which, of late, has again become famous by the discovery, within its old precincts, of king *Mesha's* 'Moabite Stone,' on which distinct mention is made of a considerable number of familiar Biblical towns.^a

Throughout the entire distance which we have just traversed from Mount Hor northward, Dibon is the first place which, in the completest Biblical account, is also introduced as an encamping station of the Hebrews, the interval between Hor and Dibon being filled up by the

^a See the numerous interpretations of the Inscription by Ganneau, De Vogüé, Ginsburg, Nöldeke, Hitzig, etc.; comp. also Zeitschr. d. D. M. G., xxiv., 1870, pp. 212 *sqq.*, 433 *sqq.*; xxv., 1871, pp. 149 *sqq.*, 463 *sqq.*, etc.; *Colenso*, Lectures on the Pentateuch, pp. 349-363, etc.

names of *Zalmouah*, *Punon*, *Oboth*, and *Ije-Abarim*, which is described as lying in 'the desert that is in the east of Moab,' or 'at the boundary of Moab,' and therefore near the Arnon.^a Although these resting-places cannot be identical with the Edomite or Moabite localities noticed in this sketch, as the Hebrews did not touch the territory of Edom and Moab, some of them were doubtless situated in a line parallel with, though more easterly than, those well authenticated localities.^b

A few additional stages within the mountain range of Abarim, which we have reached, will bring us to the point where the scene of Balaam's prophecies is laid. If, travelling from *Dhibân* in a north-westerly direction, we cross first the Roman road and then the small river *Heidân*, a tributary of the Arnon, we come, in rather more than two hours, to very considerable heaps of ruins, called by the natives *Kureiyôt*, and corresponding to the ancient *Kirjathaim*, or *Kirjath-huzoth*,^c and next, after about an hour's journey, we reach the ruins of *Attarus*, the old *Ataroth*, where the country, on the western side, can be surveyed beyond the Dead Sea as far as Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Mount Gerizim. In this region must have been the next station of the Hebrews specified in the Biblical list, viz., *Almon-Diblathaim*; and hence passing northward, partially through very grand and surprisingly wild scenery, over *Wady Zerka Maîn* and its deep valley, where the flora is almost tropical, and, leaving the far-famed hot mineral springs of *Calirrhoë* to the left, and the vast tracts of ruins at *Maîn* and *Madiyabeh*, the Hebrew *Baal Meon* and *Medebah*, to the right, a longer

^a Comp. Num. xxxiii. 37-45.

^b As the Hebrews marched from Hor first southward down to the Gulf of Akabah and then only, after having reached the eastern side of the mountain, proceeded northward (Num. xxi. 4), they must have

several times encamped west of Mount Seir. But the small number of stations given for those long routes is surprising. On conjectural identifications see *Palmer*, *The Desert of the Exodus*, ii., ch. 11.

^c Num. xxii. 39, קרית הצנות.

march brought the Israelites to the ‘*mountains of Abarim before Nebo*,’ a commanding peak in the ridges of *Mount Pisgah*, in ‘the wilderness of Kedemoth.’^a From hence they desired to proceed at once to the Jordan by turning to the north-west, and to cross that river near its influx into the Dead Sea. To accomplish this object, they required the permission of the Amorite king Sihon, who, not long before, had come into possession of these provinces, and who resided in *Heshbon* (the present *Heshbân*), only a little distance from Pisgah. Sihon, however, rejecting and resenting their request, marched against them with his whole army. The Hebrews, without breaking up their encampments before Nebo, went out to meet him, routed his troops, and conquered the land between the rivers Arnon and Jabbok. Never losing sight of the main end of the people’s wanderings, and anxious not to leave in their rear powerful enemies who might check their progress unawares, Moses sent from Nebo military detachments to the northern and north-western parts of the country for exploration and conquest, and particularly despatched a large force to oppose Og, the formidable king of Bashan, who, after a vain resistance, shared the fate of the other Amorite ruler. After having successfully carried out the task entrusted to them, the armed bands returned to the principal encampment in Nebo. Hence the entire host and all Israel next removed north-westward to ‘the plains of Moab;’ spread in a long line over that depressed tract of land^b which, partly well-watered and luxuriant in vegetation, extends along both sides of the Jordan and is, on its eastern bank, about four or five miles broad; and thus pitched their tents from Bethjesimoth, near the Dead Sea, northward to Abel-shittim, so that the chief or central part of the camp might well be described to have been ‘opposite Jericho.’^c

^a Comp. Deut. ii. 26.

^b *Arabah, El-kora*.

^c Comp. Num. xx. 22-29; xxi. 4,

10-13, 18-31; xxxiii. 37-49; Deut. i. 4; ii. 2, 3, 8, 9, 13, 18, 19, 24, 26, 30-36; iii. 27, 29; xxxiv. 1.

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.

CHAPTER XXII. 1.

REGARDING the events in this light, we are able to explain several difficulties. We can understand the statement that 'Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites' (xxi. 31, comp. Deut. iii. 29), while they were actually carrying on war even with distant tribes; and we can account for the fact that the list of stations in Chap. xxxiii., immediately after 'the mountains of Abarim before Nebo,' records the encampment 'in the plains of Moab opposite Jericho' (vers. 48, 49); for as the people, and probably a part of the army, remained behind in Nebo, no general stage between this place and the province of Bashan was to be entered. Thus, or similarly, the compiler of the Book of Numbers seems to have viewed the matter, or else he could not have incorporated, side by side with the narrative of Chap. xxi., the list of Chap. xxxiii., in which the absence of any station within the whole distance between Nebo and Edrei would be the more surprising, as the Hebrews did not even reach Edrei by the direct or shortest but by a tortuous route, as they first advanced northward to Jazer and then 'turned (וַיִּשְׁבֹּטוּ) and went up by the way of Bashan' (xxi. 32, 33; comp. Deut. iii. 1, וַיִּשְׁבֹּטוּ). But it is a very different question, which we cannot here discuss, whether that list and this narrative are really in harmony, or whether, if both imply different versions, the author of the list considered the conquest of the north-eastern part of Gilead to have been achieved in post-Mosaic times, and, for this reason, is silent about this district. The uncertain dimness of those early traditions is strikingly manifest in the conflicting accounts given of the Hebrew journeys even in the comparatively small distance between Hor and Beth-jesimoth near the Jordan—accounts which research will hardly ever succeed in harmonising, even if we could hope to identify all stations (comp. Num. xxi. 10–13, 18–20; xxxiii. 41–49; Deut. ii. 3, 8, 13, 14, 18, 19, 24). For the illustration of this narrative it is sufficient to follow, in the main, the completest and most careful list in Num. xxxiii.—There are several clear instances of partial

and separate campaigns analogous to those above conjectured. A selected force was sent by Moses against the Midianites, and after having executed their sanguinary commission, returned with the booty and the prisoners 'into the camp, to the plains of Moab, which are by the Jordan opposite Jericho' (xxxii. 3-12). Again, 'the children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, went to Gilead and took it, and dispossessed the Amorite who was in it' (xxxii. 39); which terms evidently involve an independent expedition of a part of one tribe (comp. Deut. iii. 15). Nor is it unlikely that the conquests in the north-eastern tracts were made under the leadership of Jair, another Manassite, to whose kinsmen those provinces were then assigned (xxxii. 41; Deut. iii. 4); for it is not clear from the narrative (xxi. 32-35) whether Moses accompanied the expedition or not (comp. ver. 32, 'And Moses sent men').

With regard to the term **מַעְבַּר לַיַרְדֵּן**, we may here add a few remarks to those made in another place (Comment. on Genes. p. 776). Though **עֵבֶר**, in connection with a river, originally means merely its bank (for the primary sense of the word is *side* or *surface*, comp. Exod. xxxii. 15), and though, therefore, if one of the banks is specially meant, **עֵבֶר** must be furnished with some distinctive qualification, such as **יָמָה** *westward* or **מִזְרָחָה** *eastward*, unless the connection excludes all doubt (as in Josh. ix. 1; 1 Sam. xxxi. 7); it is yet certain that the phrase **עֵבֶר הַיַרְדֵּן**, in the course of time, became, among the Hebrews, a fixed geographical term, meaning *the other side* or the *east* of the Jordan, since they considered the land west of that river as Canaan proper, and as their country *κατ' ἑξοχήν*, so much so that the two tribes and a half, which took up their abodes in the east, deemed it necessary to mark, in the most solemn manner, their connection with the other or western tribes (comp. Num. xxxii. 16-32; Josh. xxii. 9-34). Except, therefore, in the few passages where the context proves that the author is clearly conscious of speaking from the east-Jordanic point of view (as in Deut. iii. 20, 25), the words **עֵבֶר הַיַרְדֵּן**, if left without any qualification, must undoubtedly be understood to refer to the *eastern* territory (Deut. iii. 8; Josh. ii. 10; vii. 7; ix.

10; xiv. 3; xvii. 5; xxii. 4; xxiv. 8; Judg. v. 17; vii. 25; x. 8; xi. 18; 1 Sam. xxxi. 7; 1 Chron. xii. 37; comp. also עבר הים in 2 Chron. xx. 2, the eastern side of the Dead Sea); and so familiar did this usage become to the Hebrews, that we find those words occasionally employed with respect to the east-Jordanic land, even under the exceptional condition alluded to, viz., where the speakers distinctly imply that they are in the east of the Jordan (comp. Num. xxxii. 32, where the men of Reuben and Gad say in Gilead, 'We will pass over armed into the land of Canaan, but the possession of our inheritance shall be לְיַרְדֵּן מֵעֵבֶר,' that is, *in the east of the Jordan*; Num. xxxv. 10, 14, where Moses says in the plains of Moab, 'When you come over the Jordan into the land of Canaan' . . . you shall appoint three cities of refuge 'in the land of Canaan' and 'three לְיַרְדֵּן מֵעֵבֶר,' that is, *in the east of the Jordan*). At what period this usage established itself, cannot easily be determined; it is constant in the Books of Judges and Samuel; it was certainly common at the time when the people had developed their earliest traditions with some degree of consistency, and when they believed they had a double right to call themselves 'people of the other side' (עֵבֶרִים), because Abraham, the founder of their race, had emigrated from the other side of the Euphrates, and because their ancestors under Joshua had conquered Canaan by advancing from the other side of the Jordan; and after the deportation of the east-Jordanic tribes by the Assyrians, in the eighth century, Gilead was to the Hebrews, of course, a land 'on the other side of the Jordan.' Naturally, however, all this did not prevent historians from continuing to add, in political and geographical records, explicit designations of east and west, and such terms we find subjoined even in the latest Books, not only in Deuteronomy and Joshua, but also in the Chronicles (comp. 1 Chron. vi. 63, for the east לְיַרְדֵּן יָרְחוּ לְמִזְרַח הַיַּרְדֵּן; 1 Chron. xxvi. 30, for the west לְיַרְדֵּן מֵעֵרֶבָה). So much remains certain that, *in the age of Moses*, no Hebrew could employ the expression עֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן without some precise qualification, for the land east of the Jordan, as it is employed in our passage and elsewhere (for the words לְיַרְדֵּן מֵעֵבֶר are an explanation of

בְּעֶרְבֹת מוֹאָב, and not conversely); it could be so used only at a time when it might be supposed to be, in itself, intelligible to the reader (comp. the general phrase עַל יַרְדֵּן בְּעֶרְבֹת מוֹאָב יָרְחוּ, Num. xxxv. 1). Analogous to עֶבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן is the term עֶבֶר הַנְּהַר or עֶבֶר נְהַרָא, which is either the land west or east of the Euphrates, according as the standpoint is taken in Mesopotamia and Persia or in Canaan (Josh. xxii. 4, 7, 10, 11; xxiv. 3; 2 Sam. x. 16; 1 Ki. xiv. 15; Isa. vii. 20; Ezra iv. 10, 11, 20; v. 3, 6; vi. 6, 8, 13; Neh. ii. 7; 1 Chron. xix. 16).

The designation 'plains of Moab' (עֶרְבֹת מוֹאָב) points either to a very early or to a very late period. For according to Numbers and Deuteronomy, the Moabites had, before the arrival of the Hebrews in those countries, been deprived by the Amorites of all lands north of the Arnon (Num. xxi. 13, 26; Deut. iii. 8; Judg. xi. 18, etc.); with what right, therefore, could the tracts along the Jordan opposite Jericho be called 'plains of Moab'? The surprise is enhanced by the fact that this territory is, in some passages of Deuteronomy, even distinctly called 'the land of Moab' (אֶרֶץ מוֹאָב, Deut. i. 5; xxviii. 69; xxxii. 49; xxxiv. 5), and in Numbers (xxi. 20) 'Field of Moab' (שָׂדֵה מוֹאָב; comp. Gen. xxxvi. 35; 1 Chron. i. 46; Ruth i. 6; iv. 3). Now the same districts, up to the Jabbok, were soon afterwards conquered by the Hebrews, but were, after the deportation of the east-Jordanic tribes, re-occupied by the Moabites (see *supra*, p. 69), and could then *again* justly be called 'the plains of Moab' or 'the land of Moab.' It is certainly not impossible that these appellations lingered in the popular language even after they had ceased to be strictly applicable; but, considering the date and character of the different Books of the Pentateuch, we are inclined to consider the suggested view as more probable. This may also explain the singular fact that the situation of a place of encampment to the *east* of the Jordan should be described by a town to the *west* of that river: at the time of the composition of Deuteronomy and Numbers the land east of the Jordan was less familiar to the Hebrews, if it had not, in a great measure, ceased to interest them.—The combination יַרְדֵּן יְרֵחוֹ, found almost exclusively in the latest portions of Numbers (xxvi. 3, 63;

xxxi. 12; xxxiii. 48, 50; xxxiv. 15; xxxv. 1; xxxvi. 13; and besides only in Josh. xiii. 32; xvi. 1; xx. 8; 1 Chron. vi. 63), implies a pregnant use of the construct state—the ‘Jordan of Jericho’ being not that bank of the Jordan where Jericho lies, but that which is opposite this town. The novel conjecture that ‘the Jordan of Jericho’ denotes that part of the river which is near the Sea of Tiberias—this lake, seen from the east, having the appearance of the crescent of the moon (יְרִיחוֹ)—can only be upheld by a forced disarrangement of many geographical statements of the Bible (so *L. Noack*, *Von Eden nach Golgotha*, ii. pp. 236, 241, ‘der Jordan sein Mond;’ comp. *ibid.*, *Erläuterungen*, pp. 254, *sqq.*).—The two forms יְרִיחוֹ and יְרִיחֹ, for the town of Jericho, seem indeed to have been current at all times, although, apparently, the same authors did not use them promiscuously, but always the one or the other form. For we find יְרִיחוֹ constantly both in Deuteronomy and in Numbers, and in the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles; and יְרִיחֹ as constantly in Joshua, and generally likewise in the Books of Kings (written יְרִיחֹ in 1 Ki. xvi. 34; comp., however, 2 Ki. xxv. 5, יְרִיחוֹ; and thus also 2 Sam. x. 5; Jer. xxxix. 5; lii. 8). But, on the whole, it may be observed that יְרִיחוֹ is the *later* form, and may, by the revisers of the Pentateuch, have been adopted, in the few instances of Deuteronomy (xxxii. 49; xxxiv. 1, 3), for the sake of uniformity. On no account is it possible to found, on the relative use of יְרִיחוֹ and יְרִיחֹ, an argument in favour of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (as has been endeavoured by *Hengstenberg*, *Bileam*, pp. 256, 257).—The time spent by the Hebrews in their journeys from Mount Hor to the plains of Moab cannot have been very long; for in the beginning of the fifth month they were in Hor (xxxiii. 38), and in the beginning of the eleventh month, in the same year, Moses is said to have delivered or begun his exhortations (Deut. i. 3), and within these six months fall all the wars in the eastern districts, the sojourn before Nebo, and the encampment opposite Jericho. From the outlines above attempted it will be seen that the distance from the east of Mount Hor to the plains of Moab may be accomplished in fifty-five to sixty hours.

2. COUNCILS. XXII. 2-4.

2. And Balak, the son of Zippor, saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. 3. And Moab was very much afraid of the people, because they *were* many, and Moab had a horror of the children of Israel. 4. And Moab said to the elders of Midian, Now will this host devour all *that is* round about us, as the ox devours the grass of the field. And Balak, the son of Zippor, *was* king of Moab at that time.

The Hebrews had no more hostile intentions against the land of Moab and Ammon, than they had previously shown against that of Edom, because all those districts were inhabited by tribes closely kindred to themselves. But it seems that the Moabites attached no faith to the invaders' friendly assurances, and perhaps even refused to sell to them provisions.^a They had indeed every reason for desiring a peaceful arrangement, since but shortly before, during the preceding reign, they had been materially weakened by Sihon, king of the Amorites, who had taken from them their most populous and most fertile provinces.^b For some time they might have fostered the hope, that the strange immigrants would be crushed by the same powerful monarch, to whom the presence of such large hosts of armed men could also not be indifferent. What must have been their consternation, when they saw that these warlike foreigners, as if urged on and supported by some hidden power, not only vanquished that very king Sihon, their own formidable conqueror, and wrested from him a large part of his territory, but rapidly subdued other and hardly less powerful princes.^c No wonder, then, that they 'dreaded,' nay,

^a See *supra* p. 69.

^b xxi. 26-30.

^c xxi. 21-25, 33-35.

'loathed'^a such enemies, and that they abhorred them like devastating swarms of locusts 'covering the face of the land,' or like herds of hungry oxen devouring every green blade within wide areas.^b In this distress they seem first to have endeavoured to secure allies. They certainly took counsel with the elders of the neighbouring Midianites. But when these could afford no effectual help, the king of Moab, unable to oppose to the invaders a sufficient material resistance, knew no other expedient than to take refuge to spiritual powers and to attempt by supernatural agencies what he despaired of achieving by human means. For he feared the Israelites simply 'because they were numerous' or 'mightier' than himself,^c and had in recent campaigns shown undaunted valour. It did not enter into his considerations, that they might stand under the protection of an all-powerful Deity. He relied on miraculous intercession for himself in a manner which proved the perverseness of his notions regarding the Divine conduct of human affairs; and he was certainly incapable of understanding the destinies of Israel and the guiding Providence of their God.^d

The casual allusion to 'the elders of Midian'^e may be considered as the sad germ, out of which nearly all the confusing misconceptions of this narrative have grown. For it caused readers from the oldest times to associate Balaam's prophecies with the Midianite war, and with the infamous share he is alleged to have borne in its origin;^f and it thus materially helped to destroy that unmingled enjoyment which all should derive from so perfect a work. Josephus, in his elaborate paraphrase, strangely places the Moabites almost entirely in the background.^g The Chaldee translation of Jonathan thus expands the allusion: 'The people of Moab and Midian

^a ויגד and ויקן, ver. 2.

^b Comp. 2 Ki. iii. 4.

^c Vers. 2, 6.

^d See *supra*, pp. 13-15.

^e In vers. 4, 7.

^f Num. xxxi. 8, 16; Josh. xiii. 21, 22.

^g Jos. Ant. IV. vi. 2-13.

had been one and the kingdom one up to that day . . . and Balak, the son of Zippor, the Midianite, was the king of Moab at that time . . . for so was the convention among them, to have alternately kings from the one people and from the other.' And it is a favourite assumption of many modern interpreters, that Balaam was recommended to Balak by the Midianites, who are supposed to have heard of the soothsayer's skill on their extensive caravan journeys;^a while others assert that Balaam himself was a Midianite, and is represented as such in the second or diverging account.^b But supposing even that Balaam's fame reached Moab through some Midianite traders, does it necessarily follow that there existed between Balaam and the Midianites a close and permanent connection? Though a portion of the latter people spread, no doubt, eastward as far as the Euphrates, they can, on no account, be called inhabitants of 'Aram,' Balaam's native country, which the writer clearly distinguishes from Moab and Midian.^c And what is more natural than that the Moabites were considered to have sought the advice and assistance of an adjoining and friendly tribe? There is certainly no reason to feel surprise at finding Midian associated with Moab in schemes of attack against the Hebrews. For on the one hand, one chief branch of the Midianites dwelt in the immediate vicinity of the Moabite territory, spreading eastward and northward—the other and less warlike portion, with which Moses came into contact after his flight from Egypt, extending southward to the Gulf of Akabah and far into the peninsula of Sinai—and on the other hand, there prevailed, between them and the Israelites, an ancient enmity, although both nations traced their origin to the common ancestry of Abraham. Nor did the Midianites, from a feeling of gratitude, relax

^a Comp. Gen. xxxvii. 28; Isai. lx. 6.

^b *Ewald*, *Geschichte*, ii. 220.

^c xxii. 5; xxiii. 7.

their animosity when they regained complete independence through the victory of the Hebrews over king Sihon, by whom they had been subdued.^a At the time of the exodus, they are said to have shared the hostile feelings of the Egyptians against Israel,^b and tradition made them and their moral degeneracy the causes of a fearful calamity which befell the Hebrews, which, however, did not remain without terrible consequences for themselves.^c But the mutual hatred reached the highest pitch through the cruel and wanton oppression, which the Midianites, in the period of the Judges, exercised against Israel for seven years, till they were, by Gideon's heroism and shrewdness, so effectually crushed, that, from that time, they cease to appear in history as a separate people, although their caravan trade may long have survived.^d We cannot wonder that deeds so glorious and so remarkable in their results, deeply impressed themselves upon the popular mind, and were preserved among the nation's proudest memories. A Psalmist, who probably wrote in the reign of king Jehoshaphat (about B.C. 900), could frame no stronger prayer against Israel's enemies than, 'Do to them, O God, as Thou didst to Midian;'^e and Isaiah still speaks of 'the day of Midian' and 'the slaughter of Midian' with an emphatic brevity which proves how generally even then, after an interval of so many centuries, the remembrance of those victories was cherished.^f It must, therefore, have been fresh and vivid in David's time, the date of this narrative; and hence it is natural to see the Midianites, who seem to have been accustomed to join other tribes for attack or defence,^g participating in the plans of Balak, who, besides, may have easily persuaded them that, from the nearness of their abodes, their interests also were

^a Gen. xxv. 2; 1 Chr. i. 32; Josh. xiii. 21.

^b Habak. iii. 7.

^c Num. xxv. 6 *sqq.*; xxxi. 2 *sqq.*

^d Judg. vi.-viii.; comp. Isai. lx. 6.

^e Ps. lxxxiii. 10.

^f Isai. ix. 4; x. 26.

^g Judg. vi. 3, 33.

threatened by the Hebrews—'Now will this host devour all that is round about us.'^a The commonwealth of Midian appears to have been a patriarchal organisation, headed by 'kings' or 'chiefs,'^b of whom at one time two, at another five, are mentioned,^c and who were assisted in the government by 'princes' and 'elders.'^d With some of the latter Balak took counsel, and they then accompanied the Moabite elders as messengers to Balaam.^e

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—Among the many proofs of the isolation of the 'Book of Balaam' within the Book of Numbers, are the place it occupies and the manner in which it is introduced. According to the preceding accounts, the Israelites had not only crossed the river Arnon, then the boundary of Moab, but had advanced very considerably beyond it, steadily increasing the distance in five or six northward journeys. How, therefore, should it occur to the king of Moab, at that juncture, to take measures of precaution? If operations were at all necessary, they should have been devised when the Hebrews, on passing the *Wady el-Asha*, had reached the eastern confines of the territory of Moab. Balak might well have inferred from their latest movements and actions that it was not their intention to retrace their steps southward, but to press in a westerly direction, and to cross the Jordan with the least possible delay (*supra*, p. 68). Some such considerations appear to have suggested themselves to later readers, or to the final reviser of these chapters. For a careful examination shows that the narrative originally ran thus: 'When Balak, the son of Zippor, saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, he sent messengers to Balaam, the son of Beor, to Pethor, which is by the river Euphrates' (vers. 2, 5). In order to connect this general statement, consistent in itself, with the tenor of the Book of Numbers, it was later

^a Ver. 4. Comp. *Comm. on Gen.* p. 475; on *Exod.* p. 33; *Nöldeke*, *Die Amalekiter*, pp. 7-10.

^b מלכים or נשיאים.

^c *Judg.* viii. 6; *Num.* xxxi. 8; *Josh.* xiii. 21.

^d זקנים and שרים; *Judg.* vii. 25.

^e Vers. 4, 7; comp. *Ps.* lxxxiii. 12.

deemed advisable to insert the third and fourth verses, which specially refer to the people of Moab and their alliance with the Midianites, and particularly dwell on the terror inspired by the Hebrew hosts. But it cannot escape our attention that those verses are indeed an interpolation. For, first, vers. 2 and 5 fit admirably together; next, *Moab* is mentioned in vers. 3 and 4 only, whereas the narrative everywhere else speaks of *Balak*; and lastly, an author of such ability would not write thus incoherently: 'And Balak, the son of Zippor, saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites' (ver. 1), and then, 'And Balak, the son of Zippor, was king of Moab at that time' (ver. 4). These last words, moreover, thoughtlessly destroy that historical probability so admirably maintained throughout the section; for how could a contemporary of Balak, writing in the fortieth year of the Hebrew wanderings—the very year in which the related incident is recorded to have happened—say, 'And Balak was king of Moab at that time,' unless it be gratuitously assumed that Balak died within the few months that intervened between Balaam's prophecies and Moses' death? The following justification has indeed been proposed: 'The author had first spoken of Balaam, the son of Zippor (ver. 1), and then of Moab, without describing the relation in which the one stood to the other; with respect to his contemporaries, whom the author had in his mind when beginning the account, an explicit remark setting forth that relation was unnecessary; but he added it afterwards, because he remembered that he was writing for posterity also' (*Hengstenberg*, *Gesch. Bileams*, p. 34). However, it is difficult to see why a writer who proves himself able to grasp and to combine the events of centuries, could not make so obvious a reflection from the outset, and say simply, 'And Balak, the son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, saw,' etc.; though even this form would have involved a forgetful disregard of the age of Moses, and have betrayed the hand of a later compiler. A recent scholar joins vers. 2 to 5 in one period, in order to maintain Balak throughout as the subject ('When Balak saw all that Israel had done . . . and that the Moabites were afraid . . . and that the Moabites said to the

(Balak?)

elders of Midian, . . . Balak . . . being king of Moab at that time, he sent messengers,' etc.; so *Luzzatto*), a most involved construction opposed to the simple *parataxis* of Hebrew, and yet not removing the chief difficulties. A more critical explanation has been attempted by the remark, 'As the older source introduces Balak only in ver. 4, the second verse is probably a statement of the Jehovist, added for the purpose of connecting this narrative with the preceding account of the wars' (*Knobel*, *Numeri*, p. 128). But if ver. 2 did not originally form part of the composition, there was hardly any reason why it should have been added, as the tale is complete and intelligible without it. Besides, according to the present state of Pentateuch criticism, the relation between the 'older source' and 'the Jehovist' is almost the reverse of what it was considered to be at the time when that conjecture was proposed (in 1861). And lastly, none of the main documents or writers of the Pentateuch concern us in the consideration of this section (see *supra*, pp. 51, 52; comp. also *Nachmanides*, *Bechai*, and *Abarbanel* in loc., who felt the manifest irregularity of style, without being able to account for it satisfactorily). The suggestion made in the Midrash and elsewhere, 'that Balak was not the hereditary king, and that a change of dynasty had taken place' (*Canon Cook*, *Holy Bible*, in loc.), could hardly tend to lessen the incongruity, even if it rested on a stronger support than the expression 'former king of Moab' (in xxi. 26).—In order to establish in the verbs of the third verse the gradation evidently intended by the author, we must render $\text{וַיִּקְרַח בְּנֵי מוֹאָב}$, not *and Moab dreaded* or *was distressed*, but *and Moab loathed* or *had a horror of the children of Israel*, physical disgust (which is no doubt the primary meaning of וַיִּקְרַח —Gen. xlvii. 46; Num. xxi. 5—as of the kindred root קָרַח) and moral aversion, which may show itself either in fear (Isa. vii. 11) or hatred (1 Ki. xi. 25), contempt (Prov. iii. 11) or anger (Lev. xx. 23, comp. Greek *κοτεῖν*), being in some languages correlative notions (comp. בָּטַח Chald. *to loathe*, Syr. *to be afraid*; Arab. مَلَّ in both meanings; *Sept.* προσώχθισαι ; *Vulg.*, quite indistinctly, *et impetum ejus ferre non possent*). That loathing

or horror on the part of the Moabites was caused by Israel's irresistible progress and power, which had for them something extraordinary and incomprehensible, and which they were therefore anxious to oppose and to break by supernatural forces. The case is similar with the Egyptians who 'loathed' or 'had a horror of the children of Israel' (ויקצו, Exod. i. 12), because it was to them an unaccountable fact that 'the more they afflicted the Hebrews, the more these multiplied and grew.' Only in this passage and in ours, קוין is followed by מפני, this verb being everywhere else construed with א; it must, therefore, here and in Exodus, be taken absolutely, so that מפני means 'on account of,' as is clear from Gen. xxvii. 46, where both particles occur together, קצתי בחיי קיפני בנות חת, 'I loathe my life on account of the daughters of Heth' (comp. טק in the various figurative meanings of despising, hating, or being angry, in Ezek. vi. 9; xvi. 47; xx. 43; xxxvi. 31; Ps. xcv. 10; cxix. 158).—The graphic simile, peculiarly appropriate in connection with pastoral nations, 'now will this host devour all that is round about us, as the ox devours the grass of the field,' is on Assyrian inscriptions varied by the metaphor, 'with the main body of my servants I threshed the enemy's country like a threshing ox' (Monolith Inscription of Shalmaneser II., col. ii. § 52; comp. Records of the Past, iii. 94); and it has not unnaturally tempted many to allegorical interpretations (*e.g.*, *Origen*, In Num. Homil. xii., 'Quia vitulus ore abruptit herbam de campo et lingua tanquam falce quæcunque invenerit secat, ita et populus hic ore et labiis pugnat et arma habet in verbis ac precibus,' etc.).

It seems desirable here to take a comprehensive view of the proper nouns occurring in these and the following verses. First, they are all of *Shemitic* etymology, as might be expected, since Balak was a Moabite and Balaam an Aramæan (xxii. 5; xxiii. 7; Deut. xxiii. 5); and this circumstance should facilitate the enquiry by following intelligible principles. A few illustrations will suffice. Nearly all authorities in ancient and modern times have interpreted the name בלעם as 'devourer,' or 'destroyer of the people' (for בלע עם, see *supra*, p. 29), and have taken both the person and the name as historical. How is this to be understood? Who gave to

the celebrated seer that odious name? His parents? Or his countrymen, by whom he was so highly honoured? Surely not. Therefore, none else but his personal or national enemies. But, if so, עֲלֵז is not a real or strictly historical name. The case is similar with קֶלֶז . The most obvious meaning of the root would lead to the sense 'the empty' or 'idle one' (comp. Isa. xxiv. 1; Nah. ii. 11); can this be the name by which the king of Moab was known to his people or his contemporaries? It seems that the matter may be thus explained. If the names are indeed in any way historical (and it is on this supposition only that the subject deserves minute investigation), they had doubtless, when first bestowed, an import involving something characteristic or conspicuous, and certainly not anything abusive or disgraceful (comp. Comm. on Genes. p. 540). By slight modifications, to which both the Oriental mind and the Oriental languages are eminently adapted, the original name might afterwards be so changed by adversaries and opponents, that it was little altered in sound, but very materially in meaning. Strictly adhering to this consideration, we shall at least be guarded against grave mistakes in the explanation of proper nouns, even should we not always arrive at safe and positive results. If קֶלֶז is indeed referable to the root בלק , in the sense of *making empty* or *laying waste*, the original name was probably בלק , *the devastator, the great conqueror*, which an Eastern ruler would naturally bear with particular pride; and as no vowels and, of course, no quiescent letters as *matres lectionis* were written, בלק was without difficulty converted into קֶלֶז , which would be interpreted either as 'the man of *idle* endeavours, who *vainly* hoped to crush Israel by curses' (Philo takes both בלק and בלעם as *μάταιος*, and the former, besides, as *ἄροϋς*, Opp. ii. 423, see *supra*, p. 27), or, since emptiness and poverty were deemed analogous notions and בלוקותא is in Syriac *poverty*, as the *impoverished* king, because he received from his predecessor the land greatly diminished in extent and power (xxi. 26).—Similarly עֲלֵז , if from the first so vocalised, means, no doubt, properly *destruction* or *destroyer* (from בלע with the affirmative ע , as in many other proper names— אונם , געתם , חם , עפר , etc., or with ז , as זון , זר , זר , זר , זר ,

etc.—), a name which the father might fitly have given to his son whom he hoped and wished to be able, by his execrations, to terrify and to destroy his enemies and the foes of his friends and employers (comp. xxii. 6); though we are rather inclined to consider that proper noun to have originally been vocalised בַּלְעָם (so *Sept.*, Βαλαάμ; *Joseph.*, Βάλαμος; *Saad.*, بَلْعَام) and to be a contraction for בַּעַל-עַם *lord of the people* (the *ע* being elided as in בַּל for בַּעַל, whence the *Syr.* has בַּלְעָם; comp. רַיִת, *Chald.* רַעִית); but in either case the Hebrews might easily understand that name in a sense which was certainly attributed to it at a very early date, as *corruption* or *perdition of the people* (בַּלְעָם, *Talm. Sanh.* 105a, etc., see *supra*, p. 29); though the elision of *ע* at the end of the word is questionable, and is only supported by such apparent analogies as יְרוּשָׁלַם for יְרוּשָׁלַם (comp. *Engl.* transcribe for transcribe, etc.).—Not much different in meaning is the name of Balaam's father בַּעַר, which, in the intention of those who first gave it, no doubt also signified *destroyer* (בַּעַר) in the sense above indicated, as Beor was probably likewise an enchanter and diviner, whereas that word readily suggested to the Hebrews the similar meaning of *the people's debaser* or *destroyer*, if not, at the same time, that of voracious *brute* (רַעַר, *Exod.* xxii. 4; *Num.* xx. 4, etc.), or of the abominable idol רַעַר, to whom the soothsayer's family might well have been deemed devoted. A conclusive analogy is near at hand. The Greek proper noun Nicolaus (Νικόλαος), and its synonyms, as Nicodemus, Andronicus, and others, are by no means vituperative but unquestionably honourable in import, denoting great heroes and successful warriors; and yet the New Testament, as we have shown (p. 23), renders the name *Balaam* by *Nikolaos*, and assigns to the latter, as it does to the former, the worst significations of depraver and spiritual ravager of the people. Thus, both in Greek and in Hebrew, etymologies, elastic enough in any case, were conveniently employed for turning a meaning into its very opposite. In the second Epistle of Peter (ii. 15), רַעַר is rendered Βοσόρ; this is perhaps merely a copyist's error, instead of Βεώρ or Βοώρ; or it may have arisen out of the difficulty of accurately

representing the Hebrew letter φ , for which there is no proper equivalent in Greek (comp. Heb. Gram. ii. pp. 54, 55), and which, therefore, as the strongest aspirate, was, in that instance, represented by the sibilant s (comp. $\xi\pi\tau\acute{\alpha}$ and *septem*, $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\varsigma$ and *sal*, etc.); if it is not a peculiarity of the Galilean dialect, by the use of which Peter the Galilean was markedly distinguished (Matt. xxvi. 73; Mark xiv. 70), and in which, to the great displeasure of southern purists, the φ was pronounced more softly, almost like \mathfrak{s} (comp. *Talm. Eruv.* 53; *Buxt.*, Lexic. Talm., pp. 434–436), though some consider it to be a Chaldaism, because they suppose that the Apostle was then a resident at Babylon. But lest any opportunity, however trivial, be neglected for casting discredit on Balaam, a very learned divine of the seventeenth century, with the approval of many later writers, threw out the surmise, that the Apostle designedly used the form *Βασίρ*, in order to recall the sound of בָּשָׂר *flesh*, ‘thus elegantly intimating that Balaam, the false prophet, by inciting men to carnal pleasures, was justly called *the son of flesh*’ (*Vitringa*, *Obs. Sacr.*, IV. ix. 31, p. 937).—It is hardly likely that *Βασίρ* is intended for בַּתִּיר , so that *Βαλαάμ ὁ Βασίρ* would mean ‘Balaam, a native of Pethor,’ as *Grotius* and others believe.—It is remarkable that the first king of Edom is called ‘ לְעָם the son of בְּעֹר ’ (Gen. xxxvi. 32; 1 Chron. i. 43); this coincidence, if it does not prove that these two names were, at that time, great favourites in families proud of ‘producing manslaughterers, whether in the bodily or spiritual sphere’ (*Hengstenb.*, *Bilcam*, p. 22), teaches, at least, that בְּלָעַם was meant as identical with לְעָם , and that it was not taken as a compound of עַם , neither as equivalent to עַם בְּלָעַם (see *supra*); nor much less to עַם בְּלֵה עַם (*Aruch*, sub voc.), denoting one ‘who confounded (יִשְׁבַּלְבֵּל) Israel by his advice’ (*Rashi*); nor to עַם בְּלֵא עַם , meaning ‘one who has no community whatever with the pious people of Israel’ or ‘a leader or teacher with but a scanty number of followers’ (*Talm. Sanh.* 105a, etc.); nor to עַם בְּלָעַם ‘*non-populus, peregrinus*’ (*Gesenius*, *Thesaurus*, p. 210; compare *Aruch*, i.e., $\text{עַם בְּלֵא עַם מִמּוֹקוֹמוֹ וּמַעֲמֹוֹ וְהֵלֵךְ לְעַם אַחֵר}$); which, irrespective of the vowel in the first syllable, would be almost unintelligible as elliptical expressions. More-

over, the town בְּלָעַם, in the eastern province of Manasseh (1 Chron. vi. 55), bore also the name יְבִלְעָם (Josh. xvii. 11; Judges i. 27; 2 Kings ix. 27), from which it is evident that בְּלָעַם was traced to בלע, not to בל or בעל; this being one of many instances of double proper nouns, one containing the past, the other the future of the verb (comp. בְּנִיָּה and יְבִנֶּיָּה, גְּדִלְיָהוּ and יְגִדְלֵהוּ, etc.).—One additional remark we would, in this place, make on Hebrew proper nouns. Some names were so generally current and so familiar that it would have been impossible to alter their form without causing material confusion. In such cases, endeavours were made, etymologically or otherwise, to *interpret* the word in the desired sense. To this category belongs the name כִּנְזָב, which means properly ‘seed of the father’ (for כִּנּוּ is a poetical term for *water*, Job ix. 30, which is used for *seed*, Isa. xlvi. 1), that is, simply the descendants of some great ancestor, who was κατ’ ἐξοχήν called ‘father;’ but Hebrew historians of later times, explaining כִּנְזָב by כִּנְזָב (ἐκ τοῦ πατρός), attributed to that name, literally, the sense of ‘offspring of the father,’ and embodied this view in a detailed story (Gen. xix. 32, 34; comp. Comm. on Gen. p. 426).—Jewish authorities elucidate בְּלָק by נָק and לָק, or בֵּא לִלְקוֹת רַמְנָן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל ‘he came to lap (or suck) the blood of the Israelites;’ and the very same sense is attributed to the name עֲזִיבְלָק contended to be equivalent to עַם and לָק and to mean שֶׁלֶק רַמְנָן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל (see *Baal Hattwin* in loc.). This one instance out of very many will illustrate that wonderful flexibility of etymological explanation, to which we have above referred; and we will only add that Patristic writers, asserting Balaam to mean ‘vain people,’ and Balak ‘devourer,’ consider the one as the type of the Jewish scribes and Pharisees, and the other as the emblem of the implacable enemies of the spiritual Israel (comp. *Origen*, In Num. Hom. xiv. 4, etc.).—It seems natural to understand פְּתוֹר (comp. Deut. xxiii. 5), Balaam’s home, as the town of ‘interpretation of dreams’ (פְּתוֹר, Gen. xl. 8, 16; xli. 8, etc.; *Sam. Vers.*, פִּשׁוּרָה; *Syr.*, פִּשׁוּרָא), in which art the seer, like perhaps some of his fellow-citizens, may have been a great adept (comp. xxii. 8-12, 19, 20; *Talm. Sanh.* 106a; *Yalkut*, Balak, § 771; *Targ. Jon.*, etc.); but this opinion has, of course, no claim to certainty; for the

primary meaning of פתח is *to open* or *to divide*, which may be very multifariously applied to a town (*e.g.*, *Gesen.*, *Thes.*, p. 1141, after Midr. Tanchuma, ‘fortasse id quod Chald. פתורא, mensa,’ etc.). Some ancient versions (as *Samar.*, *Syr.*, *Vulg.*) take פתור not as a town, but as *interpreter* or *soothsayer*, (see *supra*; *Abu Said* المنفس), against the context and against Deut. l.c.—צפור is undoubtedly *bird*, like the feminine צפורה, the Midianite wife of Moses (Exod. ii. 21, etc.; comp. the Midianite chief ערב, *Raven*, Judg. vii. 25, etc.).—The Targum of Jonathan thus paraphrases the fifth verse: ‘And Balak sent messengers to Laban the Aramæan, that is Balaam, the son of Beor, who was eager to destroy the people (למבולוע בית עמי), the house of Israel; for he was insane from the vastness of his knowledge, and had no compassion with Israel . . . and the place of his abode was in Padan, that is Pethor (פתור), meaning interpreter of dreams (פתור חלומות), and it was built in Aram, on the river Euphrates, where the people of his country worshipped him.’ This specimen sufficiently exemplifies both the bias and the confusion of traditional explanation throughout this section (see *supra*, pp. 29, 30).—As regards the position of Pethor (*Sept.* Φαθουρά), we must be content with the statement of the text, that the town was situated on the Euphrates (ver. 5). More than this we do not even learn from the Monolith Inscription of Shalmaneser II. (B.C. 858–823), and from the remarkable black Obelisk of the same king, both which monuments mention, in the immediate vicinity of the Euphrates and the river *Irganri* or *Saguri*, which has not been identified, a town ‘which the men of the Hittites’ (*i. e.* the Syrians) ‘have called the city of *Pi-it-ru* or Pethor,’ although from the latter record the town appears to have been in the *highlands* of Mesopotamia (see Inscription of Shalm., col. ii. §§ 85, 86; Black Obel., face C., lines 38–40, ‘at my return into the lowlands,’ etc.; see *Schrader*, *Keilinschriften und das A.T.*, p. 65; *Records of the Past*, iii. 99; v. 51) Everything else is uncertain tradition or conjecture; but the identity of that town is, for the main object of our narrative, of little importance—whether Pethor is traceable to Φαθούσαι, a place south of

Circesium (*Zosisimus* iii. 4; *Knob.*), or to Rehoboth Ir (Gen. x. 11; xxxvi. 37), or, after the Oscian *petora* (four), means a town built in the form of an oblong (*Hitzig*, Sprache . . . der Assyrier, p. 11). It seems, however, probable that Pethor was one of the cities or districts which, according to an old Babylonian custom similar to the appointment of priestly and levitical towns among the Hebrews, were set apart for the various classes of philosophers, astronomers, and soothsayers, and which formed the principal centres of their work and reputation (comp. *Strabo*, XVI. i. 6, p. 739; *Plin.* Nat. Hist. vi. 26 or 30, Hipparennum, Chaldaeorum doctrina et hoc sicut Babylon; see also *Ciccr.* De Divinat. i. 41, Telmessus in Caria est, qua in urbe excellit haruspicum disciplina).

3. FIRST MESSAGE. XXII. 5-14.

5. And he sent messengers to Balaam, the son of Beor, to Pethor, which *is* by the river (Euphrates), *to* the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt; behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. 6. Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people, for they *are* too mighty for me; perhaps I shall prevail, *that* we may smite them, and *that* I may drive them out of the land: for I know that *he* whom thou blessest *is* blessed, and *he* whom thou cursest is cursed. 7. And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam, and spoke to him the words of Balak. 8. And he said to them, Stay here this night, and I will bring you word, as the Lord shall speak to me. And the princes of Moab remained with Balaam. 9. And

God came to Balaam, and said, Who *are* these men *that are* with thee? 10. And Balaam said to God, Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, *saying*, 11. Behold, the people that is come out of Egypt, it covers the face of the earth; come now, curse me them; perhaps I shall *then* be able to fight against them, and drive them out. 12. And God said to Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse the people; for they *are* blessed. 13. And Balaam rose in the morning, and said to the princes of Balak, Go to your country, for the Lord refuses to give me leave to go with you. 14. And the princes of Moab rose, and they went to Balak, and said, Balaam refuses to come with us.

The result of Moab's and Midian's common deliberations was that, under the critical circumstances, nothing better could be undertaken than to send a legation to the famous diviner Balaam and to claim his powerful aid, since even both nations united felt diffident in opposing the large and victorious armies of the Hebrews. In order to invest the embassy with a national character and dignity, they dispatched, as official representatives, the elders of both communities. Their utter helplessness and perplexity are admirably conveyed in Balak's uncertain and wavering message. He vaguely speaks of 'a people that is come out of Egypt.'^a More than this he fancies does not concern Balaam. He engages and pays a soothsayer, and therefore thinks he may dispose of his services at pleasure. To him the enchanter's will and art alone have reality. Those against whom that art is

^a נִסְיָן עַל, ver. 5.

to be employed, have no share in his considerations. It is enough that he desires to have them cursed; whether they deserve to be cursed or not, appears to him indifferent. It would have been impossible to pourtray more aptly paganism and its obtuse blindness. How infinitely superior to such a state of mind is even the rigid doctrine of retribution, which caused the Hebrews to see so deep and intrinsic a connection between man's deeds and his fate, that they were certain that the Canaanites, though destined to destruction, could not be exterminated until the measure of their sins was full.^a Balak might well have assumed that so well-informed a man as Balaam had heard of the Hebrews and their long wanderings in the desert, if not of their memorable deliverance from foreign bondage. That Balaam was really acquainted with these events, is clear from his own words. For in repeating to God the commission he had received, he said, 'Behold *the* people that is come out of Egypt.'^b To Balak the Hebrews were merely hostile hordes dangerous to himself; but to Balaam they were the one renowned people of Jahveh, who had singled them out for His special protection and had hitherto led them so miraculously.^c By the slightest modifications, the author's skill fixed the strongest contrasts.—Almost incoherently, the king further sends word to the seer that the Hebrews were filling the whole land; that they were encamped in his close proximity; Balaam was to come and curse the swarming multitudes; '*perhaps,*' he continues, 'I shall prevail that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for *I know* that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.'^d Hesitation and assurance, despondency and reckless courage, struggle in his uneasy and foreboding mind. He is conscious of taking refuge in an uncommon

^a Gen. xv. 16, and Comm. *in loc.*

^b נִצְּתָהּ מִצְרָיִם, ver. 11.

^c Comp. xxiii. 22; xxiv. 8; see *supra*, p. 14.

^d Ver. 6.

and desperate device, and his words cling to hopes in which his heart scarcely believes. But the soothsayer must come to Moab; it would be of no avail if he pronounced the curse in his Mesopotamian home; he must *behold* those whom he attempts to annihilate by the power of his incantations; and Balak is eager to hear himself those welcome words which are to inspire him and his people with new strength. Does Balaam attach the same weight to his personal presence? Does he also believe that the eye, whether it be the good or the evil eye, must be fixed upon those who are effectually to be blessed or cursed? This the narrative leaves in uncertainty, because it represents Balaam in perfect and almost passive repose. But so much is undoubted, that all arrangements and directions referring to that point do not proceed from him, but from the king of Moab, who, in his restless anxiety, is unwilling to neglect any form or ceremony deemed desirable by the most scrupulous belief of his nation and his time.

Is it necessary to accumulate proofs of the faith of the ancient world in the real power of blessings and curses? The whole Bible, all classical and non-classical literature, proclaim it. Extraordinary men, such as prophets, and ordinary men in uncommon moments, such as the approach of death, were supposed to be seized by the divine spirit, and so far uplifted beyond the usual measure of human power and intelligence, that, consciously or unconsciously, they reveal the decrees of Providence, nay, are able to direct and change them, and, by the force of their holy zeal and fervour, to transform the word into an unerring deed. When little children, failing to honour the prophet in the 'bald head,' mocked Elisha, 'he cursed them in the name of the Lord,' and forthwith two bears came out of the wood and tore forty-two of the children;^a and when Theseus believed

^a 2 Ki. ii. 23, 24.

he had reason for well-founded suspicion against his son, and wrathfully cursed him in the name of domestic honour and purity, the curse was fulfilled even upon the innocent youth, and no prayer and no repentance of the agonised father were able to avert or undo it.^a Such an ardent conviction of the participation of human enthusiasm in the counsels of heaven, is well compatible even with a high degree of truly religious feeling; but of such a depth of conviction Balak was wholly incapable. He believed he could 'hire' a prophet and bid him speak, not as his god suggested, but as he, the terror-stricken king, desired. Therefore, he did not omit to send to Balaam 'rewards of divination,'^b probably rich and ample wages, as he considered that the more liberally he paid, the more powerful was the curse he could command.^c

It may be allowable to dwell one moment longer on this point. How superficially the effect of cursing was viewed by the Hebrews, even in later times, is indeed sufficiently clear from their belief in 'day-cursers,' endowed with the gift of blotting out, or devoting to eternal oblivion, certain days or seasons of disaster and mourning;^d but it is most strikingly apparent from the remarkable ritual of the 'Offering of Jealousy:' the curse was written on a scroll, which was then dipped in the 'bitter water;' this water, bodily saturated, as it were, with the words of the curse, was drunk by the suspected woman, and it was firmly expected that if she was guilty, the water 'would make her womb to swell and her thigh to rot.'^e Can it, therefore, be surprising that heathen nations hardly set bounds to the possible effects of spells and charms?

^a Compare *Hor. Od.* IV. vii. 25, *Infernis neque enim tenebris Diana pudicum Liberat Hippolytum*, etc.

^b קֶסָמִים, ver. 7.

^c See *infra*.

^d אַרְרֵי יוֹם, Job iii. 8.

^e Num. v. 11-29, and Comm. on

Lev. i. pp. 282-289; ii. p. 596; comp. Gen. ix. 25-27; xxvii. 4, 12, 27-29, 39, 40; xlviii. 9, 15, 16, 20; xlix. 2-27; Num. vi. 24-27; Deut. xi. 29; xxvii. 12-26; xxxiii. 1-25; Josh. vi. 26 and 1 Ki. xvi. 34; Matth. xxi. 19.

Plato speaks of certain itinerant priests and prophets^a frequenting the houses of the rich, and persuading them that they possess a power granted by the gods of expiating by incantations^b all sins and crimes committed by any living person or by his forefathers, and of blasting any foe, whether he was guilty or not, by blandishments and magic ties.^c When Alcibiades, after profaning the Eleusinian mysteries, had been condemned in his absence and punished with the confiscation of his property, the people ordered him, besides, 'to be execrated by all priests and priestesses,' which occasion was rendered still more memorable by the priestess Theano, who refused to comply with the command, contending that she was 'a priestess of blessings, not of curses.'^d

In the Roman twelve tables penalties are enacted against any one 'who shall have enchanted the harvest,' or 'shall have used evil incantations' generally;^e for 'there was no one who did not dread being spell-bound by means of malignant imprecations.'^f The Romans preserved some old and secret forms of execration, the awful power of which was believed to destroy not only those against whom, but even those by whom they were pronounced, and which, therefore, were only employed in the most uncommon emergencies. Such an occasion was the contemplated departure of M. Crassus to Syria (B.C. 55), with the intention of waging war against the Parthians; the tribunes of the people strongly disapproved of the plan, and when Crassus still insisted upon its execution, they 'uttered against him public imprecations,' using fearful and terrible spells and menaces—after which the historians record, without surprise and

^a Ἀγύρται and μάντιες.

^b Ἐπιρδαῖς.

^c Ἐπαγωγῶν καὶ καταδῆσμοις;
Plat. Republ. ii. 7, p. 364.

^d Εὐχῶν, οὐ καταρῶν ἱέρειαν γε-
γονέναι, *Plut. Alcib. c. 22; comp.*

Lysias, Adv. Andocid. 51; Xen. Mem. II. vi. 10.

^e Qui fruges excantassit; qui malum carmen incantassit.

^f Defigi quidem diris precatio-
nis nemo non metuit.

as a natural result, that Crassus perished in Parthia with his son and nearly the whole of his army. Indeed it was firmly believed, as Pliny attests, that 'words can change' the destinies of great empires. But their remarkable efficacy was considered to appear in various other ways. Imprecations pronounced during a sacrifice 'have caused the victim's liver or heart suddenly to vanish or to be doubled.' By the incantations of Vestal virgins the flight of runaway slaves, who had not passed beyond the precincts of the town, was supposed to be arrested. Spells were held to control and rule the very elements and all nature, to induce rain and to repel it, to draw down the moon and the stars from the skies and to direct the winds, to check the movements of serpents and to make them burst asunder, to avert hail-showers and to conjure up thunderstorms. This is reported to have been achieved by Lars Porsena and other Etruscans, but by no one more frequently and successfully than by King Numa; while Tullus Hostilius, imitating him, but not performing the ceremonies in due form, was killed by the lightning. From that belief Jupiter bore the standing epithet of *Elicius*.^a But it is right to add, on the authority of Pliny, that 'the wisest persons' rejected all such beliefs; that every one was permitted to look upon these matters in whatever light he pleased; and, what is of greater importance, that 'it was an accepted maxim in the doctrines of divination, that neither curses nor any other auspices had the least effect upon those who, before entering upon an enterprise, declared that they paid no attention to them.'^b

^a I. e. precationibus cælo eliciendus.

^b Comp. *Plin.* Natur. Hist. II. 53 or 54; xxviii. 2 or 3-5; *Tacit.* Ann. xiv. 30, Druidæque circum, preces diras sublatis ad cælum manibus fundentes, etc.; *Macrob.* iii. 9 (al-

though the elaborate and remarkable formula there preserved contains prayers, rather than curses); *Plut.* Crass. c. 16; *Appian*, Bell. Civ. ii. 18; *Seneca*, Nat. Quæst. iv. 7; *Virg.* Ecl. viii. 69-71, Carmina vel cælo possunt deducere Lunam... Frigidus

The ambassadors arrive in Pethor and deliver their message to Balaam. Do we see him share or drawn into the eagerness and unrest of the troubled monarch? From the moment that the narrative reaches Balaam, it seems to breathe a more serene tranquillity and a higher purity. In the first place, never again is any mention made of 'wages of divination.' Gold and worldly honours are of no account in the eyes of the prophet, who serves his god alone. And who is this god? Is he one of the many idols of Balak? He is the one and sole God of the Hebrews, Jahveh the Unchangeable, the Eternal. It is vain to ask how Balaam gained the knowledge of this God. The strange answers which this question has called forth ought alone to have sufficed to show the impropriety of the question. In order to attain, it is asserted, greater proficiency in soothsaying, which he practised as a trade or profession for the gratification of his chief passions of ambition and avarice, he carefully enquired into the traditions and the history of other nations besides his own. In this manner he heard some faint echoes of the convictions left from 'the primitive age of monotheism;' he also heard some distinct whispers of the patriarchal revelations that lingered in Mesopotamia through Abraham and through Jacob's long sojourn with Laban; and, what was of the greatest moment to him, he listened to the reports of the recent miracles of Egypt and the manifestations on Sinai, since the lands of the Euphrates and the Nile were, from

in pratis cantando rumpitur anguis; *Ovid*, *Metam.* vii. 201-209, Stantia conentio cantu freta, nubila pello... ventos abigoque vocoque, Vipereas rumpo verbis et carmine fauces, etc.; *Fast.* iii. 327, 328, Eliciuunt cælo te, Juppiter, unde minores Nunc quoque te celebrant Eliciumque vocant; *Hor.* *Epod.* v. 45, Que sidera ex-cantata voce Thessala Lunamque

cælo deripit; xvii. 4, 77, 78; *Prop.* I. i. 19, At vos, deductæ quibus est fallacia Lume, etc.; *Tibull.* I. viii. 17-22, Cantus vicinis fruges traducit ab agris, Cantus et iratæ detinet anguis iter, etc.; *Val. Flacc.* *Argon.* viii. 351, 352, Fallor, an hos nobis magico nunc carmine ventos Ipsa movet, diraque levat maria ardua lingua? etc.

early times, closely joined by commercial intercourse. Thus, for his own interest and advantage, and 'in the hope that he might by these means be able to participate in the new powers granted to the human race,' he was induced to devote himself to the service of Jahveh, 'to call Him his god and to prophesy in His name,' without, however, fully comprehending or honestly following Him—similar to the Jewish exorcists, who, in later times, drove out demons in Christ's name without believing in him;^a and similar especially to Simon the sorcerer, 'Balaam's New Testament anti-type,' who, dissatisfied with the previous emoluments of his art, and attracted by the signs and miracles of his time, from which he hoped to derive greater profit, believed and was baptised, though his heart had no share in his faith.^b With what semblance of historical accuracy does prejudice often clothe the most unhistorical fancies! Balaam knows and worships Jahveh, simply because the high-minded author of this wonderful narrative attributes to him that knowledge and worship. Balaam is a prophet of the true God because the historian is a prophet of the true God, and considers Hebrew and Gentile worthy of the same privilege. It is only in the light of free and consummate art that this portion can be duly appreciated. It has the highest probability—not that of fact and history, but of poetry; it does not reveal to us the Mesopotamian Balaam, but, what is of much deeper interest to us, one of the greatest seers of Israel in the fresh and vigorous time of David. Instances are quoted from patristic writers, ascribing to certain Magi and Chaldeans 'the knowledge of God and His angels;'^c but they form no parallels to our narrative. It is one thing to regard pagans capable of single glimpses and isolated

^a Mark ix. 38, 39; Acts xix. 13.

^b Acts viii. 9-13, 18-24.

^c *Cyprian*, De Vanit. Idol. 4;

Manue. Felix, Octav. 26; *Justin*.

Cohort. ad Gent. xi. 24; see *Knobel*,

Numeri, p. 131.

rays of truth; and another to identify them entirely and cheerfully with the holy proclaimers of the Divine word.

Balaam is in familiar intercourse with God. He asks for His directions and is sure of His reply, whether by night in dreams, or by day in clear visions. He has wholly merged his own will in that of his heavenly Master. He enquires without eagerness and listens without anxiety, because he trusts in His wisdom with unquestioning devotion. Thus he invites Balak's messengers to stay over night, and promises to communicate to them, the next morning, the Lord's decision, which involves his own. This does not refer, as has been supposed, to the heathen custom of *incubatio* or sleeping in temples,^a but to a revelation in dream, such as the favoured men among the Hebrews likewise expected and prized.^b God appears, as Balaam had foreseen. With epical breadth and calmness He is made to ask the prophet, 'Who are these men that are with thee?'^c although He, the Omniscient, had no need to ask. For the narrative proceeds in that even flow which, in the midst of motion, preserves repose, and in repose presses onward, and which, like the verse of Homer, never hurries yet never pauses. Balaam's answer is clear and explicit. It is designedly an almost literal reproduction of Balak's request, but with two significant modifications. One, already alluded to above, concerns the *well-known* people that has come out of Egypt;^d the other is the omission of the king's declaration with respect to Balaam, 'for I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.'^e These words would, in Balaam's mouth, not only sound like self-praise, but would be particularly

^a The *ἐγκοίμησις* of the Greeks; comp. *Herod.* viii. 134; *Plut.* *Arist.* c. 19; *Strab.*, pp. 508, 761; *Diod. Sic.* i. 53; *Pausan.* I. xxxiv. 5, *κρίων θύσαντες . . . καθιέρονσιν ἀνα-*

μένοντες ἠέλωσιν ὀνειράτος.

^b See *supra*, p. 16.

^c Ver. 9.

^d *צִמְרִי*, ver. 11, pp. 97, 98.

^e Ver. 6.

unsuitable on account of his profound consciousness that it is not he who blesses or curses, but God through him, and that he is nothing but His human instrument. Most frequently has the reproach of vain arrogance been raised against Balaam; but in the simplest and most efficient manner the author would seem to have rendered the reproach impossible. Three times has Balaam to deliver Divine oracles, in reference to which the following gradation may be observed. The first time he says to Balak, 'I will go, *perhaps* the Lord will come to meet me:'^a free from giddy confidence or self-assurance, he, who had already been favoured with many revelations,^b is represented as the wise man 'that feareth always,' and who is doubtful whether the Divine communication will be granted to him in the desired form and at the expected moment. The second time he says, more decidedly, 'I go to meet the Lord;'^c while the third time only he deems it unnecessary to solicit special suggestions.^d Even in the most subordinate points, the author's skill and thoughtfulness are manifest.

God's answer to Balaam, short and simple as it is, leads us with a single step to the very kernel and marrow of the composition. Balaam was not to go with the messengers to curse the people of Israel, 'because they are blessed.'^e Thus the aged Isaac, even after having learnt the cunning and fraud by which Jacob had obtained the blessing, still exclaims, 'He shall certainly be blessed;'^f but he does so in excitement and agitation, uttering the words almost unconsciously, and impelled by God's secret power; while here God Himself speaks, with quiet emphasis, as the Lord of all nations and their destinies. There, a blessing that had been pronounced is to be sealed as irrevocable; here, an eagerly desired

^a אֲנִי, xxiii. 3.

^b xxii. 9, 20.

^c xxiii. 15.

^d xxiv. 1.

^e Ver. 12, בִּי בְרוּךְ הוּא.

^f גַּם בְּרוּךְ יִהְיֶה, Gen. xxvii. 33.

curse is to be averted. And yet the chief and innermost idea of both narratives is precisely the same. Israel is blessed by God, whatever men may intend against them. All are compelled to bestow upon the chosen nation their most fervent benedictions, and are supernaturally restrained from uttering imprecations; if, in reckless defiance, anyone dares to execrate, the curse, changed into a blessing for Israel, falls destructively upon himself.^a Will, in this instance, Israel's enemies, once warned, desist from such defiance? Will they persevere in it? The stirring plot is laid for a grand drama, in which royal contumacy is opposed to Divine wisdom and power: how will the design be developed? No worthier or more suitable link between the two chief actors—God and Balak—could be conceived than Balaam, who, whatever might have been his human sympathies, absolutely suppressed them in order to remain absolutely and impartially 'the mouth' of God. Thus he declared to the messengers, with resolute calmness, that he would not accompany them to Moab; nor did he conceal from them that he was solely bound by the commands of Jahveh, the God of the very people he was summoned to imprecate.^b But why did he not communicate to the envoys God's *whole* reply? He indeed hinted that he could not curse Israel, for the refusal of the journey involved the refusal of the curse. But why did he suppress the reason which God assigned for that refusal, 'for they are blessed'? He suppressed it because the messengers and their master would not have understood the depth of its import, but would have taken it merely as an irritating aggravation of the denial. This is proved by the conduct of the messengers themselves; for these, evidently unable to comprehend the terrible scope of the new complication, or, in their dark forebodings, purposely ignoring it, brought back to

^a xxiv. 9; Gen. xxvii. 29.

^b Vers. 8, 13.

the king not even Balaam's curtailed answer in his proper words, 'the Lord refuses to give me leave to go with you;' but, as if it were simply a human and personal resolve, which a caprice had prompted and a caprice might change, they gave the reply in the bare terms, 'Balaam refuses to come with us.'^a

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS. — It is incredible how many strange and fanciful interpretations have been forced even upon these verses of plain narrative. As might be expected, the largest conclusions in disparagement of Balaam have been drawn from the word *קֹסְמִים* (ver. 7), which indeed requires some illustration. It would be erroneous to infer from its use in this place, that the author shared the view of Deuteronomy and the Book of Joshua with respect to Balaam as *sorcerer* (see *supra*, pp. 6, 7). It is true that the verb *קָסַם* and its derivative nouns (*קֹסֵם*, *קֹסְמָה*) are frequently, perhaps chiefly, used in a bad sense. But an accurate comparison of all passages teaches, first, that they are not unfrequently employed in reference to true prophecy also; and, secondly, that this good meaning is the older, the bad meaning the later one. For in an evil sense they are unquestionably used in the following passages: Deut. xvii. 10, 14 (*קֹסֵם קֹסְמִים*), prohibited as a heathen abomination together with *מַעֲוֹנֵן*, *מַחֲשֵׁה* and *מַחֲשֵׁף*; comp. Jer. xxvii. 9); 1 Sam. vi. 2 (the *קֹסְמִים* of the Philistines, mentioned by the side of their priests); xv. 23 (*חַטָּאת קֹסֵם*); xxviii. 8 (Saul, after having consulted God in vain, requests the witch of Endor *לִי קֹסְמִי נָא*); 2 Ki. xvii. 17 (where *קֹסֵם* is included in the heavy sins, on account of which Israel was punished with exile); Isa. xlv. 25 (*קֹסְמִים*, coupled with *בְּרִיִּים*, lying prophets); Jer. xiv. 14 (*קֹסֵם*, in conjunction with *שָׁקֵר*, *אֱלִיל*, and *תְּרִמִּית*); Ezek. xiii. 6, 7; xxii. 28 (pregnant phrases *קֹסֵם בְּזָב*, *קֹסֵם בְּזָב*, *קֹסֵם בְּזָב*); xiii. 23 (*קֹסֵם* in parallelism with *טְוִיָּה*); xxi. 26 (*קֹסֵם קֹסֵם* included in the various forms of magic customary in Babylon, as divining by shaking arrows, inspecting the liver, etc.). It will be observed, that none of these passages reach back

^a Vers. 13, 14. About the situation of Pethor, see *supra*, p. 95.

farther than the seventh century. On the other hand, קסם is used in a good sense by the first Zechariah (the author of Chap. ix.–xi., about B.C. 750, who, in x. 2, names קוסמים, together with תרפים and חלמות, as legitimate counsellors), by Isaiah (iii. 2, where the קוסם is, besides ונביא וזקן, a principal and valued support of the land; that it is meant as a *contrast* to the latter terms, as has been asserted, is in no way intimated), by Micah (iii. 6, 7, 11, where קסם is clearly parallel with תזון, and קוסם with תזה, through whom ‘an answer of God,’ מענה אלהים, may be expected, and where it is said of the prophets of Judah, that they יקסמו in reliance upon Jahveh), and in one of the earlier Proverbs (xvi. 10, which enjoins, ‘קסם shall be on the lips of the king, and his mouth shall not do wrong in judgment’). This use of the word in a favourable meaning was maintained, in later times, even after the reproachful sense had gained ground; it is thus found in Jeremiah (xxix. 8, קוסמים, by the side of חלמות and נביאים, who prophesy in Jahveh’s name, though falsely and without a mission), and especially in Ezekiel (xii. 24; xiii. 9; xxi. 34). Therefore, whatever date may be attributed to this section, the word קסמים does not necessarily imply anything derogatory to Balaam; it might have such a signification, if the tenour of the narrative favoured it; but, as we have shown, the very opposite is the case (see *supra*, pp. 17–21). Moreover, it is Balak who forwards, not Balaam who demands, the קסמים, which are never again mentioned in the whole account. The most probable meaning of the term is here ‘rewards’ or ‘wages of divination,’ after the analogy of פֶּעֶלָה and פֶּעֶל, signifying *work* and also *the wages of the work* (Job vii. 2; Lev. xix. 13), or of פִּיטְרָה, properly *glad tidings*, and then *reward* of the message (2 Sam. iv. 10; comp. תָּוֶה *toil* and *wealth* acquired by toil, etc.); it is no doubt referred to in 2 Pet. ii. 15 by *μισθὸς ἀδικίας*; *Targ. Jon.* has ‘precious gifts’ (מִינְדִין) in return for the divination; *Vulg.*, divinationis pretium; *Luth.*, Lohn des Wahrsagens; *Kimchi*, following *Samuel Hamagid*, רמי קסמים, although he wavers between this sense and מִינֵי ק’, after *Midr. Rabb. Num.* xx. 6, or מִה יֵשׁ צְרִיבִין אֵלָיו מִעֲנֵי ק’; and so *Sept. τὰ παρτεῖα*, *Origen* divinacula, *Köster* Wahrsagungs-Apparat; while *Targ. Jer.* has, inaccurately, sealed letters, etc.

But in whatever intention the present may have been sent, it was not accepted by Balaam as a bribe rendering him partial to the king's cause; he did not belong to 'the prophets who prophesied for money' (Mic. iii. 5, 11; Jer. vi. 13; viii. 10, etc.); he was no 'pseudo-prophet corruptible by gifts,' (*Winer*, Real-Wört. i. 182). The Sept. renders קִסְדָּן , קִסְדָּן , etc., all but uniformly, by *μάντις*, *μαντεία*, *μαντεῖον*, *μαντεύεσθαι*, and once only קִסְדָּן by the more general term *ἀποφθέγγεσθαι* (Ezek. xiii. 9), קִסְדָּן , in a bad sense, by *οἰωνισμα* (1 Sam. xv. 23), and קִסְדָּן by the definite *στοχαστής* (Isa. iii. 2); the Vulgate, as a rule, has *divinatio*, *divinus*, and *divinare*, though occasionally *ariolus* and *ariolari* (Jos. xiii. 22; 1 Sam. xv. 23; Isa. iii. 2; xlv. 25), and once for קִסְדָּן *oraculum consulere*; and Luther almost constantly *Wahrsagen* or *Weissagen*, etc., translating on one occasion only קִסְדָּן by *Zauberei* (1 Sam. xv. 23). The etymological meaning of the word is uncertain; but whether קִסְדָּן be kindred with קָטַן , in the sense of *cutting* or *deciding* (Aram. קצא , Arab. *قضم*), so that קִסְדָּן would be *decision* or *oracle*, or in the sense of *dividing*, so that קִסְדָּן would properly be *discriminating counsel* or *conjecture*; and whatever specific form of divination may originally have been denoted by קִסְדָּן , since a more distinct statement is made only in the one passage, where Saul requests the witch, 'divine (קסמי) me by the soothsaying spirit (באוב), and bring me him up whom I shall name to thee' (1 Sam. xxviii. 8); it is not improbable that in the history of the word קסם , a portion of the history of Israel's religion is interestingly and significantly reflected. For a long time, קִסְדָּן was considered by them as perfectly legitimate and was, therefore, placed in parallelism with 'prophecy,' 'vision,' and 'instruction.' But when their religious notions were more clearly defined and worked out with greater severity and purity, that form of oracle was denounced and rejected, and was then coupled with 'sorcery' and 'magic,' 'falsehood' and 'iniquity.' Other words and notions also, as קִסְדָּן and קִסְדָּן , passed through similar stages, and this historical examination enables us to understand many Scriptural passages which would otherwise be in irreconcilable contradiction (comp. Comm. on Levit. i. pp. 351-356).—By that systematic misconception to which we have

alluded, Balaam's request to the messengers that they should remain over night till he had ascertained God's will (ver. 8), is interpreted to involve 'a show of sanctity,' which in reality was 'impiety,' or a cunning device to enhance his importance in the eyes of the strangers, as he would have known God's will without enquiring, if his wicked inclination, which was ready to assist the Moabites, had not obscured his mind: an unbiased construction will see in that request nothing but the most perfect self-denial. Again, God's interrogation, 'Who are these men that are with thee?' (ver. 9) is asserted to imply a severe reproof to Balaam, meant to break the stubbornness of his sinful disposition, because, 'led astray by greed and vanity,' he had not at once sent back the messengers with an unqualified refusal, since he knew that Israel was the blessed people of God: but such an introductory question is in admirable harmony with a narrative so calm and so gradually advancing (comp. Gen. iii. 9; iv. 9; xvi. 8; Exod. iv. 2; Job i. 7; ii. 2; *Ebn Ezra*, פתחון ותחלה, רבוור; *Mendelssohn*, מודע לבינה, לכנוס עמו ברברים; so *Heidenheim*, *in loc.*); in a similar manner—and this should be conclusive—God says to Balaam after the arrival of the second embassy, 'If (אם) the men are come to call thee' (ver. 20), although God cannot be uncertain on the subject. But it may be instructive to quote, in addition, the outlines of an elaborate theory of fraud and astuteness attributed to Balaam by one of the most honest and most simple-minded of theologians—as another proof of the sad infatuation of prejudice. Balaam had no doubt heard, says Rosenmüller (*Scholia ad vers. 8, 23; xxiii. 7*), that the Israelites were both most numerous and most warlike; he concluded, therefore, that they would surely defeat the Moabites. But the cunning man felt, that if he cursed the Hebrews and they were, nevertheless, victorious, he and his magical arts would fall into disrepute. On the other hand, he would not flatly decline the messengers' request, as he was unwilling to lose the large gifts which the king had promised. In this dilemma, he determined, indeed, not to curse the Israelites, but to act so, that the Moabites and their allies might consider him as a favoured friend of God. With this view he feigned to hold

consultations with God and to receive His replies, invented the whole story about the ass and the angel, and compiled out of his fancy prophecies so vague and obscure, that any impostor might safely have hazarded them. And this is alleged to be the spirit and meaning of the narrative! (Comp. also *Lange*, *Bibelwerk*, ii. 311, who sees in vers. 9-14 a delineation of 'Bileam's formheiligen aber herzlosen Widerstand').—Numerous formulas of imprecatory charms or curses and exorcisms have been deciphered on ancient Babylonian and Assyrian tablets, some of which date back at least to the 16th century B.C. (see *Records of the Past*, i. 131-135; iii. 138-154, etc.; 'The curse like an evil demon acts against the man,' etc., *ibid.* p. 147; comp. also the powerful imprecations levelled by Tiglath-pileser I., Sargon, Assur-nasir-pal, and other Assyrian kings against those who should neglect or injure their commemorative tablets, cylinders, or buildings, *ibid.* v. 26; vii. 19, 20, 56, etc.).—We have above pointed out some analogies between this section and the blessing of Isaac (in *Gen.* xxvii.), and shall, in the course of these notes, have occasion to refer to the parallel again; but this very repetition seems to militate against assigning both compositions to the same author. That *Genesis* xxvii. is an adaptation on the model of these chapters, is rendered probable by the time, the conception, the language, and the tendency; for the date of Isaac's blessing is later (*viz.*, the ninth century, as the deliverance of the Edomites in Jehoram's reign is alluded to, *Gen.* xxvii. 46); the conception is less simple; the language less concise and pithy, and the tendency more mythical, since it attributes to one early ancestor, what here, in a more historical spirit, is referred to the whole nation (see *supra*, p. 62).—The phrase ארץ בני עמון (ver. 5) 'his native country' (that of Balaam, not of Balak) may be unusual instead of the simple ארצו (ver. 13; *Gen.* xii. 1; xxiv. 4, etc.), but it is intelligible and idiomatic (comp. *Gen.* xxiii. 11; *Lev.* xx. 17; *Judg.* xiv. 16), and should certainly not be abandoned in favour of ארץ בני עמון, found in the Samaritan text, the Samaritan and Syriac versions, the Vulgate, and some manuscripts (see *De-Rossi*, *Var. Lect.* ii. 15; *Kennicott*, *Disserat.* General. pp. 77, 369; *Corn. a Lapide*, *Houbigant*, *Geddes*,

Clarke, and others); for the Ammonites, though inhabiting some of the eastern districts of Gilead, and perhaps, at times, even advancing as far as the Euphrates, never spread beyond this river; yet Balaam is called an *Aramæan* (xxiii. 7; Deut. xxiii. 5).—אֲרָמִי may be taken in apposition to פְּתוּר or to אִשְׂרָאֵל הַנְּהַר; either construction implies a free, but not uncommon use of the absolute case (see Gram. § 86.4.e).—The abruptness and incoherency produced by the asyndentic הִנֵּה the second time, are in excellent keeping with the character of the king's charge; we would, therefore, not read וְהִנֵּה with the *Samar. Text* and *Vers., Sept.*, and a considerable number of manuscripts (see *De-Rossi*, l. c.).—The phrase 'covering the face (צִי) of the land,' is properly employed of swarms of locusts settling on the ground (Exod. x. 5; see Comm. on Exodus, p. 164), and these again are used to describe large numbers of men, and especially great and ravaging armies of invaders (Judg. vi. 5; vii. 12). The same terms and images are used in the Assyrian inscription on the 'Taylor Cylinder' (col. v., lines 42–45): 'They united their armies, and as a mighty swarm of locusts covers the face of the earth, they rushed against me in destroying multitudes.'—אָרַח (ver. 6) *curse*, the imperat. Kal of אָרַח with הַּ paragog., the vowel *a* being irregularly substituted for *o*, as in בָּרַח (Ps. lxxx. 16) *protect*, and other imperatives and infinitives of verbs ע"ע; while the imperat. קָרַח (*ko-vah*, in vers. 11, 17), of קָרַח *to execrate*, is shortened instead of קָרַח; see Gram. § lxii. 3.a, p. 209. Throughout this section the root קָרַח is used (vers. 11, 17; xxiii. 8, 11, 13, 25, 27; xxiv. 10), and not קָרַח, on which see Comm. on Lev. ii. p. 529.—It may deserve to be noticed that Balak does not, like God and Balaam, simply speak of cursing the Hebrews (xxii. 12; xxiii. 8), but invariably and scrupulously puts the request, 'curse this people *for me*' (לִּי, xxii. 6, 11, 17; xxiii. 7, 13, 27); he demands a specific curse of the Israelites in direct and express reference to himself, which will be intelligible by remembering the minute exactness with which Eastern imprecations, charms, and exorcisms mention the names and describe the identity of the respective persons—in order to prevent the gods from making a mistake.—The combination אֲרַח־בְּנֵי אֲרַח־בְּנֵי exemplifies the formal—not the

logical—looseness of Hebrew syntax in a double way: first, two verbs, of which one is properly subordinate to the other, are co-ordinated (comp. Esth. viii. 6, אֶנְכִּל יִרְאֵתִי *I shall be able to see*), since נִכֵּן is the future Hiphil (comp. Josh. x. 4), not—as *Ebn Ezra, Kimchi, Zunz*, and others suppose—the infinitive of Piel, for although נִכֵּן is in one passage found in Pual (Exod. ix. 31, 32), it never occurs in Piel; and then the first person singular is, with a frequent *anallage*, followed by the first person plural, ‘I shall be able, we shall smite them,’ for ‘I shall be able to smite them’ (see Gram. §§ 104. 1; lxxvii. 21. 4; comp. ver. 11, אֶנְכִּל לְהִלָּחֵם בּוֹ). The change in the numbers is easily explained by understanding ‘I and my people’ (*Rashi, Saadiah*, and others), or by remembering that Balak intended fighting against the Hebrews in conjunction with his allies, the Midianites; while some (as *Abarban., Sal. b. Melech*, and others) explain ‘I—Balak—by war, and thou—Balaam—by curses or stratagems,’ which seems artificial.—How did Balak know that Balaam’s blessing and curse were so efficacious? Jewish tradition answers: The Amorite king Sihon, before beginning his expedition against the Moabites, hired Balaam to curse the latter, who consequently suffered a most disastrous defeat (xxi. 26; see *Midr. Rabb. Num. xx. 2*). Some (as *Origen*, In Num. Hom. xiii. 4–6) allowed, indeed, that Balaam was skilled in imprecations, but denied that, as an instrument of evil demons, he had any power to bless, which Balak attributed to him only ‘to flatter him and to render him compliant with his wishes:’ but if this were the author’s meaning, what would be the value of the following elaborate benedictions, which prove that Balaam was at least not uniformly in the service of the powers of mischief? Balak entreats Balaam emphatically, ‘Neither shalt thou curse them, nor shalt thou bless them’ (xxiii. 25), thus placing curse and blessing on the same level of potency. Some Jewish authorities (as *Bechai* on ver. 20, and others) go farther and maintain that neither Balaam’s blessing nor his curse had, in the writer’s opinion, any real efficacy; for he blessed himself, ‘Let me die the death of the righteous’ (xxiii. 10), and yet he died a premature and disgraceful death in battle (xxx. 8); and he was prevented by God

from cursing the Israelites, not because his curse would have had any significance, but lest people should attribute to it the pestilence which, as God foresaw, would soon befall the Hebrews (xxv. 9); by his astrological knowledge he learnt the seasons when God meant to inflict misfortunes; at such times he uttered imprecations, and thus he acquired his fame. The radical defect in explanations like these lies in mixing up this section with other and quite heterogeneous portions of the Book of Numbers (see pp. 3-6); neither Balaam's ignominious death nor his infamous counsels, which are supposed to have caused the plague, can be brought into connection with these chapters, in which the utterances of Balaam are represented as no less powerful for good or evil than those of any other prophet or 'man of God.'—In ver. 8 the princes of Moab only are mentioned, and not 'the elders of Midian' (ver. 7) also, simply because the former were no doubt the spokesmen of the embassy, and the latter were likewise sent by the king of Moab (comp. vers. 13, 14): other explanations of the omission, which have been proposed in great variety, seem unnecessary.—'God came (אֱלֹהִים) to Balaam' (ver. 9) in the night (comp. ver. 20, חַלְמֵי), in dream vision (see *supra*, p. 16, note *d*). Before Assur-bani-pal marched out against the revolted provinces of Babylon, we are told in his deciphered 'Annals' (col. 4, lines 48-55) that 'a seer in the beginning of the night slept and dreamed a dream,' in which the god Sin revealed to him the successful issue of the campaign, upon which the king adds, 'This I heard, and trusted to the will of Sin, my lord' (Records of the Past, I. 74, 75; comp. pp. 83, 89, 90). The dream of a seer, to whom the goddess Ishtar appeared, re-assured the same king at his impending war against the Elamites (l. c. vii. 68).—אֲלֹהֵי is rendered inaccurately by the *Sept.* (λαῖς) and others in disregarding the article, which is here essential (see *supra*).—The command, 'Thou shalt not go with them' (ver. 12), is, without a conjunction, followed by 'Thou shalt not curse the people,' for the one includes the other, since Balaam can pronounce the curse only in Moab; the two verbs do not convey two distinct prohibitions, and several times 'going' is alone employed to

express all that is required of Balaam (vers. 13, 14, 16); the *Sept.*, *Vulg.*, and others, incorrectly join both verbs by *ovêé*, neque, etc., and similarly the *Sam. Text* and *Vers.*, and others. — לְהַתְּנֵי (ver. 13) *to allow me*, for לְהַתְּנֵי; as, conversely, וְיָבִי (Ezek. xlvii. 7) *my returning*, for וְיָבִי; see Gram. § liv. 1. c. — הִלֵּךְ (vers. 13, 14), a rare form of the infinitive, instead of הִלְכָה (comp. Exod. iii. 19; Job xxxiv. 23; Eccl. vi. 8, 9); and similarly the future הִלְכֶנָּה, הִלְכֶנָּה, etc., and the imperative הִלְכֵנִי (Jer. li. 50); see Gram. § lxiv. 12.—Origen (l. c.) argues: God does not, as a rule, appear to magicians; why, then, did He appear to Balaam? From the love He bore to His people, lest Balaam, as was his wont, should curse them by the aid of evil demons ('Venit ergo Deus ad Balaam, non quod dignus esset, ad quem veniret, sed ut fugarenter illi qui ei ad maledicendum et malefaciendum adesse consueverant; comp. also *Corn. a Lapide* on ver. 8, Deus pro dæmone ei se obtulit, idque non ejus sed Hebraeorum gratia, etc.).

4. SECOND MESSAGE. XXII. 15-21.

15. And Balak sent yet again princes, more numerous and more distinguished than those. 16. And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus says Balak, the son of Zippor, Do not, I pray thee, withhold thyself from coming to me; 17. For I will honour thee greatly, and will do whatsoever thou sayest to me: come, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people. 18. And Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go against the command of the Lord my God, to do a small or a great *thing*. 19. Now, therefore, I pray you, remain you also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say to me more. 20. And God

came to Balaam at night, and said to him, If the men are come to call thee, rise *and* go with them ; but only that which I shall tell thee, that shalt thou do. 21. And Balaam rose in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

The king of Moab was *not* warned by Balaam's first refusal. If anything can serve him as an excuse, it is the obtuseness of the messengers, who reported to him Balaam's answer so imperfectly in the one main point. But he increases his guilt by striving to subvert Heaven's decrees with more determined obstinacy than ever. He despatches to the seer a second message, in which, compared to the first, everything is enlarged and intensified. On both sides greater vigour and energy are displayed in the awful struggle. The embassy is more numerous, and composed of men of higher eminence. The king's request is more urgent and decided. His promises to Balaam, more splendid and more tempting, hold out to him honours, power, treasures, in fact all that can move and influence human ambition. But more decided also, on the other hand, is Balaam's refusal, more forcible his declaration of absolute submission under the will of God, whom he now distinctly calls *his* God. So clear and well-balanced a mind is indeed incapable of exaggeration, but he uses solemn protests which almost pass to the extreme boundary of emphatic earnestness : ' If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go against the command of the Lord my God, to do a small or a great thing ' (ver. 18). As all else in this narrative is marked by the most delicate psychological truth, so especially Balaam's unusually strong reply, for it reflects both the temptation that may have assailed him, and the heroic resolve with which he casts it aside.

Balaam again delays his answer to the envoys till

the next morning; he tells them that he is awaiting Divine counsel in the night, and that he will act as he may be directed. So far, there is no difference, except in degree, between the incidents of the first and the second embassy, and the one may, with that single qualification, be regarded as a repetition of the other. Will now the command of God also be the same as before? Those familiar with the spirit of the Hebrew Scriptures will hardly expect it. As God revokes the decree of destruction announced against the people of Nineveh, because they abandon their evil ways; but as, on the other hand, He draws Pharaoh deeper and deeper into disaster and perdition, because that monarch, in spite of all warnings, hardens his heart and perseveres in the impious contest; so must Balak, king of Moab, bear the fatal consequences of his blindness and obduracy. Once he had received from God an unmistakeable admonition, which ought to have induced him to earnest reflection. But instead of retreating, he sets his own resolution against that of Providence with even greater refractoriness, and he hastens into ruin. The Biblical doctrine of free will is, with sufficient correctness, expressed in the Talmudical adages, 'If a man is disposed to sin, the door is opened for him; if he is disposed to do right, he is assisted;'^a 'Everything is a gift of God, except the fear of God,' which must be man's own choice;^b and 'Man is conducted in the path on which he is desirous to walk.'^c These maxims are certainly much nearer the truth than the teaching of Maimonides, who, although vindicating to man free will as an intrinsic attribute of his nature, yet holds that God—the God of justice and mercy—inflicts upon great sinners 'hardening of the heart' as a punishment,

^a *Talm.* Shabb. 104a; Yoma 38b;
בא לטמא פתחין לו בא לטהר
מוסייעים אותו.

^b *Talm.* Berach. 33b, הכל בידי
השמים; הוין מיראת שמים
Rashi in loc.

^c *Talm.* Macc. 10b; *Midr. Tanch.*
בדרך שאדם רוצה לילך;
Balak, § 8; בה מוליכין אותו.
Comp. Mishn.
הכל צפוי והרשות,
Avoth, iii. 15, נתונה וכו'.
Saadiath, *Emun. Ved.*,
iv. 10.

deprives them of the liberty of repentance, and makes them sink from iniquity to iniquity.^a After his first repulse, Balak was free to withdraw from his rebellious design without injury and without chastisement. But he persisted in that design; he himself—not God—hardened his heart; and now God's inevitable retribution must take its inexorable course. It is *for this reason* that Balaam receives the permission, denied before, of repairing with the messengers to Moab. There can be no question of arbitrariness or fickleness on the part of God, nor of a reproachful action on the part of Balaam. The chief actors in this solemn drama are not God and Balaam, *but God and Balak*. If this point, which seems so clear and obvious, is kept in view, the narrative readily reveals its lucid plan, its compact unity, and its majestic progress. Balak has not rested till he has brought his over-powerful opponent—for God speaks and acts through Balaam—face to face with himself. He is soon to learn the terrible danger he has conjured up for himself and his country.

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—The one error just alluded to has been the fruitful root of a hundred strange and almost inconceivable perversions. It has misled even those who, closely approaching to a true appreciation of this section, justly described it as 'a grand creation of the Hebrew mind,' and yet found in it 'the real expression of the forced acknowledgment of Israel's high destinies on the part of the hostile men of intellect among the heathens' (*Bunsen, Bibelwerk, v. 599*): those who were to be forced to such an acknowledgment, were not the men of intellect like Balaam, who are considered as no enemies to Israel, but the selfish and blind idolaters like Balak, who were hostile to the people of Israel, because they had no capacity for understanding its aims and aspirations. Balaam has almost uniformly been drawn into the fore-

^a Comp. *Maim. Yad Chazak.*, Hilch. Teshuv. V. 1 *sqq.*, vi. 3; *Shemonah Perakim*, chap. viii.

ground, whereas the text assigns to him an absolutely passive part, to which he remains faithful with unvarying modesty (see notes on xxii. 41-xxiii. 6).—The first messengers, it is asserted, had well perceived how reluctantly Balaam dismissed them; guided by their report, Balak now endeavoured to gratify the chief passions of the seer, whose refusal, he was convinced, had only been an artifice for obtaining better terms (*Hengstenb. Bil.*, p. 41). If, as is not impossible, the author attributes to the heathen messengers and the heathen king of Moab such unworthy views, this ought to be no reason for a man like Calvin and his many followers to think as meanly of Balaam ('flexiloqua sua excusatione visus est accendere desiderium stulti regis, quo pluris suam maledictionem venderet'; *Michaelis*: 'Balaam had feigned God's prohibition in order to extort more favourable conditions'; *Oort*, l. c., p. 7; *Lange*, *Bibelwerk*, ii. 311, and others); and the author could not foresee that those who are privileged to survey the whole of Balaam's proceedings from the high vantage-ground of Hebrew prophecy, would fall into the same gross errors as those who beheld but single and fragmentary facts through the distorting mirror of fear and superstition.—'If Balaam,' it is further contended, 'had not at heart remained, as he had been before, a pagan prophet inclined to untruth and worldly baseness, he would, after God's first and distinct prohibition, at once have rejected the king's second invitation; but human honour and greed of money, which he loved so much from the beginning, still lingered in the profoundest depths of his heart' (*Ewald*, *Jahrbücher*, viii. p. 19; and similarly a host of other writers; comp. *Joseph. Ant.* IV. vi. 3; *Deyling*, *Observationes* iii. p. 204; *Canon Cook's Holy Bible*, on ver. 20, etc.). But Balaam—that is, the author, who makes Balaam act—discerned the ways of God more clearly than his critics. He knew that there are cases when God annuls His first decree. He had not the presumption to decide whether this was such a case or not, but, as a faithful servant of God, referred it to Him, his Master. Is there, in all this, any 'untruth' or 'baseness'? No prophet of Israel ever acted more truthfully or more nobly. And if the author lets Balaam say, with uncommon force, and as distinctly as

human language can express it, that all the gold and silver of a royal palace are to him as nothing in relation to God's command, who will venture to insist, with pertinacious ingenuity, that Balaam was unable to bridle his secret passion for sordid gain, and that, notwithstanding the truth, which ought at last to have been clear to him, he clung, in the recesses of his heart, too fondly to all that is false and wicked? It was not Balaam who had arrived at a dangerous and 'critical juncture,' but the king of Moab, who continued to use the seer in his unholy warfare against Destiny. But as some found those words of Balaam (ver. 18) too clear even for the subtlest casuistry, they endeavoured to obscure their sense by joining them with the prophet's succeeding invitation to the ambassadors to remain till he had learnt God's pleasure (ver. 19), in which request they discovered a most horrible crime—a 'plus quam sacrilega impietas,' since Balaam's schemes were bent upon nothing less than upon 'inducing God, by the repeal of the prohibition, even to abnegate Himself,' to change His will and, consequently, His very nature' (*Hengstenb. Bil.*, p. 42). Into what fearful abysses of moral and spiritual corruption are glimpses opened to us by pious expositors! We may well shudder at the possible effects of such merciless dialectics, and we almost cease to wonder how the great reformer Calvin, who is foremost among the misinterpreters of this section, by his keen-edged and impetuous rhetoric, brought a Servetus to the stake. Abraham, Moses, and many other God-fearing men, endeavoured to change, by supplication, the Divine will and decree, and God Himself requested Abraham and Job to pray for those by whom they had been wronged, in order to avert their punishment (Gen. xx. 7; Job xlii. 8; see *Comm. on Lev.*, i. p. 301). But it is neither stated nor hinted at that Balaam ever made such an attempt, which would be repugnant to the spirit of the portion. We confess, it seems to us indeed 'plus quam sacrilega impietas' on the part of theologians of whatever creed, to sully so sublime a composition, merely because they cannot prevail upon their narrowness to allow to a heathen the gift of true prophecy, which was cheerfully accorded to him by a Hebrew writer nearly three thousand years ago.—Moreover, a variety

of vague surmises and fancies have been thrown out, of which no sound interpretation can approve. Balaam, it is said, asked God to be permitted to comply with Balak's wish, and God yielded to his 'hypocritical importunity.' (*Origen*, In Num. Hom. xiii. 8, *Molestus est Balaam Deo, et extorquet propemodum permitti sibi ut eat, etc.*; xiv. 1, and others): the words 'Rise and go with them' (ver. 20), did not convey a command or charge, but merely consent and permission, since God, seeing Balaam insolently persist in his wicked scheme, did not desire to interfere with his liberty of action, and Balaam availed himself of that permission with a culpable eagerness, which he proved by rising early the next morning and saddling his ass with his own hand: had he received the least intimation that he was to bless the Israelites in Moab, he would surely have refused to go, wherefore he was left in uncertainty on that point; and guided by the secret wish of his heart, he assumed that God, in retracting the prohibition of the journey, retracted also the prohibition of the curse (so *Knobel*, Num., pp. 122, 132, and many others). With a slight modification, even Maimonides' idea, above alluded to, has been repeated by recent writers: when Balaam's impious design of using God for his selfish purposes became apparent, the journey, 'which was to result in his destruction,' was permitted to him as a punishment (*Hengstenb. Bil.*, pp. 44, 45, and others). What is there in the Biblical text that can countenance any of these conceptions? The Hebrew language would really be that obscure and perplexing hieroglyphic, which some contend it to be, if such a sense could be deciphered from these verses. Understood in their natural context, they mean just the reverse. Balaam has no personal desire whatever. There is not even a trace of an anxiety, perhaps legitimate on his part, to assist natives and friends against invaders. He puts to God no request; he merely consults Him; and he is expressly commanded to go to Moab, because he has been appointed as an instrument in the execution of that Divine judgment which had been called forth by Balak's conduct. But in what sense Balaam's journey 'resulted in his destruction,' it is indeed difficult to see (comp. also *Ebn Ezra* on ver. 19, who tries to establish

an artificial parallel with Num. xiii. 2 *sqq.*, but is refuted by *Nachmanides* in loc.). The following view may illustrate how little the depth of this remarkable composition has been fathomed even by candid critics. As God—it is observed—did not require the foreign prophet's blessing for Israel's welfare, He, at first, forbade the journey, but then allowed it, 'because, after all, the benedictions of the famous seer might be useful to Him as a means of encouraging Israel and disheartening their enemies, although He did not exactly want them' (*Knobel*, Num., p. 132, comp. p. 122). On so weak and tottering a foundation, it would never have been possible to raise so exalted and so powerful a creation. This must relate to something more than a few speeches of praise, supposed to be of so little consequence that they might as well have been dispensed with. The Book of Balaam enforces momentous principles, bearing not only on the election of Israel, but on eternal and universal Providence.—*וַיִּשְׁלַח אֱלֹהִים* (ver. 15), *he sent again or once more* (comp. ver. 19); see Gram. §103. 1.—*לֹא אֹכֵל וּבֹרֵא*, *I am unable to go against the command of the Lord* (ver. 18; comp. 1 Sam. xv. 24), denoting a *moral* impossibility (comp. ver. 38; xxiii. 12, 26; xxiv. 13), and not—who would believe that it has ever been contended!—a physical one, as if God moved and directed Balaam's mouth and organs of speech mechanically (see *supra*, p. 49). Nor do those words imply 'fear of Divine punishment,' for Balaam is so completely devoted to God's service, that he follows His guidance from internal necessity, yet with such spontaneous readiness, that he knows of no conflict, much less of fear. It is true that, in this case, Balaam's *deed* is mainly his *word*; but as the injunctions he receives from God include other, though more subordinate, points besides, as, for instance, his travelling to Moab, the text fitly alternates *doing* and *speaking* (the former in vers. 18, 20; the latter in ver. 38; xxiii. 12; xxiv. 13). However evident this may seem, we are induced to notice it explicitly, because this matter also has been most strangely misunderstood.—'A small or a great thing' (ver. 18) is, of course, like 'a good or a bad thing' (in xxiv. 13), merely an emphatic periphrasis for 'anything,' and does not allude to Balaam's 'going' and 'cursing' respectively (so *Abarban.* and others).—*וַיִּשְׁלַח* (ver. 19),

here, corresponding to $\pi\text{ב}$, in ver. 8; comp. Gen. xxxviii. 21.—The conditional clause, ‘If the men are come to call thee’ (ver. 20), is analogous to the former question, ‘Who are these men that are with thee?’ (ver. 9), and serves, therefore, like the latter, to continue the calm flow of the narrative; but even in this fact a warning and a reproach against Balaam have been discovered, as if God, ‘granting a forced and reluctant permission,’ had said, ‘If, in spite of previous admonitions, you will follow the men at any price, go!’—a bold ellipsis suggested by fancy.—The text does not mention the terms in which Balaam imparted to the messengers God’s second reply, nor was this necessary, since Balaam’s preparations for the journey, coupled with his previous announcement to the ambassadors concerning his absolute dependence on God (ver. 18), conveyed the whole sum of God’s answer. With little justice, therefore, has that circumstance been held to point to a sinister reservation on Balaam’s part, as if in the depth of his heart all his evil passions were silently brooding over Israel’s destruction. On the other hand, it has been interpreted as culpable duplicity; for Balaam, it is urged, ought plainly to have told the envoys that he knew he could, on no account, curse Israel, and that, therefore, his journey would bring no gain to the king of Moab (so *Abarban.* in loc., fol. 54a, and others). But the journey was, in the author’s large conception, necessary, not to bring profit to the king of Moab, but retribution.

5. THE JOURNEY. XXII. 22-35.

22. And God’s anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the Lord placed himself in the way to withstand him; and he was riding on his ass, and his two servants *were* with him.
 23. And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and the ass turned aside out of the way,

and went into the field; and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. 24. Then the angel of the Lord stood in a hollow path of the vineyards, a wall *being* on this side and a wall on that side. 25. And the ass saw the angel of the Lord, and she pressed herself against the wall, and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall; and he smote her again. 26. And the angel of the Lord went farther again, and stood in a narrow place, where *there was* no way to turn *either* to the right hand or to the left. 27. And the ass saw the angel of the Lord, and she fell down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with the staff. 28. Then the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said to Balaam, What have I done to thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? 29. And Balaam said to the ass, Because thou hast mocked me; if there were a sword in my hand, surely I should now have killed thee. 30. And the ass said to Balaam, *Am* I not thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden from thy earliest years to this day? was I ever wont to do so to thee? And he said, No. 31. Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and he bowed down and fell on his face. 32. And the angel of the Lord said to him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? Behold, I went out to withstand *thee*, because *thy* way is pernicious before me. 33. And the ass saw me, and turned from me these

three times ; unless she had turned from me, surely I should now have killed thee and saved her alive. 34. And Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, I have sinned, because I knew not that thou wast standing in the way against me ; now, therefore, if it displease thee, I will return. 35. And the angel of the Lord said to Balaam, Go with the men, but only the word that I shall speak to thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

It would be a vain effort were we to try, by joining these verses to the preceding portion, to carry on the story in even continuity. Everything, from the first to the last word, indicates that we have before us a distinct composition written by a different and a later hand. We have just read how Balaam was commanded by God to go with the ambassadors, under the condition, of course, that he should only speak what God would suggest. But scarcely had he set out when 'God's anger was kindled that he went.' Very peremptory measures were required to bring him to a sense of his guilt, and when he at last perceived and acknowledged it, the former order to travel to Moab was repeated^a—the narrative returns to the abandoned groove, and the episode is rendered purposeless and superfluous. Does a writer of genius relate with such confusion and self-contradiction ? And in what light does God appear ? We have shown that, under certain circumstances, He indeed alters His resolves and injunctions. But He does so only if men occasion and justify the change by their conduct. In the present instance nothing whatever has happened in the interval between God's permission and His wrath to account for the transition of the one into the other.

^a Vers. 20, 22, 34, 35.

His change of mind seems purely capricious. He does not appear as the wise Ruler governing the world by a fixed design, but as an arbitrary Eastern despot knowing no other law but his fickle humour. Such considerations alone are sufficient to mark these verses as an interpolation; but we may add another reason even more important and decisive. The kernel of the whole section, as we have repeatedly pointed out, is *Balak's* contention against God and His decrees; but in these verses that deliberate plan is abandoned and altered into a struggle between God and *Balaam*. Every thoughtful reader must be struck by this remarkable shifting of the main interest. How was it that Balaam, who till then had lived in undisturbed tranquillity of mind and perfect submission to God, and who, in the whole of the subsequent narrative, is seen in the same harmony of character, was suddenly and transitorily drawn into this grave conflict? Was it necessary that a seer, who again and again had declared his unconditional devotion to God, and had invariably obeyed God's gentlest hints, should be terrified and admonished by an angel appearing with drawn sword and threatening him with death? And lastly, how different is the spirit of the episode from that of the bulk of the composition! The latter includes *supernatural* elements—revelations by vision and dream and prophetic utterances—all of which involve the ideal truth of a close relation of the spirit of man, in its highest moments of fervent transport, with the Divine spirit to which it is akin. But the episode includes the *unnatural* element of a distinctly articulating animal—of an ass, which sees an angel of God, and, in its fright, turns away from him; which complains of unjust treatment in pathetic words, and with which its master, by no means surprised at the animal's address, enters into dialogue. And, to complete the marvel, Balaam himself, whom we have seen to enjoy

a constant and familiar intercourse with God, does not, for a considerable time, behold a Divine apparition at once beheld by his beast. Here, as few have hesitated to acknowledge, the eternal boundaries fixed by nature between man and animal are heedlessly overthrown.^a Analogous stories of speaking beasts are indeed sufficiently numerous, but they belong without exception to the darkest periods or meanest phases of heathen superstition. They are monstrous *prodigia* invented, in extraordinary times, by wonder-loving credulity, and they refuse to be allied with any higher idea. For such remarks as, 'Surely an animal is often more intelligent and foreboding than a foolish man,'^b or, 'The irrational beast has a finer instinctive presentiment of many natural phenomena than man with the five senses of his mind ;'^c these and similar suggestions are hardly more than phrases devoid of definite meaning.^d But even more questionable is the categorical declaration that 'parallels taken from paganism lose all importance by the very fact that they are borrowed from *paganism* :'^e they lose their importance for those only who, wilfully disarding all historical exposition of the Scriptures, are determined to isolate

^a Though some have found it possible to doubt even this point. 'La chose est miraculeuse,' says Calmet (Dictionn. 1. 720), 'et au-dessus de la faculté ordinaire de cet animal ; mais elle n'est pas contre les lois de la nature.'

^b Ewald, Knobel.

^c Keil and others.

^d Comp. also *Lange*, Genesis, p. lxxix., 'horses and donkeys . . . have a wonderful disposition to recognise spiritual operations or, in their manner, to see spirits'; *Köhler*, *Bibl. Gesch.* i. 325, 'The ass perceived, by a natural impression, that she

was opposed by a higher power,' etc. Similarly *Nachmanides*, *Bechai*, and other Jewish interpreters: 'The ass did not really see the angel, but was darkly aware of the presence of something unusual or preternatural, which frightened her,' etc.; comp. Dan. x. 7: Daniel's companions, though not seeing the vision, were seized with great terror, so that they fled in consternation to hide themselves; Acts ix. 7, 'The men who journeyed with him—Saul—stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man'; see *infra*.

^e Hengstenberg.

them from all the principal spheres of human and intellectual interest. There is a poetical beauty, there may be a poetical truth, in Homer's 'immortal horse' Xanthus, the offspring of Zephyros and the Harpy Podarge, which, after having been familiarly addressed by its master Achilles, prophesies his impending death in mournful words; on which occasion, as is expressly stated, 'lily-armed Here endowed with speech' the wonderfully descended horse, while after it had finished, 'the Erinnyes checked its voice.'^a We can understand that Virgil, to express his sense of the unnatural enormity of Cæsar's assassination, poetically describes the utter reversion of the order of nature, so that not only rivers stopped their courses and ivory images wept in the temples, but 'cattle spoke.'^b But if we read that, in the reign of the Egyptian king Bocchoris, a lamb with double head and double limbs 'spoke in articulated sounds';^c or that the golden-fleeced ram of Phrixus 'gave forth human speech,' that he might be a cause of misery to many;^d or if we are assured that 'in ancient times it was a common prodigy that an ox spoke,'^e and consequently Roman historians and poets record such a wonder in nearly every period—in the early struggles with neighbouring tribes, in the Punic wars, during the civil dissensions, and especially at Cæsar's hostile approach to Rome—and couple it with other *portenta* hardly less extraordinary:^f if we read of these and

^a *Hom.* Il. xvi. 150, 154; xix. 404-423.

^b Pecu-desque locutæ—infandum! *Virg.* *Georg.* i. 466-488. For the speaking of animals seems generally to have been considered an ominous event (comp. *Lucian*, *Galus* s. *Somnium*, § 2, ὦ Ζεῦ τεράστικε . . . τί τὸ κακὸν τοῦτ' ἐστίν; ἀνθρωπικῶς ἐλάλησεν ἀλεκτρών).
^c Πήξαι φωνήν, *Æl. Nat. An.* xii. 3.

^d *Apoll. Rhod.* i. 257, 258, αὐδὴν ἀνδρόειν προέηκε.

^e *Plin.* *Nat. Hist.* viii. 45 or 70.

^f *Comp. Livy*, iii. 10; xxiv. 10; xxvii. 11; xxxv. 21, bovem locutum, 'Roma cave tibi'; xliii. 13, bovem feminam locutam publice ali; *Lucan*, *Phars.* i. 524-583, Tunc pecudum faciles humana ad murmura lingue; *Val. Max.* I. vi. 5, bos mugitu suo in sermonem humanum converso.

many similar fables that might easily be added, we are justified in asking what *they* have in common with the dignity, the grandeur, and elevated truth of Balaam's conduct and prophecies, and we feel an involuntary repugnance to identify the author of these vaticinations with the author of the episode of the menacing angel and the speaking ass. To the latter writer we must, indeed, do the justice to admit that he faithfully preserved the spirit of the main narrative at least in the one chief point of representing Balaam as a sincere worshipper of Jahveh, ready to obey His directions as soon as he had comprehended them.^a But, whether the episode was written in connection with the narrative or independently of it, he considered it impossible that Balaam should have entered upon the expedition with pure intentions, and should not, allured by Balak's promised treasures and honours, have fostered the secret design of malignantly cursing Israel. He, therefore, introduced a Divine messenger angrily opposing Balaam^b and distinctly declaring that he regarded his journey as 'pernicious.'^c But in pursuing this course, the interpolator was naturally compelled to take all the preceding and subsequent parts of the composition in the same hostile sense, and he may possibly have understood them not very differently from those later interpreters who imputed to Balaam every vice and baseness. Nor is it improbable that, like these, he was led into his misconceptions by those diverging and detracting traditions concerning Balaam which made him meet his death among Israel's arch-enemies and vilest seducers.^d Such is the inevitable confusion caused by blind attempts at welding together incongruities; and so rapidly waned in Israel the free and large-minded spirit of prophecy—yet,

^a Vers. 31-34.

^b אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה, vers. 22, 32.

^c טָרָא, ver. 32.

^d xxxi. 8, 16.

fortunately, 'like the terebinth and the oak which, when cut down, leave their stem, a holy seed.'

What pains, what displays of acumen and erudition have been lavished in justifying or explaining the speaking of the ass! For not many had the courage and candour to construe, in its obvious sense, the unequivocal statement, 'The Lord opened the mouth of the ass and she said to Balaam.'^a So it is, indeed, correctly construed in the New Testament which affirms that 'the dumb ass speaking with man's voice'^b was a rebuke of Balaam's iniquity and a check to his madness,^c and by most of the Christian Fathers;^d so also by Josephus,^e who, though representing Balaam as embarrassed and 'perplexed' at the ass's human voice, lets her even speak of 'a Divine Providence'^f that hindered her from moving onward; and similarly by some ancient and modern writers who deemed it a duty plainly to interpret plain words of the Bible.^g Not so those who endeavoured to come to its rescue with a false philosophy or a false piety. Philo, evidently unable to find an explanation satisfactory to his ideal spiritualism, dwells indeed on the appearance of the angel, and fully describes the uneasiness and fright which it caused to the ass, but he makes no allusion whatever to the animal's speaking.^h Some contended 'that not the ass spoke but an angel in her stead,'

^a Ver. 28.

^b Ἐν ἀνθρώπου φωνῇ φθιγγίζαμενον. ^c 2 Pet. ii. 16.

^d See *Augustin*, Quæst. 48 and 50 in Genes., and others; comp. *Calmet*, Diction. I. 719.

^e Ant. IV. vi. 3, κατὰ βούλησιν Θεοῦ φωνῆν ἀνθρωπίνην λαβοῦσα.

^f Θεοῦ προαίρεσις.

^g As *Augustin*, *Origen*, *Theodoret*, *Ambrosius*, etc.; *Cornel. a Lapide*, 'Movit angelus linguam asinae, ut loqueretur, sicut demon moverat os

serpentis, et sicut angelus movit os hippocentauri et satyri, ut loqueretur S. Antonio, eique in eremo viam ostenderent ad S. Paulum Eremitam; ' *Clericus*, *Calmet*, *De Geer*, *Baumgarten*, *Gerlach*, *Kurtz*, *Krummacher*, *Clarke*, 'If the ass had opened her own mouth and reproved the prophet, we might well be astonished; but when God opens the mouth, an ass can speak as well as a man,' and others; see *infra*.

^h *Ihilo*, Vit. Mos. i. 49.

as an angel spoke in Paradise instead of the serpent.^a Maimonides, always eager to systematise, went so far as to propound the principle that, wherever the Bible speaks of the apparition or address of an angel, 'a prophetic vision' or 'prophetic dream' is meant; and he asserted that 'everything which happened to Balaam on the road, including the speaking of his ass, took place in a prophetic vision'—exactly as the visit of 'the three angels' to Abraham in the grove of Mamre,^b Jacob's wrestling with the angel at Peniel,^c and the appearance of the angel whom Joshua saw at Jericho,^d happened solely in Abraham's, Jacob's, and Joshua's imagination as prophetic visions; while the voice of the angel heard by Hagar and by Manoah and his wife, who were in no manner qualified or prepared for prophetic communications, was nothing else but that 'sound' or 'echo of a voice,'^e which plays so great a part in Talmudical writings,^f and which, like the apparition of angels itself, is merely the hallucination of an overwrought fancy.^g It must be deemed a very questionable process on the part of interpreters to confound their own views with those of the Bible, and, grafting the former on the latter, to assume that, if *they* hold angelophanies or the speaking of animals to be impossible, the Biblical writers necessarily considered these matters in the same light. The belief that animals have their own language was far-spread in the ancient world. Porphyry, among others, devotes to this subject an elaborate argument. Though their language, he observes, is not generally understood by men, it was always intelligible to some favoured persons; as, in earlier ages, to Tiresias and to Melampus, who obtained

^a Saad., Corn. a Lap. (Balaam 'ab angelo, per os asinæ loquente, corripitur'), and others.

^b Gen. xviii.

^c Gen. xxxii. 25-31.

^d Josh. v. 13, 14.

^e בַּת קוֹל.

^f Comp. Matth. iii. 17; xvii. 5; John xii. 28.

^g *Maimon. Mor. Nevoch. ii. 42;* and similarly *Rulbay*, and many others.

that faculty after ‘dragons had licked his ears;’ and, in later times, to that mysterious sage, Apollonius of Tyana, to whom swallows made familiar communications, even when he was in the company of friends. He derived this wonderful skill from the Arabians. For ‘the Arabians,’ says Porphyry, ‘understand the ravens, the Tyrrhenians the eagles;’ while Philostratus maintains, more generally, that the Arabs and Indians can interpret the voices of all birds, which prophesy to them like oracles. But, apart from the aptitude shown by ravens, jackdaws, and parrots of repeating words they have frequently heard, and apart from the accounts concerning the ‘leucrocotta,’ a wild beast of extraordinary swiftness, in many respects resembling the lion, and which ‘is said to imitate the human voice,’^a it is stated, as a positive and notorious fact, that ‘the Indian hyena, called by the natives *carokotta*, speaks, even without any previous instruction, so humanly,^b that it is wont to go to inhabited houses and to call out any one whom it thinks it may be able to overcome;’ it imitates, therefore, the voice of that person’s dearest friend, at whose call he would most readily come out—by which adroit deception many persons have lost their lives!^c Various isolated instances of a kindred nature are recorded by classical writers. It may not be surprising to read of the speaking bull Jupiter^d and the speaking cock Pythagoras,^e but we are also told that an elephant advised the Indian king Porus, ‘with human speech,’ to submit to Alexander;^f and human words are attributed even to the sacred oak at Dodona and the keel of the ship Argo;^g while sacred trees in India were believed

^a *Plin.* N. H. viii. 21 or 30, hanc perniciosissimam teram . . . collo, cauda, pectore leonis, capite melium . . . humanas voces tradunt imitari.

^b Ἀνθροπικῶς.

^c *Porphyr.* De Abstin. iii. 3–5; *Philostrat.* Vit. Apollon. i. 20; iii.

9; comp. *Cic.* De Divin. i. 41 or 92; *Plin.* Nat. Hist. x. 49 or 70.

^d *Mosch.* Idyll. ii. 149 *sqq.*

^e *Lucian.* Gallus s. Somnium,

§§ 1 *sqq.*

^f *Plutarch.* De Fluviiis, i. 6.

^g *Lucian.* l. c. § 2.

to have predicted Alexander's fate and that of his nearest relations.^a In the Egyptian 'Tale of the Two Brothers,' which, to a certain extent, forms a remarkable parallel to the Biblical episode of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, it is related: 'The first cow entered into the stable and said to the keeper (the innocent and calumniated brother), "Verily, thy elder brother is standing before thee with his dagger to slay thee." He heard the speech of the first ox; the next one entered and spoke in the same way.'^b There can be no doubt that the Jews, in later times, entertained similar views. Josephus observes that, at first, all animals spoke as well as man,^c and the Rabbins declare that Solomon not only 'spoke of' (לַעֲרֹב) beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes,^d but *with* them, and that, like other wise men, he understood their language.^e But there are sufficient proofs even with respect to the Biblical period. We have not only the clear instance of the serpent in Paradise, at the speaking of which Eve showed as little surprise as Balaam did at that of the ass;^f but there is the well-known maxim of Ecclesiastes,^g 'Even in thy thought curse not the king . . . for the birds of the air will carry the voice and the winged creatures will tell^h the matter:' though these words may, in the writer's age, have been understood as a metaphor, expressing that nothing on earth remains unknown and unpunished, they had originally, like every other metaphor, a literal meaning,

^a Comp. *Corn. a Lapide*, on ver. 27.

^b Comp. *Rec. of the Past*, ii. 142; see also *Wilk. Wackernagel*, *Ursprung und Entwicklung der Sprache*, p. 5, where 'the colloquies' are referred to which, according to German and Celtic legends, 'the animals of the stable hold in the night of Christmas.'

^c Ant. I. i. 4. 'Ὁμοφρονούντων δὲ κατ' ἐκείνο καιροῦ τῶν ζώων ἀπάντων κ.τ.λ.

^d 1 Ki. v. 13.

^e Comp. *Koran*, xxvii. 15, 16, 'And Solomon said, O men, we have been taught the speech of birds,' etc.

^f Gen. iii. 1, 2.

^g x. 20.

^h 7'2'.

and imply that animals were once believed to speak and to 'tell' secrets.

The view of Maimonides was vehemently combated even by Jewish authorities of the Middle Ages.^a But it was too alluring not to be reproduced in that age, which attempted another unsuccessful compromise between tradition and reason, and it occurs again in the writings of Herder and his school with still greater distinctness and explicitness. That great and noble-minded divine who, in his enthusiastic appreciation of poetical beauties, often neglected, if he did not disdain, a critical analysis, supposed that Balaam, though at once inclined to accompany the first messengers, desisted in consequence of terrifying dreams sent by Israel's tutelary Deity; when the second embassy arrived, he was no longer able to master his worldly desires, and received permission for the journey; however, in order to inspire him with new alarm, he is on the road attacked by a fearful vision, and when the ass, in her anguish, fell down, 'the vision begins in the prophet's soul; he hears the ass speak, he sees the messenger of Jehovah with the glittering sword—presumably a brilliant flame blazing up before his eyes; he hears at last the Divine messenger's rebuke, that he, more senseless than his ass, had not listened to the earlier and gentler forebodings'; and then Herder concludes, that he can find in this incident nothing that would not be possible to any one of those Shamans, who are capable of the most violent workings of fancy, 'compared to which this vision of Balaam is as child's play.'^b Therefore, the whole is 'a waking vision,' and the delicately intuitive

^a Comp. *Nachman*. on Gen. xviii. *init.*, and others.

^b *Herder*, *Geist der Ebräisch*. Poes. ii. 177-179; comp. also his 'Briefe das Studium der Theologie betreffend,' II., Works, xi. 284-288, where a heightened eloquence in-

tensifies the error (it is sadly instructive to find even a Herder speak of Balaam in such terms as 'ein abgöttischer Schadenbereiter, ein arglistiger Lohnprophet,' whose 'lohn-lüsternes Herz Gott zu betrügen denkt,' etc.).

theologian knows precisely where it begins—namely, just at the point where, in his opinion, the incomprehensible features commence, at the animal's speaking. But by what criterion is he, or the host of his followers, guided?^a The text affords absolutely no hint, and the supernatural incidents begin undoubtedly before the point fixed upon. For hardly less astounding than the ass's speaking is her 'seeing the angel of the Lord' whom Balaam does not see. Indeed, it is impossible to conceive a more amazing wonder than that Balaam who, as Herder himself—perhaps with some exaggeration—observes, delivered oracles, 'with which in the later prophets little, in the speeches of Moses nothing, can be compared'—that such a man should be 'more senseless than his ass,' and that he should act like a common Shaman intoxicated by raving frenzy, or like one 'labouring under derangement induced by indulgence of avarice and ambition and aggravated at the moment by furious anger.'^b Preferable by far to such an hypothesis is even the mythical story of the text literally taken. It has at least the recommendation of being intelligible and consistent, and it does not, with fainthearted half-belief, set arbitrary barriers to an Omnipotence which might as easily open the ass's mouth as it closes the prophet's eye. Nor does the plain traditional interpretation affect to save the appearance of philosophic freedom amidst a complete atmosphere of supernaturalism; it is not afraid to ask, 'what manner of organs God gave the ass,' nay, it is not afraid to ask, in what language she spoke; and it has encouraged the Rabbins to extend the chain of miracles, and confidently to maintain that, among the ten special or memorable things which God created towards the end of the sixth day, was also 'the mouth of Balaam's ass,' that she spoke an Aramean dialect, whether Chaldee or Syriac, and that

^a As Michaelis, Jahn, Dathe, Steudel, Tholuck, Hengstenberg, and others.

^b *Canon Cook's Holy Bible*, on ver. 28; and similarly earlier and modern writers in various modifications.

she died immediately after she had spoken and had thus accomplished her appointed work, lest she became an object of idolatrous worship, or remained as a permanent reproach to a human being.^a

Modern apologists have tried to remove the difficulty with greater ingenuity. Whether the ass actually spoke, or whether the words existed only for Balaam's inward sense as a part of the vision, that is, 'whether God formed the sound in the ass's mouth or in Balaam's ear,'—these two views, it is asserted, are in reality not very different, since, in either case, it was God who bestowed upon the animal the power of reproving Balaam; nor does it matter much whether that remonstrance was administered by her appearance and conduct or by her words, 'for in the latter eventuality also, the speech merely *seemed* to proceed from her . . . the difference in the one supposition and the other is purely *formal*.'^b Can earnest scholars indeed mean to solve a serious problem by such subtleties? There are two definite questions to be answered:—Does the text describe a vision? and does it state that the ass really spoke? We have pointed out before, that the former is not the case, being nowhere intimated by the slightest allusion. But as regards the second question, the fact of the ass's speaking is stated by the author in the most explicit terms, which no dialectics on the part of reluctant readers can obscure, or reduce to the meaning of a donkey's ordinary and indistinct cries. And should there be no substantial difference between the mental process in the vision of a prophet and the articulated

^a See *Mishn. Avoth*, v. 6, 'וְכִי הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֲתָנָא לְמַלְאָכָא; *Targ. Jon.* on ver. 28; *Midr. Rabb. Num.* xx., etc.; comp. *Bechai* on ver. 28: 'The speaking of the ass was a great miracle against the course of nature, and it was performed for the glorification of Israel,' etc.

^b *Hengstenberg*, *Bil.*, p. 49, *Michaelis*, *Kurtz*, *Keil*, and others; comp. also *Canon Cook's Holy Bible* l. c., 'God may have brought it about that sounds uttered by the creature after its kind, became to the prophet's intelligence as though it addressed him in rational speech.'

sounds of an animal? It is scarcely possible to argue with those, who have neither the faith to acknowledge a supernatural intervention, nor the courage to follow the guidance of reason. What weapons have been seized, what allies have been welcomed to support the assumption of a vision! The operation of the nerves passing beyond the usual limits, and magnetic action, clairvoyance and second sight, even 'the mysterious and involuntary shudder experienced by animals in the Divine presence'—all this has been eagerly proposed and accepted, till at last the whole story of Balaam's journey was declared to be nothing but a dream.

The wonder of the speaking ass is hardly lessened by insisting that all she spoke required no human intelligence, but 'kept entirely within the psychical sphere of animal life.' The words of the ass, carefully analysed, will be found to include some of the most important forms of inductive reasoning and logical generalisation, and a French writer's sarcasm, 'On fait parler l'âne pour dire si peu de chose,' is scarcely applicable. However, the author did not concern himself at all with the distinction between man and animal. He could not have made an ill-treated servant speak more appropriately; and in conjunction with the gift of speech he attributed to the beast sufficient capacity to remonstrate with fitness and force. Moreover, speech itself forms hardly a less marked criterion between man and animal—some schools of science will say, a more marked one—than reason.^a

All *natural* explanations of the incident, such as were in favour during the last century in the time of Reimarus, and are not even now extinct, are necessarily more *artificial* than an uncompromising miracle. From poetical and rhetorical passages like these: 'The ox knoweth his

^a Comp. *Wilk. Wackernagel*, *Ursprung und Entwicklung der Sprache*, pp. 4-7. Man, in German and

English 'the thinking,' is in Greek μέροψ 'the articulating' creature; comp. *Aesch. Coeph.* 1018, etc.

owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider';^a or, 'The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but My people know not the judgment of the Lord;'^b from such terms, which relate to the simplest effects of animal instincts, it cannot be inferred that the Hebrews believed 'the animals often to be more sensible than man.'^c But what curious and complicated an hypothesis has been worked out on that basis! The ass, it is maintained, was recalcitrant. Tradition contended, that God made her so, in order to impress upon Balaam that He disapproved of the journey undertaken for the purpose of cursing Israel, and He sent an angel to resist the prophet. It might, therefore, fitly be said, that the angel was seen by the ass sooner than by her infatuated master. Again, the ass was beaten and she brayed—this was her complaint, which Balaam, as soothsayer, readily understood. Her braying led Balaam to reflection; these thoughts, which brought him to his senses, are his dialogue with the ass.^d The defenders of the authenticity of the episode can hardly be said to have gained much by reducing its historical kernel to the refractoriness of an animal, in which refractoriness is by no means uncommon.

The object of the angel's apparition, as is evident, was to convince Balaam how seriously God was displeased with his enterprise.^e How was this object carried out by the author? Following the later and invidious tradition, he started from the idea that Balaam, a wicked heathen, was a secret enemy to Israel, whom, from the meanest motives, he burned to execrate. He made, therefore, an

^a Isa. i. 3.

^b Jer. viii. 7.

^c Comp. *Plin. Nat. Hist.* viii. 28 or 42, *ruinis imminentiibus musculi praeemigrant, aranei eum telis primi cadunt*, etc.

^d Comp. *Knobel*, Num. pp. 133, 134; similarly, among earlier writers, *Lessing*, *Justi*, *Hezel*, and others; see also *Vater*, Pentat. iii. 124, 125; *Bunsen*, *Bibelwerk*, v. 600, 601, and others. ^e Ver. 32.

angel frighten Balaam on the road, and believed he could not show the diviner's *moral* obduracy more plainly than in typifying it, as it were, by his *physical* blindness. Thus Elisha's servant did not see the fiery horses and chariots, which the holy prophet beheld, till God 'opened his eyes.' Elisha's Syrian persecutors, who searched for him with impious eagerness, were through his prayer actually smitten with blindness, so that he could resistlessly deliver them up to their enemies. And Daniel, perceiving an extraordinary vision—a human form with 'a body like the beryl, and a face as the appearance of lightning'—relates: 'I Daniel alone saw the vision, for the men that were with me saw not the vision.'^a But then the author found himself in a perplexing dilemma. Regarding the foreign soothsayer with hatred and contempt, he exposed him to the reproof of the angel and of his own animal, and made him appear not only dim-sighted, but also irrational, obstinate, and cruel. But how would such a character harmonise with the whole narrative? And how would the benedictions of Jahveh sound from such unworthy lips? The writer was, therefore, to some extent compelled to turn and yield. He was obliged to check his bitterness and prejudice, and to represent Balaam as capable of devotion and repentance. Therefore Balaam 'bowed down and fell on his face;' and therefore he said what would almost have befitted the older Balaam, 'I have sinned . . . and now, if it displeases thee, I will return.'^b And what was his 'sin'? In the first place,

^a 2 Ki. vi. 17-20; Dan. x. 7; comp. Gen. xxi. 19; Acts ix. 3-7; Jos. Ant. IX. iv. 3; see also *Abarban.* in loc., 'Angels in their glory are only perceived by the perfect, who are prepared for such distinction'; *Corn. a Lapid.* on ver. 22, 'Sic Beati in corpore glorioso apparent cui volunt, et abscondunt se cui volunt,'

etc.; *Hom.* II. v. 127, "Ἀχλὺν δ' αὖ τοι ἀπ' ὀφθαλμῶν ἔλον; *Od.* xvi. 160, 161, Οὐδ' ἄρα Τηλέμαχος ἴδεν ἀντίον οὐδ' ἐνόησεν, Οὐ γὰρ πω πάντεσσι θεοὶ φαίνονται ἐναργεῖς; *Virg.* *Æn.* ii. 604-606, namque omnem, quæ nunc . . . mortales hebetat visus tibi, . . . nubem eripiam, etc.

^b Vers. 31, 34.

certainly his ill-treatment of the ass.^a But this was only a consequence of his 'not knowing, that the angel was standing in the way against him;' ^b and this 'not knowing' was a guilt, for it was partly a result and partly a punishment of his base passions, which had estranged him from all Divine intercourse and aspirations.^c But, in her kind, the ass was perfect, because she had remained true to her nature. She had ever served her master with fidelity, and had thus duly fulfilled the ordained purpose of her existence.^d She could, therefore, see 'the angel of the Lord,' who remained concealed from the man formed, indeed, after the Divine image, but corrupted by sin.

It is well known, and we have before dwelt on the fact, that, in the East, the ass, far from being a despised animal, as in western countries, is so highly prized and valued, that the comparison with 'a bony ass'^e could be regarded as an honourable distinction; ^f that down to David's time, it was among the Hebrews the animal commonly used for riding by the most wealthy and powerful; and that even now, apart from the fine varieties of Cyprus and Egypt, the splendid white ass, reared in the region of Bagdad, 'commands as high a price as 800 or 1,000 dollars'; ^g while Pliny relates, that the senator Q. Axius paid for a donkey the fabulous sum of 400,000 sesterces, or about £3,200 sterling.^h Although, therefore, it is not impossible, that to some modern readers the episode may have an additional strangeness, because it is a donkey that complains and expostulates, it bore, in the author's

^a Ver. 32.

^b Ver. 34.

^c This sense results from the literal translation of the text: 'I have sinned, because I knew not that thou wast standing in the way against me.' *Zunz*, 'Ich habe gefehlt, dass ich nicht merkte.'

^d Vers. 28, 30.

^e Gen. xlix. 14.

^f See Comm. on Gen. p. 748; on Exod. p. 76.

^g *Van-Lennep*, Bible Lands, i. 232; *Paul Lenoir*, Le Fayoum etc. p. 17; comp. Judg. v. 10; x. 4; xii. 13, etc.

^h *Plin. Nat. Hist.* viii. 43 or 68, asinum ecce milibus nummum emptum, etc.

time, exactly the same character as if, instead of an ass, he had introduced the most sagacious horse of the rarest Arab breed. It behoves us, of course, faithfully to enter into those old conceptions; but whether an ass or any other animal is speaking, the fabulous colouring is not materially different.

Balaam was on his journey accompanied by the Moabite ambassadors and his own two servants:^a in what light did the author view their relation to the incident? The most probable supposition is that he considered them neither to have seen the angel, nor to have heard the voice of the ass, since the servants had no direct interest in the matter, and the ambassadors could not be made to witness the scene without imminent peril to the whole object of the journey. This is indeed wonderful, but not more so than that Balaam himself did not see the angel for a long time; it has clear analogies in the Scriptures, as above pointed out; and the episode moves, from beginning to end, on miraculous ground. It is, however, also possible that the author regarded those persons as astonished spectators of the event.^b In no case would it be justifiable to conclude from their presence that he intended to describe a vision, and not a real occurrence.

If, in our remarks on these verses, the reader should notice a want of systematic connection, let him consider that it merely mirrors the want of clearness and consistency imparted to the story by an ill-devised interpolation. For the principal narrative and the episode belong to two entirely different classes of literary composition. The former is a profound *myth*, the latter a fanciful *legend*. The one embodies the great idea of Israel's election and their special guidance; the other would have no more

^a Vers. 21, 22, 35.

^b It has even been conjectured, that we owe the whole of this account to Balaam's servants, who

were privileged to witness the procedure for the humiliation of his overweening pride (*Baumgarten*, Pentateuch, ii. 361).

than a subordinate value, even if it rested on an historical foundation. Both are fictions: but the one is a poetical fiction of intrinsic and philosophical possibility; the other an arbitrary fiction suggested by misconception. Whatever the latter possesses of dignity and truth, it possesses only as a reflection falling upon it from the former. As the Greek myth of Poseidon and Athene contending for the privilege of giving the name to the chief town of Greece, is meant to teach that the Athenians were prouder of their achievements in the arts of peace than of their feats of war; as the Biblical *myth* of the creation of Eve conveys the Hebrew writer's conviction of the equality of the sexes and the sacredness of matrimony; and as no one will or should, in the one case, speculate how it was possible for Poseidon to produce 'the neighing steed by striking the earth with his mighty trident;'^a or, in the other case, how a woman could be formed out of a man's rib—because the ideas embodied are alone essential, while the form is absolutely of no account; so the enquiry how Balaam, ostensibly a contemporary of Moses, could foresee events of the time of David, would be wholly irrelevant, because, in this composition, the matter and tendency of the prophecies are the only objects of importance. It is entirely different with the episode: its sole right of existence is in the reality of the facts, and the only standard by which it must be tested is that of historical probability.

So admirable and organic is the unity of the main narrative, that any foreign or disturbing element is at once revealed and expelled.

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—The following is the most usual attempt at reconciling the episode with the bulk of the story.

^a Comp. *Virg. Georg.* i. 12, 13, | equum magno tellus percussa tri-
Tuque o, cui prima frementem Fudit | dente, Neptune, etc.

At first God forbade the journey absolutely (ver. 12), but He afterwards allowed it in order to gratify Balaam's eager desire (ver. 20). When, however, the seer, after having set out with the intention of cursing Israel, and having incurred God's anger on account of his determined self-will, found that an angel opposed him, he then, at last cured of his blindness and malice, resolved strictly to adhere to the Divine communications that were to be made to him in Moab (vers. 34, 38); and after having thus changed his disposition, he received God's revelations and was endowed with the Divine spirit (so *Knobel*, *Numeri*, p. 122; *Ewald*, *Geschichte und Jahrbücher* ll. cc.; *Smith*, *Dict. of the Bible*, i. 162, etc.; comp. *Bechai* in loc., *בִּי הוֹלֵךְ בְּמוֹנֵה שִׁקְלָל*, and many others). How inadmissible it is to speak of an 'eager desire' or a 'determined self-will' on the part of Balaam, has been pointed out above (p. 11); but equally groundless is the assumption of a 'change of disposition.' Balaam gave neither to the first nor the second messengers the slightest hope that he would prophesy as Balak desired and expected, and the same resignation under God's guidance he showed in his meeting with the angel. 'The change' is not in Balaam, but in the authors who describe his conduct.—Another expedient is the supposition that the angel did not appear with the view of preventing Balaam's journey, but of warning him of the destruction into which he was hastening (*Keil*, *Num.* p. 303). What could the 'destruction' be that awaited one who had pledged himself only to proclaim the words of God, and who, by all his actions, proved his sincerity? But we may allude to another device, not on account of its intrinsic value, but from the respect due to the scholar who proposed it. 'The author,' observes *Winer* (*Real-Wörterb.* i. 182, 183), 'desired, perhaps, merely to convey that, after Balaam had been told by God that he should scrupulously follow the Divine suggestions (ver. 20), he might and should have desisted from his plan; and as he did not desist, he received a second and sterner admonition, in which the previous order of not deviating from the Divine directions was again enjoined upon him' (ver. 35). It is confidently maintained that this explanation removes all want of harmony,

not only within this narrative itself, but in its relation to subsequent accounts (xxx. 16; Deut. xxiii. 5). Why, it will be asked in astonishment, ought Balaam to have abandoned his enterprise, when he received from God the distinct command: 'Rise and go with the men'? (ver. 20). Where does the narrative, up to that point, intimate the least displeasure with Balaam's conduct? Such an intimation can surely not be found in the fact that *Balak* sends him presents (ver. 7), nor in the circumstance that he does not at once refuse to listen to the second envoys (ver. 19). He had entirely and unconditionally surrendered his will to that of God; can he be covered with reproach, or could God be wroth against him, because he remained strictly faithful to that resolve? The difficulty does not 'lie merely in the *form* of the story;' it is discordant in its very essence, if read as one continuous whole.—The interpolation may best be considered to comprise verses 22 to 35, as vers. 21 and 36 are closely connected in import; it is, however, not impossible that, originally, ver. 20 concluded with the words וילך בלעם עם שרי בלק (ver. 35), so that ver. 21 also has been added, for the purpose of introducing the ass of Balaam.—It will be sufficient to mention the hypothesis, that the verses under consideration (22–35) formed the first groundwork of the story, all that precedes being 'a composition of the Jehovist' (*Baur*, *Alttestamentl. Weissagung*, i. 333): these verses, incomplete in themselves, cannot be the foundation of the following prophecies, while the anterior narrative has nothing in common with the Jahvistic style.—The natural impression is, that the incident here related happened soon after Balaam's departure: 'God's anger was kindled, בִּי הוּלָךְ הוּא, that he was going' (ver. 22). But some place it near the land of Moab, and why? Because, they allege, it is psychologically probable that the passions of evil corrupted Balaam's heart by degrees, so that, prompted as he was by a 'furious determination to advance,' the nearer he approached his destination, the more keenly he felt the attractive power of the honours and treasures which awaited him; wherefore, in the proximity of the temptation, he stood in need of a special exhortation, without which he would surely have pronounced curses upon Israel (*Hengstenb.*

Bil., pp. 45, 46). It would, forsooth, be unjust to deny to such interpretations the praise of 'method.' And with what relish did Fathers of the Church and Reformers, at this juncture, hurl their strictures against the prophet (*e.g.*, *Origen*, *Magus dæmones videt, angelum non videt; asina tam videt . . . ut confutaretur Balaam*; *Augustin*, *Quæst. 50 in Num.*; *Calvin*, *Visiones extraordinarias ante jactabat, nunc quod bestię oculis expositum est eum fugit; unde hæc tanta cæcitas nisi ex avaritia?* etc.; *Cornel. a Lapid.*, *Usus est Deus voce asinæ, tum quia congrue bruta mens per brutum docetur*, etc.; *Vitringa*, *Obs. Sac. IV. ix. 28*, *Bileamus suas agendi rationes ita instituit, ut asina, qua vectus est, ejus παραφρονείαν insaniam inhibuerit*, etc.); though not a few expositors of recent times may vie with them for the palm of abuse (*e.g.*, *Baumgarten*, *Pentat. ii. 357*, 'the donkey recognising the angel is a palpable manifestation of the inhuman and more than brutish obtuseness of its master; *Lange*, *Bibelwerk*, i. p. lxxix; ii. p. 312: 'The ass takes Balaam's character, to prove that he has taken her character . . . The prophet riding an ass is changed into an ass riding a prophet,' which is, surely, the acme of epigrammatic neatness).—The following plea has, from various sides, been put forward: 'The miracle was by no means superfluous; it was to convince Balaam that the mouth and tongue were under God's direction, and that the same Divine power which caused the dumb ass to speak, contrary to its nature, could make him, in like manner, utter blessings contrary to his inclination;' so *Abarban.*, *Bp. Newton*, and similarly *Herder*, *Werke*, xi. 287, and others. This explanation would, in its own sphere of thought, be conclusive, if Balaam's inclination had really been such as is assumed.—After the words 'God's anger was kindled because he went' (ver. 22), the Arabic version of Saadiah adds, 'impelled by greed of gain,' that is, because 'the wages of unrighteousness' made him but too willing to go (2 Pet. ii. 15)—to the great delight of many modern expositors happy to boast of so old an authority for their errors. But they may claim a much older one still—the author of the episode himself. Others, indeed, declare, that the addition is superfluous; for it is quite plain that, if

Balaam had not been prompted by sinister motives, he would never have gone, and he thought, 'If I only have the permission, all the rest will follow of itself' (*Hengstenb. Bil.*, p. 44). Would Balaam so faithfully have obeyed God's directions in regard to the journey, if it was his intention to defy them in the much more important point of the curse?—As the מלאך יהוה proves to be identical with God Himself (ver. 35, comp. ver. 18), it appears preferable to translate 'the (not an) angel of the Lord' (comp. Gen. xlviii. 16; Ex. xxiii. 20).—לֹא־יִפְגַּע לֹא־יִפְגַּע לֹא־יִפְגַּע 'as an adversary to him,' to oppose or resist him; in ver. 32 simply יִפְגַּע, where, however, the *Samar. Cod.* and *Vers.*, the *Sept.* and *Vulg.* have also the personal pronoun לֹא־יִפְגַּע and לֹא־יִפְגַּע, εἰς διαβολήν σου and ut adversarer tibi.—The 'drawn sword' in the angel's hand (ver. 23) is the symbol of God's displeasure and wrath (comp. Gen. iii. 24). According to the Midrash, it indicates that it would be less criminal to attack Israel with a sword in the hand than a curse in the heart.—מִיִּפְעוּל (ver. 24), literally, 'a hollow way' (the other derivatives of פֶּעַל also implying hollowness, as הַפֶּעַל the hollow of the hand, Isa. xlv. 12; 1 Ki. xx. 10), formed by high rocks or, as in this instance, by vineyard walls (בְּרֵי, Isa. v. 5; comp. Ezek. xiii. 5) on either side; *Sept.*, ἐν ταῖς ἀλλὰξι, (in the furrows); *Vulg.*, in angustiis; and so *Targ. Jon.*, בְּרֵי, etc.—The angel's meeting with Balaam and his beast is so clearly described in the text, that it requires no explanation. With remarkable regularity, the number *three* prevails in this episode: the angel stands in the way three times and is three times seen by the ass; the ass turns aside three times and is three times beaten by her master; and in each instance we may notice a perceptible gradation. The angel, at first, opposes himself simply 'in the road' (בְּדֶרֶךְ); next, in 'a hollow path' enclosed by vineyards; and lastly, 'in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left' (vers. 22, 23, 26). The ass's fright at the apparition grows step by step, till she finally falls down in helpless anguish (vers. 23, 25, 27). She first turns aside into the field, then moves back again into the road, and, at last, arriving in the hollow path, presses herself in terror against the wall, un-

mindful of thus crushing Balaam's foot (vers. 23, 25). Moreover, she is, the first two times, probably only beaten with the hand or a slight whip, but the third time with the stick (במקל) which Balaam carried according to custom (vers. 23, 25, 27; comp. Gen. xxxviii. 18). The text expressly points to the threefold repetition of all these actions (vers. 28, 32, 33); but the ass *speaks* only twice; the third time the angel himself speaks and reproves in her stead (vers. 28, 30, 31). Such calculating exactness in numbers is common in later symbolism, and, if carried out in detail, easily becomes artificial and playful. Nor have Rabbinical and scholastic writers allowed this occasion for allegorising to pass unimproved: three times, the Midrash observes, the ass turned aside, in order to remind Balaam of the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Israel's spiritual protectors; or it was intended to impress God's great compassion with man, since it manifested itself so signally even towards an irrational animal (*Midr. Rabb.*, Num. ll. cc., etc.).—Jewish tradition contends that the 'hollow path' was 'in the place where Jacob and Laban raised the mound and the pillar on this side, and the observatory on that side, which they raised that neither should pass beyond it to do evil to the other' (*Targ. Jon.* on ver. 24; comp. Gen. xxxi. 51, 52); which is the more curious as, according to the same tradition, Balaam and Laban are identical (see *supra*, p. 29).—We have above remarked, that, in these occurrences, the author in no way concerns himself about the Moabite ambassadors and Balaam's servants, as they were probably meant to see and hear nothing of the wonderful phenomena. Certainly such explanations as, 'the author very likely thought that the ambassadors went before and the servants followed behind,' or, more singularly still, 'that they looked in another direction, if they were not dim-sighted'—such superficial explanations are out of the question (comp. also *Nachman.* on ver. 33).—In this episode, ס'ל'ל, *times*, is employed (vers. 28, 32, 33; comp. Exod. xxiii. 14) for the more usual ס'ל'ל'ל (xxiv. 10; see *De-Rossi*, Var. Lect. in loc.), which circumstance probably proves more than 'that King Balak did not form his language on the model of that of the ass' (*Keil*), considering that the

word is twice used by the *angel*.—St. Augustin (l. c.) and many others, both in earlier and recent times, blame Balaam severely for not having felt surprise and terror at the ass's speech (*iste tanta cupiditate ferebatur, ut nec tanti monstri miraculo terreretur et responderet quasi ad hominem loquens, etc.*; *Bechai*, Comm. in loc. אַבְל מִתוֹךְ אֲבוֹרִיוֹתוֹ וְרוּעַ טַבְעוֹ וּב' etc.); others consider that circumstance most cogently to prove that the whole transaction occurred in a dream or vision, as any person to whom such a thing really happened, 'would be half dead of fright and would fall from the animal' (*Michaelis* on vers. 28–30, and others); while one commentator excuses Balaam by supposing that he was probably a believer in the doctrine of transmigration of souls, and hence regarded the speaking of animals quite natural (*Clericus*, Paraph. of ver. 29, Comm. on ver. 28, fortasse transmigrationem mentium humanarum in brutorum corpora fieri credebatur, etc.).—The meaning of הִתְעַלֵּל (ver. 29), apparent from the context, is to *mock, insult, or abuse* (so in Judg. xix. 25; 1 Sam. xxxi. 4; Jer. xxxviii. 19; 1 Chr. x. 4; *Sept.*, ἐμπέταυχάς μοι; *Vulg.*, commeruisti et illusisti mihi; *Targ. Jon.*, יַעֲקֹרֶף; *Rashi*, לִישָׁן גָּנְאִי וּבִזְיוֹן; *Luth.*, dass du mich höhnest, etc.): עֵלֵל is perhaps kindred to עלה, and is, therefore, in Hithpael, *to lift oneself up against another*, which may either, as here and in the passages quoted, be done from insolence, or for derision, or for the display of power (as in Exod. x. 2; 1 Sam. vi. 6). Others connect עֵלֵל with the Arabic عَالَّ *to drink again*, hence to quench thirst and, in Hithpael, 'to satisfy the mind in vexing any one' (*Gesen.* Thesaurus, p. 1033), which seems less simple and probable.—פְּעֻדָּךְ וּב' (ver. 30), lit. 'from thy being' or 'thy existing to this day,' that is, properly, from thy birth or all thy life (comp. Gen. xlvi. 15; Comm. on Genes. p. 719), a natural hyperbole forcibly expressing many years of service (*Sept.*, ἀπὸ νεότητός σου; *Vulg.*, semper; *Onk.*, מִיְּאִתְּךָ; *Samar. Vers.*, מִשְׁוֹרֶךְ, from thy beginning; *Mendelss.*, מִיּוֹם יִרְכַּבְתָּ, etc.) The ass, which grows up to the fourth year, reaches an age of about thirty years, in both respects resembling the horse; the female is rather more long-lived than the male (comp. *Plin.* Nat. Hist. viii. 43 or 68).—

The Targum of Jonathan, very free and copious in rendering the following verses, embodies several peculiar features of Hebrew tradition. 'Ten things were created after the completion of the world on the sixth day towards the evening (see *supra*, p. 136): the manna . . . and the speaking mouth of the ass (פֹּהַם מִמְּלַל אֶתְנָא) . . . And the ass said to Balaam, Woe to thee, thou wanting in mind, when thou art unable to curse me, an unclean beast, who am to die in this world, and not to enter the world to come, how much less canst thou injure the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, on account of whom the world has been created, but whom thou art going to curse!' and so on in the same legendary style.—The verb יָרַט, in the phrase כִּי יֵרַט הַדֶּרֶךְ לְנַפְשִׁי (ver. 32), probably akin to יָרַד, means, no doubt, *to be precipitous* or *destructive*, after the analogy of Arabic (عَوْرَطٌ, precipice, destruction, عَوْرَطٌ precipice; comp. מוֹרָט, Isa. xviii. 2; *Saal*, تَوْرَطَات), though the verb occurs also in transitive signification, *to throw into a precipice* (Job xvi. 11, יִרְטֵנִי with metheg, for יִרְטֵנִי, the future of Kal, not the past of Piel, which would not correspond with the preceding יִסְפֵּנִי, and would require *pathach* as binding vowel, יִרְטֵנִי); and the sense of the phrase is: 'for thy journey is pernicious in my eyes,' which, though somewhat obscure and ambiguous, was no doubt intended by the author of the episode to imply a severe censure and menace of Balaam, in antagonism to the spirit of the main narrative, which excludes Balaam entirely from the conflict and would, therefore, not threaten him with disasters. The ancient translations of יָרַט are remarkably vague; the *Samar. Vers.* has the easier equivalent בִּישָׁה; *Syr.*, 'because thou hast directed (דַּתְרַצַּת) thy way against me;' *Onk.* and *Jon.* paraphrase, 'because it is certain before me that thou desirest to go in a way contrary to me;' and 'it is known before me, that thou seekest to go to curse the people, which is displeasing to me;' and similarly all the rest (*Sept.*, οὐκ ἀσπερία ἢ ὀδός σου, which means probably *even* or *proper*, and is, therefore, not very different from ἐὶθέρια; *Vulg.*, quia per-versa est via tua mihi que contraria, etc.; comp. *Kimchi*, 'thy way deviates—יִרְטֵנִי—or is not straight before me, for it was

in Balaam's heart to curse the Hebrews;’ *Joseph.*, Ant. IV. vi. 3, τῆν ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ παρὰ γνῶμην τοῦ Θεοῦ γενομένην). It is at least not impossible to connect ירט, as Rashi does, with רטט *to fear* (comp. רָטַט *terror*, Jer. xlix. 24), so that the phrase would mean, ‘thy journey is terrible or awful in my eyes;’ but ירט is hardly equivalent to ריין, so that the sense would be, ‘the journey was rashly undertaken’ (*Mendels.*, die mir verhasste Reise war zu schleunig beschlossen; and others). (Lericus, following a doubtful authority, has, ‘via coram me clausa est.’—לְפָנַי is simply ‘before me’ or ‘in my eyes,’ not ‘in opposition to me’ (*Onkel.*; *Luzzatto*, deve ben essere disastroso un viaggio fatto a mio dispetto—which would pre-suppose a strained ellipsis).—וַתִּרְאֵנִי (ver. 33) for וַתִּרְאֵנִי (comp. Ex. xxxiii. 21; see Gram., § liii. 2. c).—None of the devices are tenable that have been proposed to uphold, in ver. 33, the reading וַתִּרְאֵנִי *perhaps*, which it is evidently a corruption of וַתִּלְאֵנִי *unless* (comp. Gen. xxxi. 42; xliii. 10; where וַתִּלְאֵנִי . . . כִּי עָתָה is used exactly as in this passage וַתִּלְאֵנִי . . . כִּי עָתָה; the *Samar. Vers.* renders וַתִּלְאֵנִי, *Onk.* and *Jonath.* וַתִּלְאֵנִי, *Sept.* εἰ μή, *Vulg.* nisi, etc.). Thus Rashbam assumes a distinction between לַפְנֵי and מִפְנֵי in the same verse: ‘if she had turned from me so as to pass me on the road, I should have killed thee;’ Köster arbitrarily explains: ‘if she had turned away from me a fourth time, instead of falling on her knees, I should have killed thee;’ and Hengstenberg (*Bil.*, p. 64) supposes a very remarkable aposiopesis to this effect: ‘perhaps she turned away from me, induced by love of her master, and impelled by an instinctive feeling of the danger threatening his safety;’ which gentle hint was meant as a greater humiliation to Balaam and a stronger rebuke of his ingratitude than any distinct words on the part of the angel could have conveyed! (comp. also *Nachman.*, *Abarban.*, and others, in loc.; *Luzzatto*: ‘Potevi pensare che forse declinava per paura di me,’ where ‘potevi pensare’ is a free addition, etc.). But וַתִּרְאֵנִי never occurs in the sense of *unless*, as some have maintained (so Rashi, Ebn Ezra, Nachmanides, De Geer, Gesenius, Maurer, who considers וַתִּרְאֵנִי to be identical with וַתִּלְאֵנִי and וַתִּרְאֵנִי for וַתִּלְאֵנִי, and others).—וַתִּרְאֵנִי (ver. 33) corresponds to וַתִּלְאֵנִי in וַתִּלְאֵנִי, *on the one hand . . . on the other hand* (*Sept.* σὲ μὲν . . .

ἐκείνην δέ); more frequent is the use of מִן . . . מִן (comp. xxiii. 25), which was not applicable in this place on account of the *double* contrast, that of the persons and the actions. Some Jewish commentators, assuming a transposition of words, explain, with little probability: 'I should also have slain (גַּם הִרְגַתִּי אוֹתָךְ), and not merely opposed and frightened thee;' so *Rashi*, *Abarban.*, *Mendelss.*, and others.—מִן מִן (ver. 35) is analogous to מִן, in ver. 20, *but only*; comp. xxiii. 13 (*Ebn Ezra*, כָּמוֹ רַק מִן, and others).—The command, 'Go with the men' (ver. 35), means, says the Midrash, 'Go, for thy portion is with them, and fearfully wilt thou, like them, be exterminated from the world;' while modern expositors assert that the permission implied in those words is not contradictory to the previous prohibition, for, coupled with the simultaneous restriction, it could not confirm Balaam in his designs against Israel, but rather tended to make him desist from his wickedness. Although a certain meed of respect cannot be withheld from such tenacious consistency, we confess we are heartily glad to have finished our remarks on that portion of the text which has yielded the most abundant crop of perversion and confusion.

6. ARRIVAL AND RECEPTION. XXII. 36-40.

36. And when Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him to the city of Moab, which *is* at the border of the Arnon, which *is* at the utmost boundary. 37. And Balak said to Balaam, Did I not indeed send to thee to call thee? wherefore didst thou not come to me? am I not forsooth able to honour thee? 38. And Balaam said to Balak, Behold, I am come to thee; have I now any power at all to say anything? the word that God shall put in my mouth, that shall I speak. 39. And Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kirjath-luzoth. 40. And Balak killed oxen and sheep,

and sent *thereof* to Balaam and to the princes that *were* with him.

It may be presumed that Balak awaited the return of his second embassy with intense anxiety, and it appears that messengers hastened in advance, south-westward, to his capital, then Rabbath-Moab (Rabbah), to report to him Balaam's approach. On receiving this welcome news, he forthwith set out to meet the seer. He was prompted to do so by a double motive. First, he desired to offer to Balaam a signal mark of attention and esteem,^a to which he imparted the utmost possible grace by joining him at the very threshold and entrance of his kingdom, on its extreme north-eastern boundary, which the travellers coming from Mesopotamia were obliged to touch. But Balak's second and more pressing object was to prevent a single moment's unnecessary delay in the execution of his cherished scheme, which, by Balaam's first refusal, had already been deferred far too long for his impatience. For it was indispensable that the expected curse should be pronounced at a place where the prophet could *see* the Israelites. But these had already advanced a considerable distance in a north-westerly direction, and had encamped, beyond the northern border of the Dead Sea, along the eastern side of the Jordan.^b Had Balaam first continued his way to Rabbath-Moab, and thence repaired to the scene of action with Balak, who, of course, desired to be present at the momentous proceedings, much precious time would have been lost by these circuitous journeys, and might not any hour bring attack and disaster?

One of the most recent travellers among the Kabyles observes: 'As soon as the approach of the caravan of an honoured guest is announced in an oasis, the sheikh of the place, clad in his red cloak, proceeds to meet it, ac-

^a See *supra*, p. 9.

^b *Supra*, p. 77.

accompanied by the kadi. Both are mounted on fine and richly caparisoned steeds. First they ride at a slow pace, but as soon as they come in sight of the expected caravan, they advance in full gallop to the distance prescribed by the conventional rules. There they suddenly halt, descend from their high saddles, and allow the reins to fall to the ground. The horses, trained for such purposes, stop motionless on the spot, while the riders hasten towards the caravan. Here the usual civilities are exchanged, while the crowd brandish the palm branches which they carry, to evince their joy and satisfaction.'^a Might we not imagine a similar scene to have occurred on the banks of the Arnon nearly three thousand years ago?

And now the two antagonists stand face to face—the king of Moab and Balaam: the incarnation of paganism and the representative of the God of Israel; two powers opposed as Chance and Providence; two systems hostile as Worldliness and Idealism. And this contrast, which extends to the hidden depth of all thoughts and the secret springs of all deeds, which tinges every emotion of the mind and prompts every impulse of energy—this all-pervading contrast is, with a master's hand, delineated in Balak's simple question and Balaam's simple reply at their first encounter. The king of Moab knows no other laws of human action than ambition, and wealth, and power. He finds it incomprehensible, that Balaam did not at once comply with his royal summons. His words express no less wonder and astonishment than dissatisfaction and reproach: 'Wherefore didst thou not come to me? am I not forsooth able to honour thee?'^b Balaam, unmoved by the agitated tone of this address of welcome, points again, with imperturbable calmness, to that one great principle which forms the guiding rule of his life, which he is never weary to proclaim, but which, far from being weakened by repetition, gains in weight and

^a *E. Dessor*, *Der Mensch der Wüste*, p. 25.

^b *Ver.* 37.

emphatic force, because each reiteration manifests, under new circumstances, the truth and earnestness with which that great idea has seized and penetrated his whole nature: 'Have I now any power at all to say anything? the word that God puts in my mouth, that shall I speak.'^a Not ambition, wealth, and power are his care, but the will of his God in which he merges his own, and that absolute obedience which curbs all pride and conceit. With sufficient clearness he makes Balak feel even at this early stage of their intercourse, that the destinies of nations do not depend on human arts and passions, but on a higher and inscrutable Power which reveals its decrees as irrevocable; and a foreboding doubt might pass through the heathen monarch's mind whether the enterprise would issue as he desired. Who can deny the loftiness of a character like that of Balaam? It is the very type of a noble Hebrew prophet--of the Hebrew prophet with all his glorious attributes and all his dangerous elements.

From the town of meeting on the Arnon, Balak and Balaam went forth with their followers to advance as close to the Hebrew camp as was deemed necessary, and they proceeded to *Kiriath-huzoth* (Street-fort or *Strassburg*), that is, probably, to that place of the present *Kureiyât* on the southern declivities of the mountain range of Attarus, which the Hebrews, journeying from Dibon, reached by crossing the river Heidân.^b It was one of those numerous towns which, not long before, the king of the Amorites had taken from Moab and destroyed, but which the Israelites, after the conquest of this district, rebuilt and allotted to the tribes of Reuben and Gad.^c Under various fortunes Kiriathaim maintained itself down to the sixth century, when it was plundered and laid waste by the Babylonians.^d

^a Ver. 38.

^b *Supra*, p. 76.

^c Num. xxxii. 37; Josh. xiii. 19.

^d Jer. xlviii. 1, 23; Ezek. xxv. 9.

Thus Balak and his companions had reached the track of those who were to be supernaturally assailed; and Kiriathaim seemed to the king the fittest place for more formally solemnising the seer's arrival by common repasts of slaughtered animals; he probably assigned to Balaam the largest and choicest portions, by means of which it was customary to show respect or affection to honoured guests.^a These feasts did not bear the character of sacrifices, and certainly did not constitute 'a great offering of consecration.' Before entering upon the solemn rites of religion and prophecy, the king very properly discharged the ordinary obligations of hospitality.

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—The 36th verse is the immediate continuation of the 21st.—'The town of Moab (עִיר מוֹאָב, ver. 36), where Balak joined Balaam, is not the capital (*Midr. Tauch.*, *Rashi*, etc.), supposed to be *Ar* (עַר, Isa. xv. 1, Ἀρεόπολις; so *Gesen.* *Thes.*, pp. 1004, 1005; *Hengstenb.* *Bil.*, pp. 234-237, and many others); for this was situated north of the river Arnon (xxi. 15, 28), then the boundary of Balak's kingdom (xxi. 13; Deut. iii. 16; Judg. xi. 18; p. 69), which he is not likely to have crossed, as he, no doubt, wished to welcome Balaam within his own territory (the Targumim simply לקרתא דמואב). If the meeting could be assumed to have taken place in the north of the Arnon, the town Aroer (עַרְעִיר) would be suitable (p. 75), the position of which is repeatedly described in a similar manner as that of this 'town of Moab' (Deut. ii. 36; Josh. xii. 2; xiii. 9, 16). For it was situated 'on the border (גבול) of the Arnon,' which river formed 'the extreme boundary' (קצה הגבול) of the land. This is the sense of the words אֶל-עִיר מוֹאָב וּב', which is not materially obscured by the somewhat indistinct application of the second אִשֶׁר.—Balak lays stress on the very act of sending (hence the finite verb preceded by the absolute infinitive, שָׁלַחְתִּי, ver. 37, which is not, 'have I not sent to thee repeatedly?') since on the second summons Balaam really

^a Gen. xliii. 34; 1 Sam. ix. 23, 24, etc.

came)—he lays stress on the distance, and the number and dignity of the envoys; being sent for in this express manner, Balaam ought, independently of any other motive, to have obeyed with alacrity (comp. ver. 17, where, for still greater emphasis, the finite verb is followed by *כִּי־אָר*; see Heb. Gram., § 97, 6). Different and more significant is the phrase *הֲיִכַל אֲנִי לֵאמֹר* (ver. 38), ‘have I any power at all to say anything?’ Either word has its own force; the one—the infinitive—emphasizes the action, the other the person: Balaam declares, that *he* is powerless to speak, and that it is *God* alone who has that power; he advances, with increasing clearness, to the absolute abnegation of his own self (xxiv. 13). How it was possible to discover in those words the fact that Balaam joined Balak with a broken or ‘lacerated heart’ (*Bunsen*, *Bibelwerk*, v. 601), will, alas! be sufficiently intelligible from preceding remarks.—Besides *קִרְיַת־בִּמ*, and distinct from it, we find *קִרְיַת* mentioned as a town of Moab (*Jer.* xlvi. 23, 24, 41; *Am.* ii. 2); this is not surprising, considering the vagueness in the meaning of those names; and within those districts several ruins have recently been found which are similarly called by the natives. In all such cases, which fortunately concern but minor points, we must content ourselves with probability, which, in this instance, is decidedly in favour of the above conjecture. *קִרְיַת הַצִּוִּת* is rendered by *Onk.* ‘the town of his market-places’ (*מַחְזוּזַת*), in the *Samar. Text and Version* by ‘the city of his visions,’ or ‘of his mysteries’ (*מַדְרִינַת רִזְיוֹן*), but in the *Sept.* by *πόλις ἐπαύλαωρ*, as if based on the reading *הַצִּוֹת* instead of *הַצִּוִּת* (comp. *Sept.* *Gen.* xxv. 16; *Josh.* xiii. 23, etc.), and in the *Vulgate* by ‘urbs quæ in extremis regni ejus finibus erat,’ as if deriving *הַצִּוִּת* from *הִצָּה* to divide. Some have identified Kirjath-huzoth with the town Huzoth read on an Egyptian papyrus (*Anastasi* iii.), and others with the conspicuous ruins of *Shihân*, four miles west by south of the site usually assigned to Ar or Ir (*Canon Cook’s* *Holy Bible*, on ver. 39), which lies, however, south of the Arnon, whereas Balak’s destination was northward and north-westward. *Targ. Jon.* calls the place ‘the city of Sihon, which is *בִּירְיָטָא*.’—*וַיִּשְׁלַח* (ver. 40) viz. *of the flesh*, not *messengers* (ver. 10).—We have observed before how little Balak’s fear and precautions

were justified by the circumstances, since the Hebrews had proceeded considerably beyond his territory (p. 87). This remark may now be extended. We see the king of Moab, accompanied by a brilliant retinue, pass free and unmolested through districts which, according to the preceding accounts of the Book of Numbers, were in the possession of the Hebrews, his enemies (comp. xxiii. 14, 28; comp. *Hitzig*, *Inscription des Mescha*, p. 5). What inferences are hence to be drawn? Either the Hebrews had but *partially* conquered the land north of the Arnon, or the narrative of Balaam and Balak is an isolated episode unconnected with the events in the midst of which we find it. As a matter of fact, the former may have been the case (p. 69), but it is not so represented in the Book of Numbers, whatever efforts have been made to prove the contrary (for instance by *Hengstenb.*, *Bil.*, p. 251). The second alternative must, therefore, be adopted, and it confirms a view of the nature and composition of the Book of Balaam, which is forced upon us by many other considerations besides. Let us here allude to one point more. While in this narrative the unity of action is admirably preserved, the unities of time and place are questionable. For the reader's impression is that the whole of the proceedings, beginning with Balak's and Balaam's departure from Kirjath-huzoth (xxii. 41) and ending with Balaam's last prophecy, followed each other in rapid succession and in the course of the same day. But while the action unfolds itself with unbroken interest and intrinsic probability, it is more than doubtful whether the long journeys from Kirjath-huzoth to Bamoth-Baal, thence to Pisgah, and thence to Peor (pp. 76, 77), the threefold erection of altars and the threefold sacrifices, Balaam's solitary meditations and his speeches, can all be compressed into the space of one day. But who will lay much stress upon this circumstance, except as an additional proof that we have before us a free creation of art? (see also *Oort*, *Disputatio*, pp. 68, 69).—Considering the character of the feast (ver. 40), as pointed out above, passages like Gen. xxxi. 54, or Neh. viii. 10-12, are not parallel with this. The verb *זָבַח* was used, not only with respect to sacrifices, but also to killing for food (1 Sam. xxviii. 24; 1 Ki. xix. 21, etc.;

see Comm. on Lev. i. pp. 72, 74). Josephus states correctly: 'when the king had entertained (*δειξαμένον*) Balaam in a magnificent manner'; and similarly Philo (*Vit. Mos.* i. 50, *καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἐνώχαι ἦσαν καὶ πολυτελεῖς ἐστιάσεις καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα πρὸς ὑποδοχὴν ξένων ἔθος εὐτρεπίζεσθαι κ.τ.λ.*; comp. *Gen.* xliii. 16). If the author had meant to describe a sacrifice essential to Balak's main purpose, he would not have so generally spoken of 'oxen and sheep' (*יֵשׁוּבִים וְצֹאן*), but would have more accurately specified the kinds and numbers of victims, as he is very careful to do at the fitting occasion (comp. xxiii. 1, 4, 14, 29). Quite unjustified, therefore, is the censure cast upon Balaam by many in various forms that 'he accepted from Balak as an honorary gift the flesh of idolatrous sacrifices' (*Cleric., Michaelis, Riehm, and others*); it would, according to eastern notions, still more decidedly than our own, have been the utmost insult to his royal host to refuse the proffered present.

7. PREPARATIONS. XXII. 41—XXIII. 6.

41. And on the *next* morning, Balak took Balaam, and brought him up to Bamoth-Baal, and thence he saw the extreme part of the people.

XXIII. 1. And Balaam said to Balak, Build for me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven bullocks and seven rams. 2. And Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on *every* altar a bullock and a ram. 3. And Balaam said to Balak, Stand by thy burnt-offering, and I will go, perhaps the Lord will come to meet me; and the word that He will show me, I shall tell thee. And he went to a solitude. 4. And God met Balaam, and he said to Him, I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered upon *every* altar a bullock and a ram. 5. And the Lord put words in Balaam's mouth,

and said, Return to Balak, and thus thou shalt speak. 6. And he returned to him, and, behold, he was standing by his burnt-offering, he and all the princes of Moab.

At last the long-desired day arrived which was to witness the realisation of Balak's ardent hopes. He had considered everything with anxious calculation. He well knew that the prophet, to curse effectually, must have those before his eyes whom he desired to curse: but how, if the imposing aspect of the Hebrew hosts, swelled by numberless foreign followers, and but recently enriched by magnificent booty of every kind, carried away the seer to enthusiastic admiration, and prompted him not to utter execrations but praises and benedictions? In this dilemma Balak prudently selected a place from where Balaam might see a portion of the Hebrews, large enough to represent the whole nation, but not so large as to impress the beholder with the conviction of formidable strength and power. Balaam showed ready obedience in this point also: 'And on the next morning Balak took Balaam and brought him up to Bamoth-Baal.' The revelations which he expected—of this he was sure—did not depend on the spot in which they were repeated. To him one point only was important—to listen to those revelations with all the energies of his soul. He saw, therefore, likewise with indifference, that it was 'heights of Baal' to which he was conducted. Balak naturally regarded a place dedicated to one of his chief idols as most appropriate for his object; for as yet he was totally ignorant of the deity in whose name the prophecies were to be uttered; he simply relied upon Balaam's art and skill, and no doubt believed he was materially assisting him by the choice of a locality pre-eminently sacred and revered.^a

^a Comp. xxi. 28.

From the tenour of the text, Bamoth-Baal seems to have been in the immediate neighbourhood of Kirjath-huzoth, where, the day before, the social feasts had been celebrated. It was probably one of the many elevations of the chain of Attarus, from some of which it must have been possible to see the extreme divisions of the Hebrew army spreading from Abel-Shittim to Beth-jeshimoth, almost to the point where the Jordan enters the Dead Sea.^a The 'evil eye' in itself was considered to possess terrible force, but in conjunction with imprecating speech, it was deemed irresistible.^b When Elisha heard the children mocking him, 'he turned back and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord.'^c Democritus contended that 'from the eyes issue images (εἰδωλα), which are neither without sensation nor without volition, and are filled with the wickedness and malice of those from whom they proceed; imprinting themselves firmly upon the person to be enchanted, they become a part of him, and disturb and injure both his body and mind.'^d It would be needless to dwell on the great importance of the eye in all systems and doctrines of emanation. From the eye of Brahman, the supreme god, the sun was, by the Hindoos, supposed to have sprung. That from the eyes of Ra or Hórus, the good things, from the eyes of Set or Typhon the noxious things are produced, was a common Egyptian belief frequently alluded to in the papyri; and we read not only that 'from the eyes of Ra mankind proceeded,' or that

^a *Supra*, p. 77; comp. xxi. 19, 20.

^b Comp. *Plin. Nat. Hist.* xxviii. 2.

^c 𐤀𐤏𐤍𐤁, 2 Ki. ii. 24.

^d Συνοικούντα τοῖς βασκανομένοις, ἐπιταράττειν καὶ κακοῦν ἀνθρώπων τὸ τε σῶμα καὶ τὴν εἰάνοιαν; *Plutarch, Sympos.* V. vii. 6; comp. § 3, αἱ ὄψεις . . . ὥσπερ πεφάρμαγ-

μένα βέλη προπίπτωσιν κ.τ.λ.: similarly *Heliodor* iii. 7; iv. 5; comp. *Virg. Ecl.* iii. 103, Nescio quis teneros oculus mihi fascinat agnos; *Pers.* ii. 33, 34, urentes oculos inhibere perita; *Plin. Nat. Hist.* vii. 2, esse, qui visu quoque effascinent interimantque . . . iratis præcipue oculis etc.; *Gell.* ix. 4, etc.

'the eye of Ra subdues the wicked,' but the powerful king Ramses II. is, on the Luxor obelisk, glorified as 'the precious egg of the sacred Eye, emanation of the king of the gods.'^a

It is remarkable that when the direct execution of Balak's scheme is finally approached, Balaam's passive conduct suddenly ceases. He acts as vigorously and resolutely as is at all compatible with his mission. He makes every necessary arrangement with precise determination. He is now the prophet of Jahveh and directs in His name. He is not Balak's servant, but his master and guide. With great decision he requests the king, 'Build *for me* here seven altars, and prepare *for me* here seven bullocks and seven rams.' With conscious distinctness he separates himself from the heathen king. The altars and the sacrifices are not meant for Balak's idols, but for Balaam's God. Moreover, both altars and sacrifices are to be signalised by that holy number which is to the Hebrews the emblem of oath and covenant; which, like a golden thread, runs through all their sacred institutions and festivals, from the weekly Sabbath to the Year of Jubilee; which pervades and rules all their laws of purity and atonement; and which, divested from its merely cosmical character, soon obtained a profoundly religious significance.^b Not easily, therefore, could a better means have been devised for carrying us directly into the very centre of Hebrew conceptions, than the systematic introduction of *seven* altars and *seven* animals. When David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem with all possible solemnity and rejoicing, the Levites 'offered seven bullocks and seven rams.'^c When the pious king Hezekiah purified the Temple and its vessels, he presented a sacrifice consist-

^a Comp. Com. on Gen. p. 58; Rec. of the Past, ii. 131, 132; iv. 23, etc.

^b See Comm. on Exod. p. 449; on Lev. ii. pp. 207, 534, etc.

^c 1 Chron. xv. 26.

ing of 'seven bullocks and seven rams, and seven lambs and seven he-goats.'^a And in one of the ripest works of Hebrew literature. God Himself ordered the friends of Job to offer 'seven bullocks and seven rams,' in expiation of the sin they had committed by their unjust accusations of the sufferer.^b As the desired prophecies relate to the destinies of Moab, the king must indeed have a share in the preparatory sacrifices;^c but that share is altogether subordinate. Everything that is essential proceeds from Balaam. He gives all instructions; he says to God, 'I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram;'^d he exercises the sacerdotal functions—he is both priest and prophet.

The animals chosen testify to the importance of the occasion. The bullock was the *victima maxima* employed for the most solemn purposes, such as the expiation of the anointed High-priest or the community of Israel; and next to it the ram was the most valued victim appointed for the holocaust or thank-offering of the whole people and its chiefs.^e

The simple and faithful narrative implies collaterally the most interesting hints and inferences. The author describes sacrifices presented to Jahveh, the God of Israel. Who presents them? where are they offered? and with what rites? They evidently bear, in every respect, the character of patriarchal sacrifices, which were performed by any person at any place, such as were performed by Samuel and David and Solomon, and many others before and after them, unrestrained by levitical ordinances enjoining a single central sanctuary and hallowing a single priestly family with exclusive privileges.

^a 2 Chron. xxix. 21.

^b Job xlii. 7. In an Accadian Psalm, which must have been written prior to the 17th century B.C., we read: 'O my God, seven times seven are my transgressions;' comp.

Matt. xviii. 22; Records of the Past, vii. 155. ^c Ver. 2.

^d Ver. 4.

^e Comp. Comm. on Lev. i. pp. 82, 83.

^f See Comm. on Lev. i. pp. 14 *sqq.*

Let it not be argued that it is the Mesopotamian Balaam who directs and carries out the rites; for the author makes Balaam throughout speak and act like a Hebrew, like a most pious, a most gifted and most favoured Hebrew. He would have shrunk from letting him offer, on the 'heights of Baal,' sacrifices to Jahveh, if, at his time, the rigid injunctions of the levitical legislation had existed.^a Every single feature of the narrative points to the fresh and vigorous time of David's reign.

However, Balaam's independent proceedings are strictly confined to his intercourse with Balak. In his relations to God he remains, as he was before, submissive and self-denying; he is the master of Balak, only because he is the servant of God. After the almost imperious commands given to the king, he dwells again on those relations with a decision deriving a new grace from the meekness with which it is blended. For although he had frequently before received Divine communications, he is far from the pride of expecting them again with certainty. He is aware that he must entirely rely on a higher mercy and wisdom: 'I will go,' he said, 'perhaps the Lord may come to meet me.'^b He has at once the firmness inspired by the consciousness of great and unselfish aims, and the modesty arising from the knowledge of human dependence and weakness. The 'elements are so mixed in him,' as they are only in the greatest and rarest characters.

And how does he await his inspiration? Not amidst the excitement of din and tumult, not in impetuous phrenzy sure to be followed by exhaustion, nor by intoxication of the senses paralysing clearness of mind; but 'he went to a solitude,' into silent nature, to be uplifted by her grandeur and infinitude, and in quiet concentration to commune with his God, who is not in

^a See *supra*, p. 17.

^b Ver. 3; p. 106.

the roaring 'tempest rending mountains and shattering rocks,' but in the 'still small voice,' that speaks and is intelligible to none but the pure-minded.^a 'And God met Balaam.'^b How did He meet him? This is the secret of the prophetic writer to whom we owe this precious composition. It is the secret of all those great men who came forward and were acknowledged as prophets. It is the one questionable problem, the solution of which concerns alike the depths of psychology and the history of religion, and which can never be solved without due regard to the character of eastern nations and of those remote ages. But so much is certain, that 'God met Balaam' precisely as He met a Gad or Nathan, an Elijah or Elisha, an Isaiah or Jeremiah—not enticed by spells and enchantments and magic arts, but appearing spontaneously and graciously, in order to reveal to His elected organ utterances concerning His elected people. Calm even in this solemn moment, Balaam simply stated the facts, not as if he desired to make to God new communications, for he referred to 'the seven altars' as well known to God, but in order to express that he had done all that devolved upon himself. He had offered, he said, the sacrifices most acceptable to God by their character and number: they were *holocausts*,^c typifying God's absolute sovereignty as Ruler of nations and individuals; and they consisted of twice *seven* of the most valued animals presented on *seven* altars, by which Balaam meant to intimate—for this is the symbolical meaning of seven as theocratic number—that, as far as lay in himself, he had earnestly striven to rise up to God in thought and feeling. But he does not even now prefer a request. He goes to meet God, God meets him, and he declares what he has done: whether he is to receive a prophetic inspiration, this he leaves, without eagerness or solicitude, to God's wise decision.

^a See p. 19.

^b Ver. 4.

^c חֲלָוִים, vers. 3, 6.

As a free act of mercy God puts words into his mouth, and bids him announce them to Balak, who is to hear the Divine message to his dismay and punishment. The king awaits the prophet's return, standing by his sacrifices, in order that their connection with Balaam's speeches may remain manifest; and he waits 'with all the princes of Moab,' because those speeches do not concern him alone, but his whole land and people.

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—We are unable more accurately to ascertain the position of Bamoth-Baal (comp. *Hengstenb. Bil.*, pp. 238–243): the statement of Josephus (*Ant. IV. vi. 4*) that the height 'was distant sixty stadia from the Hebrew camp,' is, of course, mere conjecture; but it suffices to understand some elevation north of *Kureyât*, from which it was possible to survey the land up to the southern extremity of the Jordan.—In accordance with the explanations above given is the remark of Philo (*Vit. Mos. i. 50*), that on that hill 'a pillar had been erected to some deity, which the natives of the country were accustomed to worship'; comp. *Sept. ἀρεβί-βασεν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὴν στήλην τοῦ Βαάλ.*—עֲזָרָה וְעֲזָרָה 'a part of the people,' in contradistinction to the 'whole people' (*xxiii. 13; Sept., μέρος τι τοῦ λαοῦ; Vulg., extremam partem, etc.*; but incorrectly *Luth., De Geer, Gesen., Kurtz, Baumgart.*, and others, 'universum populum usque ad extremitates ejus,' 'bis zu Ende des Volkes,' or, 'das Volk von einem Ende bis zum andern, das ganze Volk;') comp. *Gen. xix. 4; xlvii. 2, and Comm. in locc.*; see *Jer. xii. 12*).—Jewish tradition considers that the seven altars of Balaam were intended to recall the altars previously erected by seven pious men: by Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses (*Midr. Rabb. Num. xx. 8; comp. Rashi in loc.*); but the number seven has, in this passage, a much deeper import than that of an historical analogy, and it is not confined to the altars, but extends to the sacrificial animals. Some modern expositors, on the other hand, Argus-eyed in their suspicions, find that 'Balaam's directions with reference to the mystical number seven, savour strongly of the tricks of magic and incanta-

tion' (comp. *Kether Torah*, לִזְבַּח לַשֶּׁבַע הַמִּיִּשְׁתָּהִים; *Deyling*, Obs. iii. 112; *Dathe*, *Kitto*, *Beard*, *Lange*, who calls the sacrifice 'a sordid union between paganism and monotheism, between yes and no,' and others). Yet those expositors would be the last to declare the Hebrew laws and writings as mystical or as savouring of magical tricks on account of their being saturated with the same number (comp. *Virg. Æn.* vi. 38, 39, 'Nunc grege de intacto septem mactare juvencos Præstitit, totidem lectas de more bidentes.' On Assyrian monuments the sacrifice of seven animals is not rarely mentioned; comp. *Records of the Past*, i. 99; iii. 136, 143, etc.). Ebn Ezra, on the other hand, finds here again 'deep mysteries, which but few are able to fathom'; and Maimonides believes that the number seven prevails because it is the intermediate cycle between the solar day and the lunar month (comp. *Bechai* on xxiii. 4; see also *Abarban.* in loc.).—Even Balaam's most inveterate detractors, with few exceptions, do him the justice to admit that the offerings were presented to the God of Israel and 'not to the Moabite idols, which, in the whole of this matter, are out of the question' (*Hengstenberg*, Bil., p. 69, and others; comp., however, *Origen*, In Num. Homil. xv. 1; xvii. 1, culpabilis est Balaam, cum ædificat aras et victimas imponit dæmoniis et aparatu magico poscit divina consulta; *Corn. a Lapid.* on ver. 5, septem aras extruxit ipsi Baal, eique victimas immolavit, and others). But the fact itself of offering sacrifices as a preliminary to the anticipated revelations, should not be made a subject of reproach to the seer, as if 'the lower the grade of prophetism is, the more it stands in need of extraneous aids and auxiliaries.' To the ancient world sacrifice was the chief form and element of divine worship, and was deemed indispensable in all solemn or important emergencies of life; among the Hebrews, in particular, it replaced, rather than accompanied, prayer and praise; it was, down to the latest periods, recommended by their noblest and most enlightened teachers, provided it was rendered acceptable by purity of heart and life; and it is by the prophets retained even in their pictures of the future golden or Messianic times (comp. Isa. lvi. 7; Zechar. xiv. 20, 21, etc.

and so *Maimonides*, Hilch. Melach. xi., 'מקריבין קרבנות וכו'; see *supra*, p. 17; Comm. on Levit. i. פק. 14 *sqq.*, 50 *sqq.*). Balaam's sacrifices had no other object than to prove and to enhance that purity; they were neither meant 'to change the mind of the Almighty,' nor to serve as an assistance to his prophecies; if this had been his intention, he would have awaited the inspiration at the altars, and would not have sought it in a solitude. The analogies, therefore, which have been adduced, especially from Hindoo usages, though interesting, are not applicable to Balaam's proceedings. We learn that before a king goes forth to battle, seven altars are placed in front of the temple devoted to the goddess of the royal family (*Veerma-kali*); seven, fourteen, or twenty-one victims (buffaloes, rams, or cocks) are killed, and their carcases thrown into burning pits, near to the altars, with prayers and incantations; and then the priest, after having burnt incense in the temple, 'takes a portion of the ashes from each hole, and throwing them in the direction of the enemy, pronounces upon them the most terrible imprecations' (*Paxton*, Illustrations, ii. 299; *Kitto* on ver. 1, etc.). Of the whole of this ceremony the sprinkling of the ashes is evidently the most essential part; but it is in our narrative never hinted at, which is the more decisive against the analogy, as the imprecation of enemies was Balak's only object in employing Balaam's services. It is, therefore, surely unjust to mix up the king and the prophet in suggestions like this: 'sometimes the one only, sometimes both together, are seen striving to overpower the voice of conscience and of God with the fumes of sacrifice' (*Stanley*, Jewish Church, i. 190). Neither in religion nor in morals Balaam had anything in common with the heathen and obdurate monarch. But what did Balaam do in the solitude? This question has engaged the zeal of a hundred writers, and as it is not answered in the text, it has afforded to many another welcome opportunity of accusing Balaam of the darkest paganism and the basest juggleries. They described him as the type of a lying augur, and ransacked classical and unclassical antiquities to paint the hideousness of the contemptible tribe of soothsayers, among whom they assigned to Balaam a fore-

most rank. How greatly they thus wronged the author, we have shown above. Can he be supposed to represent the God of Israel as inspiring exalted and far-reaching prophecies in connection with, nay, as the result of, the meanest of heathen sorceries and impositions? (About *נְהַיִשִּׁים*, xxiv. 1, see pp. 19–21, and notes on xxiii. 25–xxiv. 2).—The article implied in *בְּמִזְבְּחֵהֶם* (vers. 2, 4) has distributive meaning, *on each altar* (and so in vers. 4, 14, 30; see Gram. § 83. 6; *Oukel.*, על־כָּל מִזְבְּחֵהֶם; *Luth.*, je auf einem Altar, etc.; but *Sept.*, inaccurately, ἐπι τὸν βωμόν; *Vulg.*, super aram, though in xxiii. 30 per singulas aras, etc.).—*קָרָה* in Niph'al (vers. 3, 4, 15, 16) is *to meet*, as in Exod. iii. 18; v. 3, where the same verb is employed with reference to God 'meeting' Moses and Aaron; nor does it here imply the notion of chance, as if 'God's revelation came to Balaam, who was no true prophet, merely by accident' (דרך מקרה, *Nachman.*, *Abarban.*, *Mendelss.*, and others).—*מָה*, used as a relative pronoun, is like *מִיֵּשֶׁר* occasionally preceded by the construct state (*מִיֵּשֶׁר*; see Gram. §§ lxxx. 11; 87. 8. f.). 'מָה' signifies, etymologically, a *bare* or *waste* spot, from *מָהַץ*, kindred to *מָהַץ*, to be *equal* or *even* (comp. Isa. xiii. 2, הַר נִשְׁפָּה, a *bare mountain*, covered with no trees or shrubs; Job xxxiii. 21 *keri*): Balaam went to a solitary place that he might not be disturbed in his attention nor miss the Divine voice when it came. It may be that 'מָה' is more frequently a *bare height* or *hill* (Isa. xli. 18; Jer. iii. 2, 21; vii. 29; xii. 12; xiv. 6), though this is by no means uniformly the case (Isa. xlix. 9; Jer. iv. 11); but supposing even that 'מָה' implies such a notion in this passage (so *R. Jonah b. Gannach*, *Ebn Ezra*, *Kimchi*, *Abarban.*, *Mendelss.*, and many others), although then the verb would hardly be *וַיֵּלֶךְ* but *וַיַּעַל* (comp. xxii. 41), that would be no cogent reason for assuming that Balaam, as heathen augurs did, went out to watch for 'remarkable phenomena of nature' or 'important signs,' as thunder, lightning, or the rainbow; for applying to him the whole vocabulary of Greek and Roman divination, of *τέρατα* and *σήματα*, *οἰωνοπόλος* and *μάντις*, of auguria and auspicia, lituus, auguraculum and *tesca*; and for insisting that, veiling his head and turning to the east, he practised all the arts and tricks usually performed on elevations. The Temple of

Jerusalem, no less than the most famous heathen temples, stood on a hill; and so constantly did the Hebrews worship on heights, that among neighbouring nations it was currently said, 'A God of mountains is Jahveh and not a God of valleys' (1 Ki. xx. 23, 28; see Comm. on Lev. i. pp. 372, 373). If the narrative shows indeed a 'significant mixture of Hebrew and heathen notions of religion' (*Keil*), that mixture is significant not in reference to Balaam, but the Hebrews. The older translations of שפי are extremely divergent and very few rest on a safe foundation. Closest to the correct meaning is *Onkelos*, who has יְהִי'ר, *alone or lonely*, though שפי is a noun (so *Abarban.*, מַתְּבוֹרֵר; *Zunz*, einsam; *Bunsen*, allein): *Ewald* (*Jahrbüch.* x. pp. 46-49, 178), after having defended this interpretation with the utmost earnestness, finally abandons it in favour of the casual conjecture 'he went out to *espy*' viz., auguries, tracing יִשְׁפֵה to צַפֵּה, for which connection, he admits, there is no foundation in Hebrew and no analogy in the kindred dialects. *Rashi* adds the secondary notion of *quietness or silence* (שִׁתִּיקָה עִמּוֹ אֵלֶּה שְׁתִּיקָה; compare *Syr.* שְׁפִיאִית, *Saad.*, and others), probably following the *Targ. Jerus.*, which here, as in Gen. xxii. 8, renders בִּלְבַב שְׁפִי 'with tranquil mind,' which translation, resulting from repeated metaphors, swerves considerably from the right path, yet not so much as the interpretation 'with contrite or humbled heart' (בְּרוּחַ גִּשְׁבֵּרָה, *Rabbi Jehudah* quoted by *Kimchi*, שְׁפִי' being associated with the Chaldee שְׁפִי'ה, *to crush or wear away*; similarly *Dothe*, anxious, etc.). The Midrash also attributes to the word the sense of *calmness*, and explains: 'Balaam intended cursing Israel; therefore, he lost that tranquillity of mind which he had till then enjoyed, and was thenceforth uneasy and troubled' (נִטְרָר; *Midr. Rabb. Num.* xx. 8). But the usual Talmudical exposition is *lame* (חֲנֵר); for Balaam is asserted to have become so by the ass pressing his leg against the vineyard wall (xxii. 25; *Talm. Sauehedr.* 105a; *Rashbam*, and others); he was, however, lame in one foot only, while Samson, who in Jacob's last Address is compared to a שְׁפִיפִין, *riper* (Gen. xlix. 17), was lame in both feet (*Talm. Sot.* 10a; *Sanh.* 105a). Guided by this conceit, *Targ. Jonath.* actually renders, 'And Balaam bent or crept like a

serpent' (נחין כחייא); and hardly less hazardous are some other translations, as *Sept.* εὐθεΐαν, the straight road; *Samar. Vers.* מוכנן, 'lurking' (with which word it also expresses שפיפון in Gen. xlix. 17), *i.e.*, furtively going out after signs; *Vulg.*, velociter; *Luth.*, eilend, etc.—The phrase, 'The Lord put words into Balaam's mouth' (ver. 5), which, of course, refers to the ordinary inspiration of prophets, has been explained to mean that the words were put into Balaam's *mouth*, not into his *heart*, so that he neither understood them nor sympathised with their spirit (comp. *Origen*, In. Num. Hom. xiv. 3, nunc autem, quoniam in corde ejus desiderium mercedis erat et cupiditas pecuniæ, etc.; xv. 2, etc.).

8. BALAAM'S FIRST SPEECH. XXIII. 7—10.

7. And he took up his parable and said,
 From Aram hath Balak brought me,
 The king of Moab from the mountains
 of the east:
 Come, curse me Jacob,
 And come, execrate Israel!
8. How shall I curse, *whom* God doth not
 curse?
 And how shall I execrate, *whom* the
 Lord doth not execrate?
9. For from the summit of the rocks I see
 them,
 And from the hills I behold them:
 Lo, a people *that* dwelleth apart,
 And is not reckoned among the nations.
10. Who counteth the dust of Jacob,
 And by number the fourth *part* of
 Israel?
 Let me die the death of the righteous,
 And be my end like them!

Repose characterises Balaam's lofty oracles, as it distinguishes the plain narrative of the Book. But those oracles are invested with the choicest attributes of poetry, and the sublime is genially blended with the beautiful. They are, therefore, by the author designedly called 'parables.'^a They have not the usual vehemence of prophetic utterance; they are not the offspring of fervid passion, but of lucid thought; they are not spoken *pleno ore* but *ore rotundo*; they do not rush along in torrent-like eloquence, but move with a quiet dignity, upheld by their own inherent strength. The first speech in particular bears a character almost epic and idyllic. It seems hardly to do more than describe, in the simplest form, the actual facts and circumstances; but not less powerful than the impression produced by Judah's wonderful address to Joseph, apparently likewise a mere recapitulation, is the effect wrought by these measured words of Balaam. Proceeding in unrestrained and natural grace, they yet do not, for a moment, lose sight of their high object; and breathing the most peaceful harmony, they yet point with irresistible weight to the grand struggle that is being fought and decided. With magic force they demolish the bulwarks of pride and stubbornness, which Balak deemed invincible. The king of Moab is compelled to learn that all his treasures are unavailing even to make a friendly seer speak as he desires or commands. He must hear, with growing distinctness, that blessing and curse are in the hands of no prophet, however famous and privileged, but in the power of Jahveh alone—the God of his dreaded foes; and he must be taught, and through him every heathen, that the world is not a play of human caprice or selfishness, but is governed by the unerring laws of a Wisdom, which is indeed abundant in mercy, but pours out this goodness upon those only who deserve it by their deeds and aims.

^a מִּשְׁלֵי, vers. 7, 18, etc.

But Israel is worthy of this glorious distinction. They are a righteous people (יִשְׂרָאֵל); and as they excel all other nations of the earth in virtue and piety, so they are singular in the safe protection of their God. By His grace they have become numerous as the dust of the earth, of which no one would attempt to count even a small portion. Through Him they enjoy the most precious prerogatives of spiritual enlightenment. All these gifts and boons are by Balaam but slightly touched upon; yet their mere remembrance moves him so suddenly, seizes him so powerfully, that he exclaims with an abruptness that may seem surprising, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and be my end like them'!—and thus concludes. A twofold lesson was to be impressed upon the king of Moab: that it was a fatal error to declare to Balaam, 'I know that he whom thou cursest is cursed'; and that Israel cannot and must not be cursed, because 'they are blessed.'^a The prophet summoned to execrate Israel wishes for himself no higher felicity than to share the lot of that very nation. Shall we more admire the consummate art which produces such effects with the simplest means, or the wealth of thought condensed in so small a compass? For what is it that Balaam's wish implies? Nothing less than Israel's entire theocratic and spiritual history. 'The people that dwelleth apart (לְיִשְׂרָאֵל) and is not reckoned among the nations,' is God's first-born son and His treasure, His chosen and peculiar people, His turtle-dove and the flock which He leads, the great, the wise, and the humble nation, the beloved bride whom He has betrothed to Himself for ever in mercy and faithfulness,^b and lastly, as the culmination of all, 'the kingdom of priests and the holy nation.' And the people of Israel are wise and holy, because they have received God's laws and obey them; they are great and powerful, living 'in safety,

^a xxii. 6, 12.

^b Hos. ii. 21, 22.

alone,' because He is the shield of their help, and because He 'pastures with His own staff the flock of His inheritance that dwelleth alone' in His favoured land.^a When, therefore, Balaam prays that his end may be like that of the Israelites, he wishes that, similar to the members of their great community—like Abraham, their own chosen type and model—'the rock whence they were hewn'—he may die 'in peace' and 'full of years,'^b that, in the hour of death, he may look back upon an existence blessed by security and rich in pious works, a life ennobled by the knowledge of God and His protecting love; and that he may leave behind a numerous and happy posterity.

But if we enquire in history after 'the people that dwelleth apart,' where is it to be found? Perhaps no people, certainly no Eastern people, kept itself so little separate as the ancient Hebrews. From the earliest times of their independence to the latest, they practised all the superstitions and idolatries of the heathen. From the earliest times to the latest, down to those of Ezra and Nehemiah, they mixed by intermarriages with every surrounding tribe, and so thoroughly did they abandon their identity, that a part of them ceased to understand the Hebrew tongue,^c till at last the whole nation spoke a foreign language, or adopted a mixed dialect, in which a corrupted Hebrew formed a subordinate element. 'The children of Israel,' we read in one of the earliest Books, 'dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, and Amorites, the Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites, and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served other Gods.'^d And again, 'The people of Israel,' we read

^a Deut. iv. 1-8; xxxiii. 28, 29; Mic. vii. 14; see Comm. on Exod. pp. 332, 333; on Lev. i. p. 398; on Lev. ii. p. 184; etc.

^b Gen. xv. 15; xxv. 8; Isa. lvii. 2; etc.

^c Neh. xiii. 24.

^d Judg. iii. 5, 6.

in one of their latest records, 'and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the (heathen) people of the lands . . . for they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands.'^a The picture drawn by the author of Balaam's speeches is not the picture of the real but the ideal Israel, and a prophet had a right to draw it. The aspiration to be a 'special' and a holy people never died or waned in Israel. At all times there were found among them ardent men who fanned and fed the sacred flame. However often the people sank, and however deep, they were constantly regenerated by guides and monitors rising from their own midst. The great goal, though distant, never vanished from their eyes. It was the Divine beacon brightly visible even in the most intricate and most tortuous paths.^b

At last the time came when the Israelites really 'dwelt apart and were not reckoned among the nations;' but it came in a manner which those great and God-inspired men could neither foresee nor desire. Their free and noble teaching was set aside to give way to statutes which indeed separated the Hebrews from all other nations like a brazen wall, but which separated them also from their own glorious past and its spiritual liberty, which replaced a living individuality, rich and varied, by the lifeless monotony of an unchangeable code; and who can say how much this matchless prophecy, misunderstood and narrowed, contributed to that long and fatal isolation? But how many and how great revolutions must have preceded before a Persian magnate could say of the Hebrews, 'There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the nations . . . and their laws are different from every people.'^c They had

^a Ezra ix. 1, 2; see Comment. on Lev. i. p. 357; ii. pp. 354-356.

^b See *supra*, p. 36.

^c Esth. iii. 8.

ceased to 'dwell apart' in their own land, but so strange were their ordinances and habits, their forms and ceremonies, that the bond of sympathy between them and the other nations was rent asunder, and that in a sense very different from that intended by the author of these prophecies—they 'were not reckoned among the nations.' Nor will that bond be fully restored until they return—and by the nobleness of their lives induce others to turn—to the light and truth of their great prophets with an unswerving devotion.

But in other points besides, the ideal character of this speech is manifest. 'Who counteth the dust of Jacob, and by number the fourth part of Israel?'—thus an earnest patriot might proudly speak in the time of David, when the Hebrew monarchy fairly promised to become one of the powerful eastern empires, when, by that king's brilliant conquests, it extended almost from the Nile to the Euphrates,^a and when this large territory was occupied by teeming and flourishing populations. But soon came disruption, decline, and civil dissension, the loss of subjected provinces, and at last the abduction of ten tribes to Assyria—and then the Deuteronomist no more compared the Hebrews so confidently with the dust of the earth or the stars of heaven, but he declared impressively, 'The Lord did not choose you, because you are more numerous than any people, for you are the fewest of all people, but because the Lord loved you.'^b—And again, in David's time, the religious leaders might still cherish the hope that Israel would live as a 'righteous' people, rejoicing in justice and piety, and united in the adoration of one incorporeal and all-pervading God. But when generation after generation passed away, without the incessant admonitions of zealous men bearing any fruit; when, as Jeremiah again and again laments, the

^a Comp. Gen. xv. 18; Ex. xxiii. 31; Deut. xi. 24; 1 Ki. v. 1.

^b Deut. vii. 7; comp. i. 10; x. 22; xxviii. 62.

prophets, whom 'God sent from early morning,'^a were disregarded, slighted, and cruelly persecuted; and an ardent lover of his country was forced to exclaim, 'Who is blind like My servant, and deaf as My messenger (Israel) whom I have sent?'^b—then the same high-minded writer of the seventh century felt bound to point, with the utmost decision, to God's all-embracing scheme of universal government as the inscrutable cause of Israel's election, and to warn the people, 'Not on account of thy piety and the righteousness of thy heart dost thou go to possess the land of the Canaanites; but on account of the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God drives them out before thee.' For the Hebrews, he insists, are a 'perverse and crooked,' a 'foolish and unwise' people, who 'waxed fat and rebelled, and forsook God who made them.'^c Thus thoughtful men among the Hebrews constantly laboured to explain and to justify the course of history anew, when the old ideas and expectations proved unsafe or fallacious.

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—The whole of this composition, as we need not prove again, is so peculiar, that analogies should be applied with the greatest caution. No other prophecy in the Old Testament is called מִשְׁלֵי, which word, properly 'simile,' is exclusively used of the metaphorical diction of poetry or of proverbial wisdom (Ps. xlix. 5; lxxviii. 2; Isa. xiv. 4; Ezek. xvii. 2; Mic. ii. 4; Job xxvii. 1; Prov. i. 1, etc.; comp. Num. xxi. 27, מִשְׁלֵי, etc.; *Luzzatto*, *proferi la sua poesia*). Yet Balaam's speeches are none the less true prophecy because they are at the same time the finest poetry. Their difference, in form, from all other prophetic orations is sufficiently accounted for by the circumstance that no other prophet had to accomplish so peculiar a task as Balaam (see p. 63); and it seems almost to pass beyond the boundaries of fair interpretation, to explain that difference by the assumption that 'Balaam had only the *donum*, not the

^a השבם ושלוח

^b Isai. xlii. 18.

^c Deut. ix. 5, 6; xxxii. 5, 6, 15.

minus propheticum, and that he had around him no congregation which he could have improved, even if he had desired it' (*Hengstenb.*, Bil., p. 79; *Keil*, Num., p. 310). For whom are all these beautiful utterances intended? Were they not meant for the instruction and elevation of the great and living community of Israel, which in the author's time acted and advanced with unprecedented vigour?—Bishop Lowth (*Sacr. Poes.*, Præl. xx.) thus characterises the arrangement of Balaam's prophecies: 'Eleganti inchoantur exordio, rerum continuatione et serie decurrunt, et perfecta demum conclusione plene absolvuntur.' Our preceding observations will prove that we agree as fully with this remark as with the same divine's general estimate of the poetical value of these compositions, of which he says: 'Nihil habet Poesis Hebraea in ullo genere limatius aut exquisitius' (*ibid.*; comp. Præl. iv., xviii). We are not aware that bias, through so many centuries, misled any interpreter so far as to disparage the peerless beauty of Balaam's speeches; this was reserved—it might appear incredible—to an expositor of our own time, who considers that those oracles 'are more rich in pathetic forms than in matter, and that the images are crowded, sometimes obscure, and redundant' (so *Lange*, *Bibelwerk*, ii. 315).—It is evident that מִן־הָאֲרָצוֹת (in ver. 7) should be provided with a *distinctive* accent, which, as our translation shows, establishes a good parallelism (comp. xxiii. 18; Gen. iv. 23, etc.); the order of the words in both hemistichs is then 'chiastic,' and the verb מִן־הָאֲרָצוֹת is in the second part to be supplied again from the first. For the utterances of Balaam are remarkable for an exemplary parallelism. This consists all but uniformly of two members mostly synonymous, more rarely antithetical (xxiv. 9b, 20), and occasionally sythetic, whether in two parts (xxiii. 20, 22, 23b; xxiv. 8a, 17c, 19, 23), or three, or even four (xxiv. 4, 24); while, in one instance, it is thrice synonymous (xxiv. 8b).—As the words מִן־הָאֲרָצוֹת correspond to מִן־הָאֲרָצוֹת, they do not mean 'from the primeval mountains' (as in Deut. xxxiii. 15; comp. Gen. xlix. 26; Hab. iii. 6), but 'from the mountains of the east' (*Sept.*, ἐξ ὀρέων ἀπ' ἀνατολῶν; *Vulg.*, de montibus orientis, etc.; comp. אֲרָצוֹת קָדִים or בְּנֵי קָדִים, Gen. xxv. 6; xxix. 1; Judg. vii. 12; also Isa.

ii. 6), as Mesopotamia (אֲרָם or אֲרָם נְגַרְיִים, Deut. xxiii. 5; comp. Num. xxii. 5), lying east of Moab, although on the whole flat and abounding in vast plains, is not without considerable mountain elevations, especially in the northern districts, into which the extensive ranges of Armenia reach (comp. *Ainsworth*, *Researches in Assyria*, pp. 79 *sqq.*; *Ritter*, *Erlkunde*, xi., pp. 438, 585, 726, 957, etc.). It is, moreover, interesting to notice that the Assyrian Inscription of Rimmon-Nirari, found on a pavement slab from Nimroud, mentions 'the Temple of Kharsak-Kurra,' which signifies 'the mountains of the east,' supposed to denote the highlands of Elam, the original abodes of the Accadai or Babylonians (comp. *Records of the Past*, i. p. 4; see also the 'Annals of Assur-Nasir-pal,' l.c. iii. 66, 'at the mountains over against the Euphrates I halted,' etc.; the Black Obelisk Inscription, B., line 29, 'To mount Amanus I went up,' etc.). That 'the mountains of the east' are meant as a contrast to 'the summit of the rocks' and the 'hills' of Moab, on which Balaam was then standing (ver. 9), is as little probable as the idea that those words emphasize the great distance from which Balak had called the seer, and yet to no purpose. The transparency and calmness of Balaam's words do not favour the search for such hidden and artificial allusions, and 'the mountains of the east' are simply a poetical description or periphrasis of 'Aram.'—About אֲרָם see on xxii. 6.—אֲרָם, for אֲרָם or אֲרָם (fut. אֲרָם, ver. 9), as אֲרָם Judg. vi. 28) for אֲרָם; see Gram. §§ xvi. 4. *b*; xxxix. 4. *a*.—The poetical verb נָעַם, whatever its primary meaning (probably, *to foam* at the mouth; comp. Engl. *scum*, Germ. *Schaum*, etc.), has commonly the sense of *speaking angrily* (Zech. i. 12; Isa. lxvi. 14; Prov. xxii. 14; xxv. 23; Dan. xi. 30), and then, with an easy transition (comp. Mal. i. 4), that of *cursing* (used parallel with אָרַר and קָבַצ, vers. 7, 8; Prov. xxiv. 24; Mic. vi. 10; Sept., ἐπικατάρασαι; Vulg., detestare; Luth., more weakly 'schilt,' and similarly *Hengstenb.*, 'bedräue,' etc.; *Targ. Jon.*, נָעַר, make small or diminish; *Targ. Onk.*, תָּרַיָה, expel or remove). It is, as in this passage, mostly construed with the accusative (hence also the passive forms נִנְעָם and נָעַם, *angered*, *cursed*; Prov. xxii. 14; xxv. 23; Mic. vi. 10), rarely with עַל (Deut. xi. 30).—נָבַח (ver. 8), for

רַבִּי (comp. Gramm. § xxx. 1), the relative אֲשֶׁר being omitted in both parts of the verse, and in the second part the suffix of the personal pronoun also (וְעַם).—Balaam's exclamation, 'How shall I curse, whom God doth not curse,' etc. (ver. 8), refers indeed, in the first instance, to the Hebrews, whom, as being blessed by God, he must not execrate; yet it bears a general application, and Balaam does not hint that, in other cases, he is well able to pronounce an effectual curse, even against the will of God (comp. xxii. 18; xxiii. 12; xxiv. 13): the poet chooses individual and concrete illustrations, even if he means to convey a general idea; it would be strange if he were to make a vague and comprehensive declaration when he has one particular instance in view. How unjust, therefore, is Calvin's assertion: 'Interea se potentia illa abdicat, qua ipsum excellere persuasus fuerat Balaam!' Where does Balaam express or insinuate this conviction?—כִּי (ver. 9) must be understood in its ordinary causal meaning (not as *indeed* or *when*). Balaam says, he cannot curse Israel, *for* they are a remarkable people, dwelling apart, etc.; the words מֵרְאִיט צְרִים וּב' are inserted for the poetical description of the scene and the Hebrew hosts, and the sense is: for the people I see from these heights is one that dwelleth apart, etc.—From our general comments it will be clear, that the remark, 'non de virtute populi, sed tantum de benedictione Dei agitur' (*Calvin* and others), is but partially correct: the author means indeed to intimate that the Hebrews have been elected by the grace and favour of God, but he also says distinctly that they are a people of אֲנִיִּים (ver. 10; comp. ver. 21), which term ought not, for the sake of a deep-rooted prejudice, to be strained to signify 'recti vocantur Israelitæ non propria rectitudine, sed Dei beneplacito, qui eos dignatus fuerat segregare ab immundis gentibus.'—And again, the words that the Hebrews 'dwell apart' (מֵרְאִיט), etc., have indeed the immediate or literal sense that they are living in safe and retired seclusion, exempt from violent changes and foreign interference (comp. Judg. xviii. 7, 10, 27; Hos. viii. 9; Jer. xlix. 31; Ps. iv. 9 and *Hupfeld* in loc.); but they have, besides, the figurative and deeper import, that the Hebrews are a 'special' or 'peculiar' people

(סְגִלָּה) among all the nations of the earth, whom God bore on eagles' wings and brought to Himself (Exod. xix. 4, 5; Deut. vii. 6; xiv. 2; xxvi. 18; Ps. cxxxv. 4; Isa. xli. 8; xliii. 1, etc.). However, it would hardly be correct to combine both meanings in this way, that the Hebrews 'delighting only in the knowledge and worship of their God, prefer separating themselves from all nations, in order to serve Him undisturbed,' and then to contend that 'this retirement of the people, and this desire of securing above all their religion, did not prevail before the ninth or eighth century, when the political power of the kingdom declined in every way' (*Ewald*, Jahrb. viii. 25). Where does Isaiah, the great representative of that period, evince a desire of keeping the Hebrews apart from all nations in the matter of religion? Does he not rather long for the time when Egypt and Assyria will worship God in common with Israel, and will, like them, be acknowledged as His inheritance? (p. 35). Moreover, it would be difficult to find, in the genuine parts of this section, the slightest trace of a decline of political power; it speaks, on the contrary, throughout of strength and power and victory (p. 56). And lastly, although the Hebrews are described as the chosen and the pious people, they are yet as free from tendencies of particularism as of hierarchy.—תִּהְיֶה צָב (ver. 9) *he is reckoned*, the meaning of the Hithpael being occasionally that of the passive of Piel (Lev. xxv. 27, 50, 52), as הִתְחַפֵּץ (1 Sam. ii. 14) *to be expiated* (see Gram. § xxxvii. 2. d; *Sept.*, λογισθήσεται; *Vulg.*, reputabitur; *Rashi*, נמנין, etc.).—The phrase, 'Who counteth the dust of Jacob?' (מִי־מְנֵה עֹפָר עֵקֶב, ver. 10) is a pregnant expression by no means surprising in poetry, and means, 'Who can count (Onkel., מִלֵּל לְמִנֵּי) the Israelites, who are like the dust that cannot be counted?' It is indeed so natural that it certainly need not be regarded as a reminiscence or intentional reproduction of such prose passages as Gen. xiii. 16 or xxviii. 14, to which the author is supposed to refer, and without which, it is asserted, he could not have written this verse (*Hengstenb.*, *Ewald*, and others): the dust of the earth and the sand on the sea-shore (Gen. xxii. 17; xxxii. 13; Josh. xi. 4; Judg. vii. 12, etc.), no less than the stars of heaven (Gen. xv. 5; xxii. 17:

Deut. x. 22, etc.), are common and obvious similes, denoting a vast or infinite multitude. 'The enemy advanced with men and horses numerous as sand,' we read on a papyrus relating the war of Ramses II. with the Khittoi; or, 'the herds multiplied like the sands on the shore,' on the 'Great Harris Papyrus' of Ramses III.; and again, 'the worshippers in the temple' were 'numerous as the stars of heaven,' on the Inscription of Tiglath-pileser I. (see *Rec. of the Past*, ii. 68; v. 24; vi. 26, 33; viii. 9, etc.).—If וַיִּסְפֹּר is the correct reading, and not וַיִּמְנֵה (so *Sept.*, καὶ τίς ἀριθμῆσεται; *Samar. Vers.*, וַיִּמְנֵה בַתְנֵי; *Saadijah*; *Veuema*, and others), it may either be taken absolutely as an adverbial accusative, *according to the number*, אֶת־רִבְעֵהוּ being governed by מִנְהָה, 'Who counteth the dust . . . and by number the fourth part?' (comp. Gram. § 86. 4); or it may be considered to govern the accusative אֶת־רִבְעֵהוּ, as a *nomen verbale* preserving the force of the verb from which it is derived, *the numbering or the number of the fourth part* (comp. הִנֵּשֶׁע אֶת־יְשׁוּעֵי־הָרָקָה, Habak. iii. 13, *to the help of thy anointed*; see Gram. § lxxxvii. 15; *Luther*, die Zahl des vierten Theils; *Mendelss.*, מְקוֹר בַּפֶּלֶס שֵׁם, etc.): as מְנַה has the more comprehensive meaning of *preparing or arranging* (Isa. lxx. 12; *Sept.*, τίς ἐξῆραβῶσατο), מְסַפֵּר, in connection with it, is no tautology; and we find, in fact, the phrase מִנְהָה מִסְפֵּר (Ps. cxlvii. 4). By vocalising וַיִּסְפֹּר the sense would grammatically be plain, but the diction would not be poetical. Some old manuscripts omit את and read וַיִּסְפֹּר (see *De-Rossi*, Var. Lect. ii. 16), 'the number of the fourth part,' which is evidently another attempt at rendering the construction easier.—'The fourth part (רִבְעֵהוּ) of Israel' means, doubtless, a small portion: who can count even a fraction of Israel's hosts? though the number four does not elsewhere occur with a similar force. Jewish tradition found in that word an allusion to the four divisions in which the encampment of the Hebrews was distributed, during their journeys through the desert (Num. ii., x.) and of which Balaam, from his position, saw only one, that of Dan, which was hindmost (so *Targ. Onkel.* and *Jonath.* on xxii. 41 and xxiii. 10, 13; *Ebu Ezra*, *Bechai*, *Abarban.*, and others), and this view has been adopted by not a few

modern interpreters (as *Michael.*, *Rosenm.*, *Heugstemb.*, *Baumgart.*, *Keil*, and others); but it has no better support than another opinion of some Jewish scholars who, tracing רָבַע to רָבַע in the meaning of *begetting*, render it by *seed* or *posterity* (*Talm. Nidd.* 31a; *Rashi*, זרע היוצא מן התיטמיש שלהם; *Saadi.*, and others), or identifying רָבַע with רָבַע in the sense of *lying down* (*Ps.* cxxxix. 3), translate the *camp* (comp. *Ebn Ezra* in loc.; *Zunz.* die Lagerstätte), or than the conjecture that instead of אֶת־רָבַע we should read אֶת־רַבּוֹת or רַבּוֹת the *myriads* (*Knobel*), which plural occurs only in the latest Books, for the earlier form is always רַבּוֹת.—The word יְיָשָׁרִים *righteous*, has here almost the force and nature of a proper noun, and thus coincides with יְיָשָׁרִים (Deut. xxxii. 15; xxxiii. 26; comp. וְבָלִין), a poetical appellation of Israel, who are or should be the יְיָשָׁרִים or צַדִּיקִים, κατ' ἐξοχήν (*Ps.* xiv. 5; *Isa.* xxxvi. 2; lx. 21, etc.), as God Himself is צַדִּיק יְיָשָׁר (Deut. xxxii. 4), and who possess or should possess those qualities as inherent characteristics. Thus, perhaps, the *singular* of the suffix in כָּמֹהוּ, though referring to יְיָשָׁרִים, may be accounted for, since that suffix is hardly meant to point to כִּוּוֹת; so that כָּמֹהוּ would stand pregnantly for כָּאֲהָרִיתוֹ. There is no reason for abandoning the usual and peculiarly appropriate meaning of the term, and to explain יְיָשָׁרִים as the *happy*, or the *brave*, like the Greek ἀγαθός, so that the סֵפֶר הַיְיָשָׁר (Josh. x. 13; 2 Sam. i. 18) would be 'the Book of Heroes,' or of 'Songs of Heroes' (*Herder*, Geist der ebr. Poes., ii. 180, 186); nor is it possible to refer יְיָשָׁרִים to 'the ancestors of Israel,' to whom certainly the singular כָּמֹהוּ could not be applied (ver. 22 is not analogous), or to restrict the sense to 'the righteous men in Israel,' as in that term the whole people as a unity is idealised.—אֶת־הָרִיתִי, as the parallelism shows, is *my end* or *death* (*Vulg.*, novissima mea, and others), not *my posterity* (comp. *Ps.* xxxvii. 37, 38; cix. 13, etc.; *Sept.*, τὸ σπέσμα μου, and others).—We have above described the probable scope of Balaam's emphatic wish, 'Let me die the death of the righteous,' etc. It does not hint at the immortality of the soul and a future life, which Balaam desires to share (*Cuzari*, i. 115; *Bechai*, *Abarban.*, *Michael.*, *Mendels.*, and others), for all the blessings in these prophecies have refer-

ence solely to temporal happiness secured by piety and God's favour (comp. *H. Schultz*, *Alttest. Theol.*, ii. 399-401). Nor does that exclamation point to 'the immortality of Israel, founded on the eternal hopes that pervaded the people' (*Fürst*, *Bibl. Liter.*, ii. 228), which idea is too abstract for the time and the context. But how utterly unwarranted it is to connect Balaam's allusion to his own death with his inglorious destruction in the Midianite war (xxxii. 8), and to regard it as a dark foreboding prompted by a guilt-laden conscience (*Targ. Jon. and Jerus., Cleric., Hengstenb.*, and others), it would be unnecessary to explain again in this place (see pp. 4-7).—In conclusion, it may be instructive briefly to glance at the manner in which this speech of Balaam is rendered by Josephus (*Ant. IV. vi. 4*). Though professing to furnish a literal reproduction of the prophecies, he offers a copious paraphrase differing from the original in every detail. Balaam speaks of 'the best institutions,' which the Hebrews 'leave to their better children,' of their permanent possession of the land of Canaan, and of their great fame filling earth and sea. He expresses wonder and admiration that from one common ancestor should be descended such large hosts, sufficiently numerous to people every part of the world, as they are destined to do. He praises their prosperity in peace and their glory in war, and expresses a wish that their enemies may be infatuated enough to attack them for their own unfailing annihilation. And then Josephus continues: 'Thus Balaam spoke by inspiration . . . moved by the Divine spirit' (ὁ μὲν τοιαῦτα ἐπεθείαζεν . . . τῷ θεῷ πνεύματι πρὸς αὐτὰ κεννημένος). What were his sources? And were they more authentic than the Hebrew Scriptures? His paraphrase is as much the product of fancy as the address he puts in Balaam's mouth for causing the corruption of the Hebrews (p. 25); and he consistently concludes this section: 'These events have come to pass among the several nations concerned, both in former ages and in this, *until within my own memory*, both by sea and by land' (i.e., § 5). For the application of prophecies invariably extends up to the interpreter's time. Analogous in character is Philo's account (*Vit. Mos. i. 50*).

9. REMONSTRANCES AND NEW PREPARATIONS.

XXIII. 11—17.

11. And Balak said to Balaam, What hast thou done to me? I took thee to curse my enemies, and behold, thou hast blessed *them* indeed. 12. And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord puts in my mouth? 13. And Balak said to him, Come, I pray thee, with me to another place, whence thou mayest see them—only the extreme part of them shalt thou see, but shalt not see them all—and curse me them from there.—14. And he brought him to the Field of Seers, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on *every* altar. 15. And he said to Balak, Stand as before by thy burnt-offering, while I go to meet *the Lord* as before. 16. And the Lord met Balaam, and put words in his mouth, and said, Go back to Balak, and speak thus. 17. And when he came to him, behold, he was standing by his burnt-offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said to him, What has the Lord spoken?

Balak, hearing the prophet's words in amazement, considered them as nothing else but base treachery, as a breach of that pledge which, in spite of repeated protestations to the contrary, he thought was plainly involved in Balaam's journey to Moab. As if he had been grievously wronged and deceived, he exclaimed, 'I have taken'—that is, I have hired—'thee to curse my enemies, and behold, thou hast blessed them indeed!' So bitter and so violent is his vexation that, at the moment, he does not

even listen to Balaam's renewed declaration of absolute dependence on God. He certainly does not deem it worth a rejoinder. He is solely engrossed by his ardently cherished plan. The first failure has not conquered but stimulated his contumacy. 'Who is the Lord, that I should listen to His voice?' Pharaoh stubbornly exclaimed. Should a Balak, having once undertaken the daring warfare against the God of Israel and His decrees, hopelessly abandon it without a further attempt? And yet, in the midst of restless excitement, he seems to be seized by doubt and apprehension. Balaam's words have produced a powerful effect upon his mind, however reluctant he is to avow it. He indeed carries out every arrangement for a second prophecy exactly as before. He again—and now of his own accord—builds seven altars, and presents on them twice seven victims like the first time. He takes the same anxious precaution that Balaam should on no account see the whole, but only a part of Israel. He even chooses another place for the rites, and fixes upon a locality which he hopes will prove more auspicious. And yet, when he beholds Balaam returning from his solitary contemplations, how does he receive the prophet? Not as the first time, silent and passive, but with the impatient question, 'What has the Lord (יהוה) spoken?' Against his will the confession is wrung from his lips, that he must expect his fate from the hand of the God of the Hebrews, and that this God is not only the Lord of His own chosen people, but of all the nations of the earth. However, although he was impressed with a sense of the *power* of this God, could he be expected to understand His *nature*? Is it surprising that he measured that nature by the standard of his own idols? He believed that, like these, Jahveh could, by new sacrifices, by reiterated ceremonies, and impetuous solicitations, be moved to revoke His councils. 'Cry aloud,' said Elijah to the priests of Baal, 'for he is a god, per-

haps he is meditating or is engaged, or he is in a journey or is asleep—that he may awake.’^a Therefore Balak courted the favour of the Hebrew God anew. His heart and his thoughts had remained unchanged, yet he expected that his destinies would be changed. But the author skilfully uses the same means for two very different ends. Balaam’s second prophecy is intended to show at once the tenaciousness of the desperate king, and the absolute certainty of Israel’s greatness. Pharaoh dreaming twice a dream of the same import, is assured that it will unfailingly and speedily be realised;^b the same promises are given to the patriarchs again and again, to prove that they will be fulfilled under whatever conditions and circumstances; and thus our author unfolds his benedictions of Israel in repeated strains, both to represent them as irrevocable, and to enlarge by perceptible degrees their depth and meaning. In equal proportions Balak’s defiance is broken and Israel’s fortune glorified.

The notion that some localities are more favourable for certain purposes than others is the natural correlative of the habit of placing every object and event under the influence of some special deity, spirit, or constellation. The same idea was of course extended to seasons, and even to names. When Abraham was to begin a new life as the guardian and propagator of Divine truth, he was bidden to leave Mesopotamia and to settle in Canaan, surely not because the population of this country was more accessible to the teachings of a monotheistic creed, but because the country or the place itself was, according to God’s council, more adapted to the end. Nearly all the laws of festivals in the Pentateuch are based on the particular sanctity of certain seasons—of the new and the full moons, of the seventh days, weeks, and years. On the Assyrian monuments we find constantly momentous enterprises recorded to

^a 1 Ki. xviii. 27.

^b Gen. xli. 32; comp. Acts xi. 10.

have been carried out 'in a good month and a fortunate day.'^a Even the early history of the patriarchs offers the most striking instances of change of names resorted to at important epochs of life; and in the Talmudical times, when Babylonian and Persian influences prevailed among the Jews more strongly than ever, it was still a generally received principle that man's decreed destiny is annulled not only by 'change of conduct,'^b but also by change of name and even of place.^c

In selecting the new spot for the sacrifices, the king of Moab was guided by the same considerations as before. He took Balaam to 'the Field of Seers'^d—a plain on one of the summits of Pisgah, which, as the name indicates, was a well-known station used by the prophets and diviners of the country for the exercise of their avocations; for Balak deemed his own holy places particularly suitable for Balaam's speeches—so little had he fathomed the God whose name he had learned, and whose might he began to dread. The general position of that 'Field' cannot be doubtful. The ridge of Pisgah, a part of the mountain-chain of Abarim, stretches to the north and east of Mount Attarus, on which was Bamoth-Baal, the scene of the first prophecy.^e The 'Field of Seers' must, therefore, have been in close vicinity to Mount Nebo, which is likewise described as 'a summit of Pisgah,' and is only a short distance south-

^a *E.g.*, Annals of Assur-bani-pal, col. i., line 12; col. x., lines 60, 61; Inscription of Esar-baddon, col. v., line 27; Annals of Sargon *sub fin.*; Birs-Nimroud Inscription of Nebuchadnezzar, col. ii., line 8; in fact, in Accadian, 'festival' is properly 'blessed' or 'fortunate day;' comp. Records of the Past, i. 57, 104; iii. 120; vii. 55, 77, 159; also ii. 15; see *Ovid's Fasti* passim.

^b שינוי המעשה

^c *Talm.* Rosh. Hash. 16 *b*, צרקה צעקה שינוי השם ושינוי מעשה וייט אומרים אף שינוי מקום; see Comm. on Genes. pp. 384, 394, etc. 'May my fortunate name Nebuchadnezzar,' we read in the Birs-Nimroud Inscription, 'or the Heavendoting king, dwell constantly in thy mouth' (col. ii., lines 28-31; Rec. vii. 78).

^d שַׂרְהַ צְפִים

^e *Supra*, p. 160.

west of the ancient town Heshbon (now *Heshbân* or *Huzbhân*); and though Mount Nebo is probably the higher of the two, and offers the widest prospect in all directions,^a the entire range of Pisgah rises and 'looks out over the wilderness' in which the Hebrews were encamped.^b On the whole, therefore, the locality of the second speech was doubtless at a similar distance from the camp as that of the first; but in each case Balaam surveyed a *different* part of the Hebrew multitudes.

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—To express the contrast between the expected *curse* (קָלַב, ver. 11) and the actual *blessing* with greater force, the finite verb is supported by the following infinitive בָּרַךְ, which, besides, intensifies the notion of blessing — 'thou hast blessed indeed' (comp. xxiv. 10). In ver. 25, where merely the juxtaposition is intended and nothing more, the infinitive precedes the finite verb (comp. xxiv. 11; see Grammar § 97. 6–8), while in ver. 20 — a poetical passage — the stress is conveyed by the mere position of בָּרַךְ, which precedes the principal verb (Gram. § 74. 5). — The construction of the words אַתָּה אֵינְךָ מִן הַיְיָ (ver. 12) is clear from the analogous phrase וְיִזְכְּרוּתָם לְעֵינֵיהֶם, *you shall take heed to do them* (Deut. v. 1; comp. vi. 25, etc.); אַתָּה is, therefore, governed by מִן הַיְיָ, not by אֵינְךָ; and as this verb has here not the meaning of the simple future, but implies moral necessity (comp. xxii. 38, הֵיכַל אֵיבָל), those words are to be rendered, 'I must take heed to speak that.' — הֵי (ver. 12, as in Judg. xix. 13), for הֵלֵךְ, *go* (xxii. 6, 17, etc.), the quiescent letter being elided on account of the close connection of the word with the following וְ, which for the same reason is provided with *dagesh forte conjunctivum* (comp. Grammar, § xxxix. 4.c.). — קֵצֵה קָצֵהוּ (ver. 13) corresponds exactly to קֵצֵה הָעָם (in xxii. 41) and signifies, like the latter, *the extreme part of the people*. It is difficult to see why קָצֵה must, in this passage, be taken 'in a more comprehensive sense' (*Hengstenb., Kurtz, and others*). On the contrary, Balak seems the second time to have taken even greater care than before not to let

^a Deut. iii. 27; xxxiv. 1; comp. xxxii. 49. ^b xxi. 20; comp. xxiii. 47.

Balaam see too much of the Hebrew army and people. The difference was not in the extent but in the division of the camp which the prophet beheld. The limitation by 'כֹּה אֵינִי רֹאֶה' follows so directly after 'וַיִּרְאֵהוּ אֱלֹהִים', 'thou shalt see the people,' that a mistake is impossible. The *Sept.*, to make the sense perfectly clear, even adds in the first part the negation unnecessarily, εἰς οὐδὲν οὐκ ὄψησθαι αὐτὸν ἐκεῖθεν, and then continues distinctly, ἀλλ' ἢ μέρος τι αὐτοῦ ὄψει, πάντας δὲ οὐ μὴ ἴδῃς; the *Vulg.*, briefly, unde partem Israel videas, et totum videre non possis, etc. It is, therefore, sufficient to quote the singular translation which, strange to say, has been adopted by more than one interpreter, 'from where thou shalt see them' (viz., the whole of Israel)—'only their extreme part thou seest, but not all' (viz., here on Bamoth-Baal), which, in Balak's opinion, had caused the unfavourable result of the first prophecy (so *Calmet*, Dictionnaire, i. 715, d'où vous le verrez entier, car vous n'en avez vu qu'une partie; *Keil*, Num., p. 313, and others). Can תראה in the same breath be understood so differently in a plain narrative?—The form קִבְּלוּ, *curse them*, instead of קְבֹלוּ or קְבֹלוּ, starts from the irregular imperative קְבֹלוּ (xxii. 11, p. 113), the ה *paragogicum* being omitted, but the ו *epentheticum* not assimilated with the suffix (as in וַיִּבְרַכְנָהוּ, Ps. lxxii. 15, etc.; see Gram. §§ liii. 2; lxii. 3. a. It is certainly unnecessary to assume a root קבו (of which there is no trace in the Old Test.) supposed to have arisen from קב by way of metathesis (so *Judah Chajjug*, *Heidenheim*, and others): as has been observed above (p. 113). קַבַּב, not נַקַּב, is the verb employed in this portion.—Considering the analogy of the 'heights of Baal' and the 'summit of Peor,' to which Balak took Balaam the first and third times (xxii. 41; xxiii. 28), it is more than probable that the שַׂרְה צְפִים, the locality of the second prophecy, was likewise connected with Balak's religious worship and practices, to which the literal meaning of the name obviously points; for שַׂרְה is a synonym of הַרְהָה or הַרְהָה, *seer* or *prophet* (Isa. lvi. 10; Ezek iii. 17; xxxiii. 6, 7; comp. Isa. lii. 8; Mic. vii. 4), and auguries of the most varied kind were usually awaited and taken on elevations (p. 169). The sense of 'field of watchmen,' as a place where guards were stationed to look out in times of war and

danger (*Rashi, Abarb.*, and others), is indeed not inappropriate (comp. the names כִּנְעָנָה, כִּנְעָנִים, etc., Isa. lii. 8), but it has no direct relation to the deeper tendency of the narrative. Some consider, with little probability, יְרֵדָה צְפִים the same place with קִנְצִיָּה כְּנָעִי (1 Sam. xxii. 3; comp. *Hitzig*, Inschrift des Mescha, p. 6). The identification of Mount Nebo with Mount Attarus has now, we believe, been generally abandoned (comp. *Hengstenb.*, Bil., pp. 244–248).—בֹּה, in ver. 15, has both times its usual meaning of *thus*, viz., as the first time; Balaam requested Balak to remain with his sacrifices as before, while he would go to meet God, as before, in the solitude (ver. 3). It is doubtful whether בֹּה ever has the meaning of *here*; that particle is omitted both times by the Sept., the second time by the Sam. Text and Vers., evidently on account of its supposed inappropriateness.—To אֶפְקְרָה, *I shall meet or go to meet*, we must supply אֶל־יְהוָה (vers. 3, 4. 16); it may be a *terminus technicus*, but it can certainly not coincide with הֲלֹךְ לִקְרַאת נְחֻשִׁים (xxiv. 1), for אֶל־יְהוָה is not identical with לִקְרַאת נְחֻשִׁים.

10. BALAAM'S SECOND SPEECH. XXIII. 18–24.

18. And he took up his parable and said,
 Rise, Balak, and hear,
 Harken unto me, son of Zippor!
19. God is not a man, that He should lie,
 Nor the son of man, that He should
 repent:
 Hath He said and shall He not do *it*,
 And spoken and shall He not fulfil it?
20. Behold, I have received *command* to
 bless,
 And He hath blessed, and I cannot
 reverse it.
21. He beholdeth no iniquity in Jacob,
 Nor seeth distress in Israel;

- The Lord their God *is* with them,
 And the trumpet-call of the King *is*
 among them.
22. God brought them out of Egypt—
 They have the fleetness of the buffalo.
23. For *there is* no enchantment in Jacob,
 Nor divination in Israel:
 In *due* time it is told to Jacob
 And to Israel, what God doeth.
24. Behold, *they are* a people *that* rise as the
 lioness,
 And lift themselves up like the lion:
 They do not lie down till they eat *their*
 prey,
 And drink the blood of the slain.

More weighty in matter and more elevated in tone, the second prophecy forms a decided contrast to the first. For the first breathes peace, the second war. The one describes tranquil possession, the other severe struggle. The one sketches briefly the results, the other draws strongly the means and efforts. The former intimates to Balak, distantly and lightly, that he is intent on a hopeless contest against overwhelming numbers; the latter impresses upon him, with crushing force, the indomitable heroism of his foes. Therefore the first speech begins calmly and without any introduction, 'From Aram hath Balak brought me;' but the second challenges the principal listener's rapt attention at the very outset; it bids him collect and rouse himself, shake off frivolous curiosity, and penetrate into the depth of the decrees about to be announced to him: 'Rise, Balak, and hear, hearken unto me, son of Zippor!' And now Balaam refers first to the king's renewed and impetuous desire of hearing the Israelites cursed. He

gives unfaltering expression to the great principle, which in the author's time no doubt had taken deep root in the Hebrew people, that God's promises are unalterable, and His wise determinations irrevocable; that, as He is *Jahveh*, the Eternal and Unchangeable, so His love does not decline or swerve from the people He has chosen. 'The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee, nor shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord;'^a and more clearly still: 'I, the Eternal, change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob do not perish.'^b The blessing once pronounced on Israel by God's behest, remains unshaken for all times. 'Behold, I have received command to bless,' exclaims Balaam; 'He hath blessed and I cannot reverse it.'

So far his address is no more than a rebuke of Balak's heedless pertinacity. But then the prophet, taking a loftier aim, turns away from the heathen king and is wholly absorbed by the life and destiny of the Hebrews. He has before called them a 'righteous' people,^c and has hinted that they owe their election and their happiness to this piety. But desirous to point out, with the utmost force, God's justice in the government of mankind, he now declares more fully and more clearly how precisely and how strikingly the fortunes of the Hebrews correspond to their virtues. He insists that they are free from all misery, because they keep aloof from all wickedness so carefully, that even God, the Searcher of hearts, can discover none: 'God beholdeth no iniquity in Jacob, nor seeth distress in Israel.' Therefore they deserve the high prerogative that 'God is with them'; that He has appointed them as 'His portion'; that, when 'He found them in a desert land, in the waste and howling wilderness, He encompassed and shielded and guarded them as the apple of His eye,' after He had led them from Egyptian

^a Isa. liv. 10.

^b Mal. iii. 6.

^c יִצְרָיִם ver. 10.

slavery into unrestricted freedom—He, in His mercy, not through any power of their own; and that, in all later ages ‘he that toucheth them toucheth the pupil of His eye.’^a He is their King, to whom they readily do homage when the blasts of the trumpet summon them to worship or to the celebration of the holy festivals, and whose guidance they follow in the perplexity of danger and the temptations of prosperity. Therefore, their vigour is like that of the huge and formidable buffalo (𐤏𐤍𐤅), which is the slave of no one and bends under no burden, is chained to no crib and forced to toil at no plough in the furrows of the field, and which, by its fleetness and the fearful power of its horns, is able to withstand the fiercest attack.^b But more than this: Israel is not merely like the buffalo which, by its enormous strength, is able to maintain its liberty, but like the lion, the king of beasts, which inspires all others with terror, and forces them under subjection; which takes sanguinary revenge upon his assailants, and does not rest till he has crushed and annihilated them. Balak is doomed to listen and to behold in this alarming picture the mournful fate of his people as in a magic mirror. But he is, moreover, to receive a lesson and a humiliating reproof. How do the Hebrews enquire into their destinies and prepare themselves for the future? Not as he does, who fancies that a conjuror’s word can overthrow Heaven’s fixed decision: ‘There is no enchantment in Jacob, nor divination in Israel.’ God shows His special favour to His elected people in this point also, that He makes them independent of the fallaciousness of divination and the fraud of diviners; for He announces to them His resolves, invariably and in due time, through His holy messengers, the prophets and pious priests, and thus unmistakably teaches them how to await and understand impending events—as in this very instance He did through Balaam.

^a Zech. ii. 12.

^b Job xxxix. 9-12; see *infra*.

'The nations which thou expellest,' He impresses on them through Moses, 'listen to sorcerers and diviners; but as for thee, the Lord thy God has not suffered thee to do so: the Lord thy God will raise up to thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like me, to him you shall listen.'^a

Even more decidedly than in the first speech, the author refers in these utterances to the *ideal* Israel; since, forsooth! there was in the real Israel enough of 'iniquity' and 'distress,' too much of 'enchantment' and 'divination.' There was not a single form of heathen soothsaying which did not flourish in Israel to kindle the wrath of the men of God—prediction by rods and auguries, by muttering spells, witchcraft and magic, incantation and necromancy. And Baal the sun, worshipped by 'putting the holy branch to the nose,' and Ashtarte with her beloved Tammuz-Adonis; the detestable and insatiable Moloch and his Moabite counterpart Chemosh; the Assyrian war-god Nergal and the evil demon of darkness Nibhaz; Gad and Meni, the fancied bestowers of all boons and blessings, honoured with *lectisternia*; the bull Apis and he-goats; the serpent and the sea-monster Dagon—these were but a small portion of the all-embracing Hebrew pantheon. And injustice and oppression, violence and every nefariousness often prevailed to such an extent, that the chiefs were called 'chiefs of Sodom,' and the people 'people of Gomorrah,' a seed of bloodstained blasphemers, plundering the widow and the orphan. Yet at no time were men wanting who, with a power surpassed by no human tongue, with a singleness of purpose rivalled by no human heart, reproved and exhorted in the name of God: 'Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean, put away your evil doing from before My eye, cease to do evil!' In the time when these prophecies of Balaam were written, when David was in the

^a Deut. xviii. 14, 15.

height and majesty of his power and had committed that crime which is the blot of his life, there came to him the prophet Nathan who caused him to see his misdeed in a touching parable—and the king in his pride humbled himself before the prophet and the God who had sent him, and exclaimed: ‘I have sinned to the Lord!’ When, in the evil days of Jezebel, the worship of the Phœnician Baal was rampant in Israel, and the whole land seemed a prey to the grossest paganism, there were left in the nation ‘seven thousand, all the knees which did not bow to Baal, and every mouth that did not kiss him,’ and there was also left the prophet Elijah, who took care to ‘anoint Elisha in his place.’^a The fervent and fearless men like Nathan and Elijah, at times numerous, at times but few, who made their voice heard in palace and cottage alike, were the true Israel, the holy community, with whom all the great hopes were associated, who in constant succession and renewal guarded and perpetuated the treasures of truth and rectitude. They were the ‘remnant of Israel’ which, meek and lowly, disdains falsehood and deceit, and leans not on the vain help of mortals, but relies ‘in truth on the Holy One of Israel.’^b And therefore, a deep and far-seeing patriot might justly say, ‘God beholdeth no iniquity in Jacob’; he might justly affirm, ‘There is no divination in Israel.’

There exists between several parts of this second prophecy and other passages of the Hebrew Scriptures a clear and remarkable affinity, which well deserves a brief illustration.

When Samuel, after the Amalekite war, had announced to Saul the loss of royalty by Divine decree, he replied to Saul’s entreaties praying for a reversal of that decree, ‘The eternal God of Israel does not lie (אֱלֹהֵינוּ) nor repent (אֵינוּ מֵעַשְׂרֵנוּ); for He is not a man that He

^a 1 Ki. xix. 16, 18; comp. Hos. xiii. 2, אֵינוּ מֵעַשְׂרֵנוּ.

^b Comp. Zeph. iii. 12, 13; Isa. vi. 13; x. 20, 21, etc.

should repent.^a It is hardly conceivable that there should be no relation between these words and the very similar terms of our text, 'God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent;' and it is probable that Samuel's utterance, which is less polished and symmetrical, is the older and original maxim. Samuel habitually introduces general sentences of a religious or moral import, and at that very interview with Saul he expresses and develops the momentous idea, 'Has the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord?'^b Poetical composition formed no doubt a part of the training in the schools of prophets, and our author must have been familiar with the best productions of literature, if he was not himself educated in one of those numerous institutions, which flourished in all parts of the land, in Bethel and Jericho, in Gilgal and other towns.^c And yet what a contrast between the wild phrenzy of the 'sons of prophets,' who in a good and a bad sense were called 'maniacs' (מְצֻנְנִים), like the Greek *μάντις*,^d who in Samuel's time went out in large bands or companies to the sound of psaltery and tabret, pipe and harp, and 'prophesied,' who 'took off their garments and lay naked on the ground' in a trance, often during whole days and nights, and whom anyone might join without the slightest preparation, provided only that he felt himself seized by a holy fury:^e what a contrast between such a condition and the thoughtful terseness and almost epigrammatic precision which pervade all parts of Balaam's prophecies in such a manner, that hardly a word, nay, hardly the position of a word, can

^a מְצֻנְנִים, 1 Sam. xv. 29; comp. *Æsch.* *Prom.* 1032, 1033, *Ψευδήγο-
ρεῖν γὰρ οὐκ ἐπίσταται στόμα τὸ
Διὸς, ἀλλὰ πᾶν ἔπος τέλει.*

^b Vers. 22, 23.

^c 1 Sam. x. 5; 2 Ki. ii. 3, 5; iv.

38; vi. 1; ix. 1.

^d Jer. xxix. 26; 2 Kings ix. 11; comp. Hos. ix. 7; *Homer*, *Odyssey*, xx. 360, etc.

^e Comp. 1 Sam. x. 5, 6, 10-12; xix. 20-24.

be changed without disturbing the wonderful beauty and harmony of the conception! Such was the rapid progress which, after once the impulse had been given in the right direction, was made in a few generations by men whose earnestness was equalled by their ability, and as whose types, besides our author, we may take his great contemporaries Nathan and Gad, who were fitted to promote alike the practical and the higher requirements of their community.

Balaam's speeches were preserved by the nation as a precious heirloom. They were studied and often imitated. None of their weighty words was lost. When a great writer, in the time of the divided kingdom, put into the mouth of the dying patriarch Jacob prophecies respecting the fortunes of the Hebrew people, he believed that the warlike valour of that tribe which, in his age, was the most powerful, and represented Israel most perfectly, could be described in no more suitable terms than those used by Balaam in regard of the whole nation: 'Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou risest; he stoopeth down, he coucheth, like a lion and like a lioness; who will make him stand up?'^a And when, in the period of the Chaldean invasion, that prophet who, in pointed elegance and artistic delicacy, perhaps resembles our author most closely, was standing before the confusion of his time as before an unsolvable riddle, when he beheld danger without and fearful depravity within, he strove to fortify and to comfort himself by the Divine utterances of a happier past. He weighed the terms, 'God beholdeth no iniquity in Jacob, nor seeth distress in Israel.' But it was in vain that he endeavoured to apply them to the dark and almost hopeless reality. In the despondency and bitterness of his heart he exclaimed: 'Why dost Thou let me behold iniquity, and cause me to see distress? for plunder and violence are before me, and

^a Gen. xlix. 9; comp. Num. xxiii. 24; xxiv. 9; see *Comm. on Gen.* p. 748.

there are many that raise strife and contention.' And yet so deep was his confidence in the holy Rock of Israel, so firmly were the old prophet's words rooted in his mind, that, repeating and enlarging them for his own consolation, he addressed God: 'Thou art too pure to behold evil, and canst not look on distress;' and like an immovable anchor he grasped triumphantly the truth: 'The just shall live by his uprightness,' a maxim the depth and scope of which Jews, in later times, estimated so justly that they considered it equivalent to the whole sum of Divine laws and precepts.^a

In what sense God was understood to 'repent,' has partly been explained above.^b He does not change His promises or menaces arbitrarily without adequate cause or motive. 'God is not a man that He should lie.' 'Repentance,' He declares therefore, 'is hidden from My eyes.'^c But men are not unchangeable. By virtue of their free will, they fluctuate between good and evil; and exactly in accordance with their conduct, God, by the law of retributive justice, and as the Holy One who loves piety and abhors iniquity, is induced, nay compelled, to alter His decrees. When He saw the early generations sink by sin from their high destinies, 'He repented that He had created man upon the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.'^d After Saul's disobedience, God said to Samuel, 'I repent that I have appointed Saul to be king, for he has not performed My commandments.'^e And, on the other hand, God was ready to retract the threatened destruction of the 'cities of the plain,' if He found in them a certain number of virtuous persons;^f and when He saw the people of Nineveh abandon their wicked ways, 'He repented of the evil that He had

^a Hab. i. 3, 13; ii. 4; see Comm. on Lev. ii. p. 117.

^b Pp. 118, 119.

^c נִחַם, Hos. xiii. 14.

^d נִחַם, Gen. vi. 6, 7.

^e 1 Sam. xv. 11.

^f Gen. xviii. 20-32; see Comm. on Genes. pp. 406-408.

resolved to do to them, and He did it not.^a For a long time, the same intelligible principle was maintained in reference to Israel's election also. Their eminent privileges were made dependent on their merits and actions. They were to remain the people of God as long as they were a 'righteous' people. But in the course of time, that election was developed into a dogma not free from mystery and mysticism. Israel remains the chosen people in spite of sin and rebellion; not on account of their own merit, but because 'God loves them,' and 'they are precious in His eyes and well-honoured.'^b They might suffer oppression, yet they are a noble vine, which men are bidden to spare, 'because a blessing is in it.' They might be 'sifted among all nations as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet no grain shall fall upon the earth.' It is true their very prerogatives impose upon them severer responsibilities: 'You only have I loved of all the families of the earth,' says God, 'therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.'^c But if He punishes them, He acts like the husbandman, who does not crush cummin with a cart-wheel, but gently uses the rod. He chastens them, but 'with measure,' and 'with justice,' not for destruction like other nations, not in wrath like Adamah and Zeboim, because His heart burns in compassion for His people, which is imperishable like the new heaven and the new earth; for 'thus saith the Lord who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night . . . If those ordinances depart from before Me, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever.'^d Even when, in His just anger at their ingratitude and

^a וינחם, Jon. iii. 10; iv. 2; comp. *Origen*, In Num. Hom. xvi. 4.

^b Isa. xlii. 18; xliii. 4; compare Amos iii. 2; Dent. iv. 37; vii. 13; x. 15; xxiii. 6, etc.: *Mishn.* Avoth iii. 14.

^c Amos iii. 2; compare Lev. x. 3, בְּקִרְבֵי אֶקְרִיט, and *Comm.* in loc.

^d Compare Isa. xxvii. 8; xxviii. 24-28; xli. 8-20; lxvi. 22; Jer. xxx. 11; xxxi. 35-37; xxxiii. 25, 26; Hos. xi. 8, 9; Amos ix. 9, 15.

revolt, He had determined their extirpation, He soon 'repented,' not because they evinced contrition and had reformed their lives, but on account of the prayer and intercession of a faithful servant, who reminded God of the inviolable covenant He had concluded with the patriarchs.^a How far into ancient times the beginnings of this proud dogma reach, is difficult to ascertain; it was by writers of the eighth century traced to the period of the redemption from Egypt,^b nay to the primeval days of Abraham;^c and it is certainly expressed with sufficient clearness in this speech of Balaam. For although the words, 'Hath He said and shall He not do it, and spoken and shall He not fulfil it?' refer, in the first instance, to Balaam's previous prophecy, they doubtless apply to all the Divine promises made to Israel and their peculiar relations to God. It is unnecessary to point out the fruits which that dogma has borne for good and for evil, and to show how, on the one hand, it fostered lofty aspirations, and, on the other hand, promoted national conceit and exclusiveness; but the powerful hold which it acquired over the Hebrew mind is apparent from the circumstance, that it was, almost without modification, extended to the royal house of David, and nothing need be added in explanation of the following words of a Psalm written shortly before the exile: 'I will make him (David),' says God, 'My firstborn . . . My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and My covenant shall stand firm with him . . . If his children forsake My law and break My statutes, then I will visit their transgression with the rod . . . nevertheless I will not take My loving-kindness from him, nor be untrue (אֶפְשֶׁר) to My faithfulness; My covenant will I not break, nor alter the promise that is gone out of My lips; once have I sworn by My holiness, that I will not

^a Ex. xxxii. 14; comp. Deut. ix. 13-20, 25-29; x. 10; xxxii. 20 *sqq.*; Am. viii. 3, 6.

^b Hos. xii. 10; Amos ii. 10; Mic. vi. 4.

^c Mic. vii. 20; Isa. xxix. 22.

lie (בְּצִדְדָּוִד) unto David; his seed shall endure for ever, and his throne shall be as the sun before Me.^a A fuller and more emphatic commentary on our passage is hardly possible.^b

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—Balak was standing (בְּצִדְדָּוִד) at his sacrifice (ver. 17); when, therefore, Balaam bid him ‘rise’ (קוּם, ver. 18), he invited him to listen attentively and dismiss all other thoughts (comp. Neh. ix. 5; Isa. xxxii. 9).—וְיִשְׁמָעֶיךָ, imper. Kal for וְיִשְׁמָעֶיךָ, non-gutturals being occasionally provided with *chateph-pathach* if the preceding letter had originally a *sh’vu mobile* (וְיִשְׁמָעֶיךָ for וְיִשְׁמָעֶיךָ); see Gramm. § iv. 4.a.—וְיִשְׁמָעֶיךָ, to listen, followed by שָׁמַע (comp. Job xxxii. 11), like the synonymous verb וְיִשְׁמָעֶיךָ, to pay attention (Job xxxii. 12; xxxviii. 18), is hardly more emphatical than if followed, as is more usual, by שָׁמַע, שָׁמַע, or שָׁמַע (comp. Mic. iv. 8; Ps. lxxv. 3). But some ancient authorities seem to have read שָׁמַע or שָׁמַע, for the Sept. translates ἐρώσια μάρτυς νόος Σεπφώρ; and the Syriac like the Samaritan interpreter, ‘listen to my testimony’ (סְעֵרוּתִי and סְעֵרוּתִי); and so a few modern expositors (as Michael, ‘sei aufmerksam und sei mein Zeuge,’ and others).—וְיִשְׁמָעֶיךָ, a rarer form of the construct state for שָׁמַע; comp. וְיִשְׁמָעֶיךָ (Gen. i. 24; Isa. lvi. 9), etc.; see Gramm. § xxvi. 1.b.—וְיִשְׁמָעֶיךָ (ver. 19) in *pausa*, for וְיִשְׁמָעֶיךָ or וְיִשְׁמָעֶיךָ (see Gramm. §§ xvi. 9.a.; lix. 7). The Sept., to avoid anthropopathic expressions, renders וְיִשְׁמָעֶיךָ and וְיִשְׁמָעֶיךָ (ver. 19) by εἰσαρτηθήναι and ἀπειληθήναι.—Targ. Jon. paraphrases the second part of the 19th verse thus: ‘But when the Lord of all the worlds has said, I will multiply this people as the stars of heaven, and will give them to possess the land of the Canaanites, is He not able to perform what He has spoken?’ That translator, therefore, like many others, considers the words וְיִשְׁמָעֶיךָ to refer to the patriarchal promises alone, whereas, considering the completeness and unity of this composition, they point, in the first place, to Balaam’s former speech (comp. ver. 20; xxii. 12), though the wider application is not excluded as an ‘under-sense.’ The Assyrian king Assur-Nasir-

^a Ps. lxxxix. 28-37.

^b Comp. 2 Sam. vii. 14-16; Isa. ix. 6, etc.

pal, like most eastern monarchs, claiming almost divine attributes, calls himself 'he who changes not his purposes' (Inscript., col. i. line 7; comp. Records of the Past, iii. 40; 77-79; v. 8, 113, etc.)—*בָּרַךְ לִי הָאֱלֹהִים* (ver. 20), lit., *I have taken to bless, i.e., I have received from God the commission to bless*; *Targ. Jon.*, I have been charged with the benediction from the mouth of the Holy One; the *Sept.* renders the principal verb incorrectly in the passive *παρείλημμαι*; and so *Vulg.*, *adductus sum*; *Luth.*, *bin ich hergebracht*; while *Luzzatto* has, *ecco 'benedici'!* ho ricevuto—taking, with less probability, *בָּרַךְ* as the imperative.—An ancient reading, instead of *וּבֵרַךְ*, seems to have been *וּבִרְכַתִּי*, which some early translators took as *יְבָרְכֵנִי*, *I shall bless* (*Sept.*, *εὐλογήσω*; *Samar. Cod.* and *Vers.*, *אברך*; *Onk.*, *ואיברכניה*; *Targ. Jer.*, *מברך אנה*; and so *Luth.*, *ich segne*), others as *יְבָרְכֵתִי*, *and my blessing*, scil. I shall not reverse (*Syr.*, *ובורכתא*; *Vulg.*, *benedictionem* etc.; *Onk.*, concluding the verse *וְלֹא אֶתִיב בְּרַכְתִּי מִיָּה*; and so some modern interpreters): but considering that the blessing is throughout traced to God and not to Balaam, the received reading seems preferable.—*הִיָּיב*, *to reverse, to annul* (as in *Am.* i. 3, 6, 9, etc; *Isa.* xliii. 13); not quite accurately *Sept.*, *ἀποστρέψω*; *Vulg.*, *prohibere non valeo*. Balaam declares that he cannot prevent the blessing once pronounced from taking effect, much less change it into a curse.—The subject to *הִבִּיט* and *ראה* (ver. 21) is evidently God (comp. *וּבֵרַךְ*, ver. 20); it is both less simple and less suitable to take those verbs impersonally (*Sept.* *ὄκ ἔστι...ὄν ἐὶ ὀφθίησεται*, *Vulg.*, *Luth.*, *Herd.*, *Mendels.*, *Ewald*, and others): the reading of the *Samar. Cod.* *אביט*, which is expressed by the *Samar. Vers.* (*אכתכל*), the *Syr.*, *Onk.* and *Jon.* (*אנא מסתכל*), and has been adopted by some modern scholars (*Dathe non video*, *Houbigant non videbo*, *Geddes*), whether in the corresponding member the third person — *ראה*—be read (*Sam. Vers.*, *חני*) or also the first person (*Syr.* and others), is less adapted to the context.—The nouns *אָוֶן* and *עָמָל* are here most appropriately understood in their common significations of *iniquity* and *toil*, which impart to the verse the comprehensive sense we have above indicated, namely, that God finds in Israel no impiety, and therefore visits them with no sufferings; the former is a fuller

explanation of יִצְרִים (ver. 10), the latter is akin to תְּהִי אַחֲרֵיָי (comp. Hab. i. 3, 13; Job iv. 8; v. 6; Ps. vii. 15; x. 7; lv. 11; xc. 10; Isa. x. 1; lix. 4; in which passages אָן and עִמָּל are in a similar relation). The sense is not, 'Unbearable to God is the malice practised against the Israelites by their enemies, and the misery they suffer, so that He forthwith removes both malice and misery' (*Rosenm.* in loc.; *Hengstb.*, Bil, pp. 112, 113; *De Geer, Maurer, Luzzatto*, egli non tollera di veder fatta ingiustizia a Giacobbe, and others); it is only by a strained construction that it is possible to give to לֹא הֵבִיט the meaning, 'He cannot bear to see,' or to אָן בִּיעֶקֶב that of 'iniquity committed against Jacob.' Still less tenable are the numerous other interpretations that have been proposed, as, 'God takes no notice (אֵינוֹ מִסְתַּכֵּל) of Israel's transgressions, but only of their good deeds' (*Midr. Rabb.*, Num. xxiv. 14; comp. Jer. l. 20); or, 'There are no idols (or idolaters) in Jacob, nor false gods in Israel' (*Onkel.*, לֵית פְּלִיחֵי גִילְדִין וְכ'; *Fulg.*, non est idolum in Jacob, nec videtur simulacrum in Israel; *Ewald*, Jahrbücher, viii. 27, 28, Götzen and Ungötter: though אָן may be 'idols,' Isa. lxvi. 3; 1 Sam. xv. 23; עִמָּל is certainly never 'false gods'); or, 'There shall be no toil . . . nor shall there be seen trouble . . .' (*Sept.*, μόχθος and πόρος; *Luther*, Mühe and Arbeit; *Herder*, Unglück and Missgeschick; *Michaelis*, Leid and Unglück: although אָן has no doubt occasionally the sense of misfortune, as in Gen. xxxv. 18; Hab. iii. 7; the notion of guilt, which more commonly attaches to the word, is essential to the context); or, 'There shall be no wrong . . . nor injustice . . .' (*De Wette*, Böses and Unrecht; *Maurer*, culpa and peccatum: but עִמָּל has nowhere clearly the meaning of injustice, though perhaps in Isa. x. 1); while some leave the right path entirely. Misunderstanding the ideal character of the prophecy, many have referred the description to the happiness of a future life (comp. *Origen*, In Num. Homil. xvi. 5, aperte in istis sermonibus futurae vitae denunciat statum . . . quia non erat secundum spiritum Israel, ideo venit super illum labor et dolor; and others). —The words, 'the Lord their God is with them' (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיָי), supplement the preceding half-

verse with peculiar aptness and precision. They explain the immunity both from און and עמל; the Israelites are with God—hence there is among them no און; and God is with the Israelites—therefore they are free from עמל (comp. xiv. 14); and in order to express the former idea as unequivocally as the second, the poet adds, ‘and the trumpet-call (תרועת) of the King is with them,’ that is, the Hebrews are constantly reminded of the dominion of their God, and summoned to His worship, by the solemn sound of the trumpet (יִצְפֹּק), which they obey with a joyful readiness proving the sincerity of their faith and devotion. As מלך is in parallelism with יהוה, it means undoubtedly here, as elsewhere, God as the King and Ruler of the Hebrews (Deut. xxxiii. 5; Zech. ix. 9; comp. 1 Sam. viii. 7; Isa. xxxiii. 22; xliii. 15; xlv. 6; Jer. x. 7, 10; xlv. 18; Zech. xiv. 9, 16, 17); the introduction of the earthly king in a passage which treats exclusively of Israel’s relations to God would impair its admirable consistency (*Sept.*, ἀρχόντων; *Orig.*, principum; *Vulg.*, regis; *Luth.*, *Herd.*, *Ewald*, *Oort*, *Fürst*, and others). The expressive appropriateness of the term תרועה in this connection will be understood by remembering that not only were all holy seasons announced, and all public sacrifices accompanied by the ‘blast of the trumpet’ (תרועה), but that one of the most important and most sacred festivals appointed in later times was called יום תרועה, or, still more significantly, זכרון תרועה, ‘a Memorial of blowing the Trumpet’ (Lev. xxiii. 24; Num. xxix. 1), intended to bring the Hebrews to God’s merciful remembrance, as we have explained elsewhere (see *Comm.* on Levit. ii. pp. 489, 505). ‘The trumpet-call of the King’ reminded them of the ‘holy convocations’ (מקראי קדיש), which were the chief bond between them and their God. ‘Blessed is the people,’ says the Psalmist, ‘that know the trumpet-call (תרועה); they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance.’ Such a people, says our author, are the Israelites; ‘the trumpet-call of their King is among them,’ and ‘they walk in His light.’ Allusions to ‘war-cries,’ or ‘the alarm sounded with the trumpet,’ or to ‘the joyful acclamations’ with which the people receive their king or accompany royal processions, or ‘rejoicing at the presence of

so glorious a King, who is at the same time God,' though admitted by the term *הרועה* (comp. Num. x. 9; Jer. iv. 19; xlix. 2; Amos i. 14; Josh. vi. 5, 20; 1 Sam. iv. 5; x. 24; 2 Sam. vi. 15; xv. 10; 1 Ki. i. 40; Ezra iii. 11; Job. viii. 20; 2 Chron. xiii. 12), are less adapted to the context (*Aquil.*, ἀλαλαγμός; *Theodot.*, σαλπισμός; *Vulg.*, clangor victoriae; *Herd.*, Triumphgesang; *Vater.*, Feldposaune; *Ewald*, Schlachtruf, etc.; but *Oukel.*, שִׁבְיִית מַלְכֵהוּן, and similarly *Syr.*, תִּשְׁבּוּחַתָּהּ דְּמַלְכָּה; *Origen*, præclara principum, i.e., potestas et regnum; *Suad.*, alliance or friendship; and so *Rashi*, חֲבֵה וְרֵעוּת, and others; while the *Sept.* renders τὰ ἔνδοξα, perhaps reading נִרְאוֹת).—Not like Balak does Balaam say, 'the people went out of Egypt' (xxii. 5, 11), but 'God brought them out of Egypt' (ver. 22, p. 98): the most striking proof showing how manifestly God is with Israel, is their deliverance from Egypt, which has inspired them with confidence, and given them the power for further enterprises and triumphs. This being the logical relation between vers. 21-24, it is neither requisite to consider ver. 22 as an interpolation, nor to place it after ver. 23 (see, however, on xxiv. 8). The participle מִנְצִיָּם does not necessarily imply that, since the Hebrews are represented as not yet having reached the land of Canaan, the act of their redemption is still considered in the course of accomplishment; in reality forty years had, at the time of 'Balaam's speeches,' passed since the Hebrews left Egypt; and the participle has not rarely the meaning of a preterite (*Gram.* § 100. 8; *Sept.*, ἐξαγαγών; *Vulg.*, eduxit, etc.). An *anallage* in the numbers of the suffixes, as in מִנְצִיָּם and לָו, both referring to the Israelites, is too common to call for an emendation of the text (*Gram.* § lxxvii. 21. 4); comp. xxiv. 8, מִנְצִיָּהוּ, from which parallel it is also evident that לוֹ does not refer to God (so *Targ. Jon.* and *Jerus.*, and others; see also *De-Rossi* on xxiv. 8).—That the רָאִים (or רָאִים, רִים or רָם) is not the *unicorn*, as many earlier interpreters translate on the authority of the *Sept.* (μοιοκέρας; *Ephr. Syr.*, *Luth.*, *Engl. Vers.*, etc.; *Vulg.*, rhinoceros, which was frequently confounded with the unicorn), is at present almost generally acknowledged, since the Bible repeatedly mentions 'the horns' (קַרְנֵי) of the רָאִים (Deut.

xxxii. 17; Ps. xxii. 22); although the unicorn is not, as has long been believed, a fabulous animal, but is found in Ethiopia and Abyssinia, and in the deserts of Thibet (see *Rosenm.*, Morgenland, ii. 269-279; comp. *Aelium*, Nat. An. xvi. 20, μονοκέρωσ μέγεθος μὲν ἔχειν ἵππου τοῦ τελείου καὶ λόφον . . . ποῶν δὲ ἄριστα εἰληχέναι καὶ εἶναι ὄκιστον κ.τ.λ.; *Cæs.* B.G. vi. 26; *Plin.* N. II. viii. 21 or 31, asperrimam feram monocerotem, reliquo corpore equo similem, capite cervo, pedibus elephanto . . . uno cornu gravi media fronte cubitorum duo emimente; hanc feram vivam negant capi). The short but graphic description in the Book of Job (xxxix. 9-12), to which we have above alluded, in conjunction with the fact that the 𐤒𐤓𐤕 is employed in parallelism with the strongest animals, such as the lion, the wild ox, and the bull (Ps. xxii. 22; Deut. xxxiii. 17; Isa. xxxiv. 7), hardly leaves a doubt that the *wild buffalo* is meant, which, of Indian origin and still found (under the name of *arna*) in the swampy jungles of Hindostan, is 'fierce and untamable, in size one-third larger than the domestic species, and of such power and vigor as by his charge to prostrate a well-sized elephant' (*Van-Lennep*, Bible Lands, i. 176-178). It is, of course, not impossible that a kindred genus, such as the wild ox (*bos sylhetanus*) or the *urus* of Pliny (Nat. Hist. viii. 15; xi. 37 or 45; xviii. 1) is intended, which rival the wild buffalo in size and strength, and surpass it in fierceness (see *Brehm*, Illustrirtes Thierleben, ii. 625, *sqq.*); but, considering the Scriptural parallels with the lion and other powerful beasts, it is certainly not probable that the 𐤒𐤓𐤕 is the *oryx*, a species of antelope (*Boch.*, *Rosenm.*, *Winer*, and others), since the circumstance that this animal has in Arabic the same name (أرن) is by no means decisive (comp. *Gesen.* Lex. and *Thes.* s. v.); or that it is a kind of gazelle (אָרְנִיָּהּ, *Talm.* Zevach. 113. b; *Bav. Bathr.* 73. b; comp. *Lewysohn*, *Zool.* d. *Talm.*, pp. 149-151), or the reindeer (*Barzilai*, *Il Renne*, etc. 1870), which cannot be proved to have existed in Western Asia within the historic time, and can hardly be described as an animal of gigantic strength.—The royal records on Assyrian monuments do not fail to mention the hunting of buffaloes; 'in those days,' we read in the Inscription of Assur-nasir-pal, 'I slew

fifty buffaloes in the neighbourhood of the nearer (eastern) side of the Euphrates, and eight buffaloes I caught alive;’ and among the tribute paid to that king by Tangara, king of Syria, were ‘horns of buffaloes’ (Inscript., col. iii. §§ 48, 68; comp. also Inscript. of Tiglath-pileser i. § 35; the Statistical Tablet of the Egyptian king Thotmes III.; the ‘Great Harris’ Papyrus of Ramses III., Plate 20. a, § 9, etc.; see *Rec. of the Past*, ii. 24; iii. 69; v. 21; vi. 47, etc.).—More uncertain is the quality תועפות associated with the דרם; it seems simplest to connect the root פוע with פוע to fly (Arab. *وَعُو* to move rapidly), and to take that word in the sense of *fleetness*, which attribute is elsewhere also ascribed to the דרם (Ps. xxix. 6), especially as the noun פוע is found in the meaning of *swift course* (Dan. ix. 21; *Michael. celeritas*; *Herd., Vater, starker Lauf*; *Rosenm. Behendigkeit*; *De Wette, Schnelligkeit*; *Hengstb. Rüstigkeit*, etc.; but, following uncertain etymologies, *Sept. ἰσχύς*; *Vulg. fortitudo*; *Luth. Freudigkeit*; *Onkel., Syr., Ebn Ezra, Kimchi, Engl. Vers. strength*; *Rosenm. elatio*—‘capite sursum elato erectisque auribus adstare,’ Germ. ‘fröhlich umherschauen;’ similarly *Lowth*—*Sacr. Poes., Præl. xx.*—*qualis remotis liber in jugis oryx fert celsa cælo cornua*; *Ewald, hehrer Glanz*, etc.; though some of these qualities are indeed collaterally included in the ‘fleetness’ of the buffalo).—In Ps. xcv. 4 and Job xxii. 25, תועפות is *treasures*, from פוע, that which is acquired by fatiguing labour, as פוע from פוע, p. 109. The plural תועפות is, of course, poetically used instead of the singular, and the word is never found in prose.—The Hebrews are so successful in all their undertakings, because they do not and need not rely on enchantment and auguries, but enjoy God’s constant communications, which He reveals to them in His own manner and in the right time. This is the tenor of the last verses (22-24). The reason introduced by כי (ver. 23) explains, in the first instance, the words תועפות לך דרם, which are easily understood as a metaphor for victory, prosperity, and success; all this the Hebrews owe to the circumstance that they do not require נְחֻשִׁים and קְסָמִים, and, therefore, do not practise such obnoxious arts—which is another mark of their piety (comp. *Philo, Vit. Mos. i. 51, οἰωνῶν ἀλογεῖσι καὶ πάντων τῶν κατὰ μαγικήν*). The clause

כי לא נהיט וכי cannot be intended as the reason of Israel's deliverance from Egypt (*Hengstenb.*, Bil., pp. 106, 127); nor does כי signify *so that*, introducing a consequence (*Kuob.*, Num., p. 141; the passages adduced in support of that meaning are not conclusive, as Isa. v. 10; xxix. 16; Job x. 6, etc.). About נהיט see Comm. on Lev. i. 375; about קסם *supra* p. 108; in this context נהיט has indeed, like קסם, the sense of augury or divination; but technical exactness cannot be expected in poetry. ביעקב and בִּישְׂרָאֵל are, therefore, 'in Jacob' and 'in Israel' (in ver. 23 as in ver. 21); and so explains also Jewish tradition. But not even in the comments on this sublime and lucid speech has the usual distortion of Balaam's conduct been abandoned, and surprising is the insinuation of modern theologians, that the best proof of the Divine power with which Balaam had been moved, is the manner in which he disparages those means of ascertaining the future, which he himself was habitually employing' (*Hengstenb.*, Bil., p. 125, and others). Thus misinterpreted, this section, instead of testifying to the large-minded liberality and enlightenment of the Hebrew writer, would most painfully reveal narrowness, pride, and superstition; and if Hebrew prophecy were so mechanical a process as that assumption implies, it would hardly possess any real or human interest. The author so entirely identifies himself with Balaam, that the ordinary views of both concerning divination must be considered to coincide, and the words 'There is no enchantment in Jacob,' etc., are meant to rebuke *Balak's* paganism, not that of Balaam, of which there is no trace whatever. The explanation frequently adopted, 'No enchantment prevails *against* Jacob, nor any divination *against* Israel' (*Calv.*, *Herd.*, *Meudelss.*, *Houbiquant*, *Michael.*, *Dathe*, *Vat.*, *Rosenm.*, *De Wette*, *Gramb.*, *Maur.*, *Steudel*, *De Geer*, *Ewald*, *Luzzatto*, and others), though perhaps philologically unobjectionable, yields no clear and satisfactory connection either with the preceding or the following verses.—The incredible number and variety of superstitious omens which prevailed in Middle Asia and were worked out into elaborate systems, are being more and more brought to light by excavations and decipherments, and they may be gathered from the very curious Babylonian Tablets

which have recently been translated; for instance: 'If a yellow dog enters into a palace, exit from that palace will be baleful'; 'if a spotted dog enters into the palace, that palace gives its peace to the enemy'; 'if a black dog enters into a temple, the foundation of that temple is not stable'; or 'when a woman bears a child and its right ear is wanting, the days of the prince are long'; 'when a woman bears a child and the upper lip overhangs the lower, there is prosperity to the multitude,' etc. (see Records of the Past, v. 169-176); such auguries would probably fall under the category of בְּתֵיבָה , at least according to later conceptions of the Jews.— בְּתֵיבָה , at the time, or in the right time (*Sept.*, κατὰ καιρὸν; *Vulg.*, temporibus suis; *Origen*, in tempore, *i.e.*, cum oportet et cum expedit; *Rashi*, 'בכל עת שצריך וכ'; *Luth.*, *Vat.*, zu seiner Zeit; *Herd.*, nach Zeitumständen, etc.); not *as at present* (referring to Balaan's own oracles, comp. Judg. xiii. 23); much less *next year at this time* (comp. Gen. xviii. 10), when the Hebrews shall have crossed the Jordan; nor *soon* (*Maurer*), or *when* (*Lengerke*, comp. Job xxxix. 18, like בְּתֵיבָה , Job vi. 17). — כִּי־פָעַל , what He doeth, or what He hath resolved to do, the preterite denoting the unfailing certainty or the immediate execution of an action (so that it is unnecessary to read פָּעַל), while the future יִפְעַל describes the customary performance (comp. יִקְרָא , etc., in ver. 24; see Gram. §§ 93.4; 94.7): against the context is the reference to the *future* or Messianic Israel; so *Origen*, In Num. Homil. xvi 8, 'de illo populo dicit de quo in psalmis (xxii. 32) scriptum est, "et annuntiabunt cœli justitiam ejus populo, qui nascetur, quem fecit Dominus,"' and some others. The words 'יאמר ליעקב וכ', taken literally, give a most suitable sense (so *Sept.*, ῥηθήσεται τῷ Ἰσραὴλ τί ἐπιτελέσει ὁ Θεός; *Rashi*, *Ebn Ezra*, *Rashbam*, and others); but they are rendered by many: 'It shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought'! (*Eng. Vers.*) and similarly *Targ. Jon.* and *Jerus.*; *Luth.*, Zur Zeit wird man von Jacob sagen: welche Wunder Gott thut! *Calv.*, Deum præclara opera exinde editurum pro defensione populi sui, quæ cum admiratione narrentur; *Rosenm.*, *Maur.*, quanta fecit Deus! *Ewald*, so lange es heissen wird in Jacob . . . 'was thut Gott'! *i. e.*, so lange man die Grossthaten Israels

bewundern und rühmen werde, and others. Curious is Luzzatto's explanation: Jacob, also called Israel, deserves a third name, viz, *Mah-paul-El*, i.e., 'destined by God for great things.' About the comparison of heroes and conquerors with the lion and other animals, see Comm. on Genes. p. 748. In the Annals of the Egyptian king Thotmes III. (line 19) it is promised: 'I let thy enemies see thy majesty like a raging lion;' and the king is described (line 20) as a 'swooping hawk which takes at his glance what he chooses'; on the Luxor Obelisk (Paris) Ramses II. is called 'magnanimous lion, golden hawk'; 'powerful Bull is the name of the Egyptian monarchs in their divine character;' and the god *Ra* himself, 'the chief of the great cycle of gods, the one alone without equal,' bears the names of 'beautiful Bull' and 'great Hawk' (comp. Records of the Past, ii. 34, 154, 135; iv. 11, 20-24, 56; vi. 73, etc.).

11. AGAIN REMONSTRANCES AND PREPARATIONS.

XXIII. 25—XXIV. 2.

25. And Balak said to Balaam, Neither shalt thou curse them, nor shalt thou bless them. 26. And Balaam answered and said to Balak, Have I not told thee, saying, All that the Lord speaks, that I must do? 27. And Balak said to Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will take thee to another place; perhaps it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence. 28. And Balak took Balaam to the summit of Peor, that looks over the plain of the wilderness. 29. And Balaam said to Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams. 30. And Balak did as Balaam had said, and he offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.

XXIV.—1. And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as the first and second time, to seek for inspirations, and he turned his face towards the wilderness. 2. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel encamped according to their tribes; and the spirit of God came upon him.

Is Balak's obduracy vanquished at last? Will he at last desist from his audacious scheme? His defiance is not conquered, but it is curbed and checked. He still clinches the old design with a convulsive grasp, but with a faint-heartedness which involves the germ and foreboding of failure. No more does he now, as he did after the first speech, say determinedly and energetically, 'Come with me to another place . . . and curse me them from thence,'^a but he exclaims almost plaintively, 'Neither shalt thou curse them nor shalt thou bless them.'^b Writhing under the stinging impression of the words still filling his ears, that the Hebrews 'do not lie down till they eat their prey and drink the blood of the slain,' he abandons the hope of a curse, and is content if the prophet withholds his blessing from the terrible and wonderful people. However, this frame of mind lasts but a short moment. The king has imbued his heart too strongly with an infatuated desire, not to cleave to it even against hope; and when, accordingly, Balaam reminds him again that, as he had from the beginning declared himself in absolute dependence and subjection of Jahveh,^c he cannot fairly be reproached with a breach of faith, the monarch, as before, utterly disregards this emphatic protest and, apparently both unwilling and unable to realise its full scope, invites the seer to make a third attempt at prostrating Israel by imprecations. But in what form does he make the request? He says

^a Ver. 13.

^b Ver. 25.

^c xxii. 38.

not to Balaam now, 'I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed;'^a even after the first prophecy, he was impressed with a feeling, however vague and dim, that it was not Balaam, but Jahveh, the God of the Hebrews, from whom proceed blessing and curse;^b but now, after the second oracle, he is shaken by doubt and hesitation; the old obstinacy is mingled with an unwonted weakness, and there is almost the tone of a suppliant in the words, 'Come, I pray thee, I will take thee to another place, perhaps it will please God, that thou mayest curse me them from thence.'^c But, though his pride has been forced to bend, his mind remains unenlightened, his heart remains unreformed. Still, as previously, he means by extraneous artifices to rule the Ruler of destinies. Twice he had vainly endeavoured to attain his object in places whence only a portion of the Israelites could be beheld; he now determines to resort to the opposite experiment, and takes Balaam to a spot where he can survey the entire host and crowd of the people 'encamped according to their tribes.' At first he had apprehended that the inspiring aspect of the whole nation would paralyse the efficacy of the evil eye; but now he is anxious to try whether that evil eye has not the potency of blasting and overwhelming his enemies, if it strikes them with one comprehensive and withering glance. And still, as before, he believes he may the more surely count upon success, if he chooses a locality consecrated to one of his deities—and he now selects a place dedicated to Peor (פִּעוֹר), whose worship was stained by the most detestable and most repulsive licentiousness, and perhaps more than any other form of Moabitish idolatry, contributed to the people's fearful debasement.^d

^a xxii. 6.

^b xxiii. 17.

^c Ver. 27, אֹלֵי יִישָׁר וְכִי.

^d See xxv. 3, 5; xxxi. 16; Josh. xxii 17; comp. *Origen*, In Num. Hom. xvii. I, 'Balach putans, quod

Balaam divino ad maledicendum loci opportunitas magis defuerit quam voluntas, etc. Fogor (Peor) autem interpretatur delectatio: in verticem ergo delectationis et libidinis imponit homines iste Balach.'

So little does the king fathom what Balaam has just repeated to him again, 'Have I not told thee saying, All that the Lord speaks, that I must do?' With the keenest penetration, the author delineates, step by step, the eternal warfare of the spirit against the varied delusions of paganism, which yields no farther than it is pressed by *fear*, the kernel of its creed and the motive power of its life.

The 'summit of Peor' belongs to the same ridge of Pisgah as the 'Field of Seers,' the scene of the second prophecy;^a for elsewhere the whole of the Pisgah is described with the exact terms here applied to the summit of Peor, namely, that 'it looks out over the plain of the wilderness.'^b It may have a somewhat more northern and western position than the 'Field of Seers,' and may rival in eminence the peak of Nebo, from which the eye surveyed 'all the land of Gilead unto Dan, and all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the western sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho . . . unto Zoar;^c and it was, therefore, certainly possible to see from the top of Peor 'the wilderness' or 'desert,'^d that is, 'the plains of Moab,' in which the Hebrews were encamped, 'in the valley over against Beth-Peor.'^e

And how does Balaam act at this juncture? Here, above all, must we look for the crucial test of his conduct, his character, and his religion. Readily he responds this time also to Balak's request. He is disposed to a third prophecy—for 'a threefold cord is not quickly broken,' thinks the author, who has another and yet higher blessing in store for Israel. He makes the arrangements with respect to altars and sacrifices as

^a Ver. 14.

^b Ver. 28; comp. xxi. 20.

^c Deut. xxxiv. 1-3, אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ, אֶת־הַנְּלָעַד עַד־רֵדְן וְבֵית־

^d הַיַּיְשִׁימוֹן, הַמַּדְבָּר, xxiii. 28; xxiv. 1.

^e xxii. 1; Deut. iii. 27, 29; iv. 46; Josh. xiii. 20; see pp. 77. 188.

before. But he believes that he no longer needs any special spiritual preparations, and therefore does not require the aid of solitude to commune with the source of revelation. Quite confident, after his twofold experience, that, contrary to Balak's wish and expectation, 'it pleases the Lord (יהוה) to bless Israel,' he awaits the Divine communication at the place to which he has happened to be conducted, and in the company of the heathen king and his nobles. He is not deceived—he casts a glance upon the Hebrew multitudes established in regular divisions along an extensive tract of the desert, 'and the spirit of God came upon him,' as it came upon, or 'clothed,' other Divine messengers and servants, and as it came, among others, upon Othniel the Kenizzite, when he was appointed deliverer and Judge of Israel.^a Who can fail to see that thus the most admirable harmony prevails throughout the whole account and all its parts? But no! The text includes one term which, if it must be retained or be taken in its current sense, suddenly and completely converts that harmony into the most painful discord. For we read that Balaam did not go, like the first and second time, 'to meet *nechashim*' (נְחָשִׁים), that is, according to the usual meaning of the word, 'to meet enchantments' or 'auguries.' Did, then, really Balaam the first and second time practise those contemptible frauds, the absence of which among the Israelites he praises as their particular glory, and describes as one of the chief causes of their power and greatness?^b

Whoever has read the previous narrative in unbiassed fairness, must surely be surprised and perplexed by those 'enchantments' which appear abruptly and unawares, like a true *deus ex machinâ*, and he will seriously ask himself, whether he is to trust to this single and casual

^a Judg. iii. 10, וַתְּהִי עֲלֵיוֹ רוּחַ | Fible Studies, Part. ii., Preliminary
 יהוה; see *supra*, pp. 16, 35; comp. | Essay, § 1. ^b xxiii. 23.

introduction of a contradictory term, in preference not merely to the repeated and unequivocal statements that Balaam went 'to meet God' (אלהים) or 'to meet the Lord' (יהוה),^a but to the unmistakable spirit which pervades this composition in every feature alike, and stamps it as one of the priceless pearls of Hebrew literature? There remain but two expedients—either to take נחשׁים as a corruption instead of אלהים or יהוה, or to attribute to that expression a less offensive signification. That this section has suffered various glosses and interpolations, we have already attempted to show, and we shall have further occasion to point out; and that the meaning of such terms as *nachash* (נחשׁ) underwent, in the language of the Hebrews, frequent modifications, generally changing from the legitimate to the unlawful, in accordance with the progress made in religious purity and strictness, this is, among many other instances, apparent from the word *kesem* (כֶּסֶם), which Balaam mentions in conjunction with *nachash*,^b and in reference to which such a fluctuation has above been proved.^c We confess that we find the former alternative more congenial, for not without the deepest regret and reluctance would we see the brightness of this noble work tarnished by rude and lying superstitions.

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—נִשְׁ . . . נִשְׁ (ver. 25) is *both . . . and*; therefore, in connection with אֵל, it is *neither . . . nor* (*Sept.*, *oÿre . . . oÿre*; *Vulg.*, *nec . . . nec*; comp. Isa. xlviii. 8: not נִשְׁ . . . נִשְׁ, as in Sam. Text and Version, and some MSS.); and the synonym נִשְׁ is used in a similar manner (Isa. xl. 24; comp. *supra* on xxii. 33).—נִשְׁ, a contracted form of the absolute infin. of Kal, instead of נִשְׁ, as נִשְׁ (Ruth ii. 16) instead of נִשְׁ (see Gram. § lxii. 2. c).—The *chateph-kamets* in נִשְׁ, in *pausa*, under the non-guttural נ, which was originally provided with a *cholem*, is not without a considerable number of analogies (as נִשְׁ, Jer. xxxi. 33, etc.); see Gram. §§ iv.

^a xxiii. 3, 4, 15, 16.^b xxiii. 23.^c P. 110.

4. *b*; xl. 4. *c*.—יְבִילִי (ver. 28), from בָּיַל, *to be laid waste*, is no proper noun, but *a wilderness* (*Sept.*, ἔρημος; *Vulg.*, solitudo, etc.), and therefore used in parallelism with בְּרֵיִךְ (Ps. lxxviii. 40; evi. 14), with which it is synonymous in our passage also (xxiv. 1).—The king of Moab took Balaam to the ‘summit of Peor,’ *because* this ‘looks over the plain of the wilderness,’ so that the whole of the Hebrew camp could be seen. Eusebius (sub Φογῶρ καὶ Βηθφογῶρ and Ἀραβιάθ Μωάβ) fixes the position of Peor more precisely close to the ‘plains of Moab,’ opposite Jericho on the way from the town Livias to Heshbon, and at a distance of about seven Roman miles from the latter place (ὑπέρκειται τῆς νῦν Λιβιάδος καλουμένης, and ὄρος Φογῶρ, ὃ παράκειται ἀνιόντων ἀπὸ Λιβιάδος ἐπὶ Ἐσσεβοῦν τῆς Ἀραβίας ἀντικρὺ Ἱεριχώ; compare *Hengstb.*, *Bil.*, pp. 248–250).—The term מַעַם־בְּמַעַם (xxiv. 1), literally *like one time with or and another time*, that is, *like before*, is neither necessarily restricted to *two* times, as in this passage (xxiii. 3, 15; comp. *Judg.* xvi. 20; 1 *Sam.* iii. 10; *Judg.* xx. 30, 31), nor does it always mean *as usual* (1 *Sam.* xx. 25; *Sept.*, κατὰ τὸ εἰωθός; *Engl. Vers.*, as at other times), in which sense that phrase is analogous to שָׁנָה בִּשְׁנָה *every year*, or חֲדָשׁ בְּחֲדָשׁ *every month* (1 *Sam.* i. 7; 1 *Chron.* xxvii. 1, etc.).—לְקִרְאת נְחֻשִׁים is, of course, rendered by the interpreters in a literal sense (*Sept.*, εἰς συνάρτησιν τοῖς οἰωνοῖς; *Vulg.*, ut augurium quæreret; *Philo*, *Vita. Mos.* i. 52, οὐκέτι κατὰ τὸ εἶδος ἐπὶ κληδόνας καὶ οἰωνοὺς ἔστο; *Luth.*, nach den Zaubereern; *Hengstb.*, Zeichen; *De Wette*, Zeichendeutereien, etc.); but even the obvious and striking incongruity in this verse alone—‘When Balaam saw that it pleased *Jahveh* (יהוה) to bless Israel, he did not go out for *enchantments*’—might have pointed the way to a juster conception.—There are still a few traces left—slight we admit, but still not indistinct—of the Hebrew verb נָחַשׁ used in a more general or extended sense for *divining*, *considering*, or *interpreting* (comp. *Gen.* xxx. 27; 1 *Ki.* xx. 33). ‘We may well suppose,’ says Lange (*Bibelwerk*, ii. 309), with a noteworthy glimpse of the truth, ‘that the obscure appellation *kosem* had originally a better meaning than in later times, similar to the worship on heights, which, at first patriarchal, became afterwards

heretical' (comp. also *Abarbanel* in loc., who thinks it possible that the phrase 'he did not go לקראת נחשים' means simply 'he did not go into the solitude,' like וילך שפי in xxiii. 3, serpents living in solitary places; *Clarke* in loc., who surmises that נחשים 'probably means no more than the knowledge of future events' or 'prophetic declarations'). It is mainly the employment of the word נחשים in this place which has suggested the view that Balaam gradually rose from the character of a heathen seer and sorcerer to that of a true Hebrew prophet, and that, after having twice relied upon superstitious auguries and enchantments, and having twice blessed Israel against his will, he then, before the third prophecy, gained the higher stage, when the spirit of God came upon him 'for the purpose of uttering a full prediction respecting the Israelite people,' and when he blessed them with a willing heart (so *Bunsen*, *Bibelwerk*, v. 605, 606; *Oort*, *Disputatio*, pp. 116-118, 127, 128, 'Spiritus divinus vincit peccatum; Bileam remanet eadem persona, vir Jahvi reluctans sed magis magisque a Numine afflatus, etc.; *Kueuen*, *Relig. of Israel*, i. 208; *Knobel*, *Numer.*, p. 123; *Davidson*, *Introd. to the Old Test.*, ii. 441, 442, and others; and similarly already, *Nachmides*, *Abarbanel*, and others). But this compromise is not borne out by the tenor of the narrative. Even before setting out on his journey to Moab, Balaam gives expression to exactly the same principle of action as after the utterance of the third prophecy—that not the whole of the king's treasures could prevail upon him to say anything but the words prompted by Jahveh, and it is on the earlier occasion that he calls Jahveh distinctly 'my God' (אֱלֹהֵי, xxii. 18; xxiv. 13). Does a heathen seer consult *Jahveh*? Does Jahveh reveal Himself so constantly and so readily to a heathen seer, as He did to Balaam from the very beginning? The first and second prophecies are at least as distinctly spiritual in tone and tendency as the third and fourth, which lay great stress on worldly prosperity and conquest; and a man who utters the wish, 'Let me die the death of the righteous' (יִשְׂרָיִם), and affirms that 'God beholdeth no iniquity in Jacob . . . and the trumpet-call of the King is among them,' can hardly rise higher in knowledge and purity,

although his prophetic gifts may increase in extent and intensity (see notes on vers. 3-9). Our narrative shows no trace either of a combination of paganism and Hebraism, or of a development of the one into the other. It displays the most perfect unity of conception. The difficulty of a single word cannot outbalance the numerous arguments on the opposite side. The author meant to delineate Balaam like a true prophet of his own people; if he did not, the chief interest of the composition is destroyed.—The ‘desert’ to which Balaam turned his face was, of course, the desert of Moab (*Ebn Ezra*, ישראל בערבנות מואב), not as the Targumim and other Jewish versions render, that of Arabia, to which the prophet is supposed to have looked in order to recall to memory the guilt of the golden calf, which the Hebrews had there committed, and through which, he thought, they might be assailable with imprecations.—The Israelites were ‘encamped (צִבְּרֹן) according to their tribes,’ as is fully described in another part of the Book of Numbers (chaps. ii., x.; *Sept.*, ἐστρατοπέδωνται; *Vulg.*, in tentoriis commorantem, etc.); but *Targ. Jon.* has, ‘he beheld Israel dwelling together by their tribes in their schools (בתי מדרשיהן), and saw that their doors were arranged so as not to overlook the doors of their neighbours.’—The ‘spirit of God’ that came upon Balaam is not in ‘pointed contrast’ to his own spirit (ver. 13), as if he had still wished and intended to pronounce a curse upon Israel instead of a blessing (*Hengstb.*, *Authent.*, i. 409), which is in opposition to the clear words of the preceding verse; nor is it that wild trance which fell upon Saul and his servants, and by which they were ‘turned into other men’ (1 Sam. x. 6, 10; xi. 6; xix. 20, 23, 24; see notes on vers. 3-9); nor merely ‘something like a Divine afflatus, which, in deference to current phraseology, is termed the spirit of God’ (*Rosenm.*, afflatu quodam tamquam divino correptus, etc.); but it is that heavenly inspiration by which Balaam, like other true prophets, was enabled or empowered to pronounce that which lies beyond the ordinary scope of human intelligence (comp. Judg. iii. 10; vi. 34; Isa. xlvi. 16; lix. 21; lxi. 1; Ezek. xi. 5; 2 Chron. xxiv. 20; also Hos. ix. 7, where the prophet is simply called ‘a man of the

Spirit,' אֵיט הַרִיחַ).—The following sketch has been offered as 'coming naturally out of the Scriptural narratives:' 'The priest of Baal—Balaam—now turns his face towards the east, where his sun-god is wont to make his daily rise, and where is his ethereal palace. With a hand outstretched, and eyes looking intently towards his own home and the home of Baal, the seer strains his faculties to find the wished-for imprecation; but the spirit of God comes upon him, and he can utter no words but those of blessing and gratulation' (*Beard, Dict. of the Bible, i. 122*). This picturesque description is, by the simple fact that Balaam is distinctly stated to have looked *westward* and not *eastward* (vers. 1, 2, see *supra*), marked as the offspring of imagination, and not of Biblical exegesis.

12. BALAAM'S THIRD SPEECH. XXIV. 3-9.

3. And he took up his parable and said,
 So speaketh Balaam, the son of Beor,
 And so speaketh the man of unclosed
 eye;
4. So speaketh he who heareth the words
 of God,
 He who seeth the vision of the Al-
 mighty,
 Prostrate and with opened eyes :
5. How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob,
 Thy tabernacles, O Israel!
6. As valleys *that* are spread out,
 As gardens by the river's side;
 As aloe trees which the Lord hath
 planted,
 As cedars beside the water.
7. Water floweth from his buckets,
 And his seed *is* by many waters;

- And his king is higher than Agag,
 And his kingdom is exalted.
8. God brought him forth out of Egypt—
 He hath the fleetness of the buffalo.
 He devoureth nations, his enemies,
 And crusheth their bones,
 And pierceth with his arrows.
9. He coucheth, he lieth down like a lion
 And like a lioness, who shall stir
 him up?
 Blessed *are* those that bless thee,
 And cursed those that curse thee.

Twice has God, descending to Balaam, 'put words in his mouth';^a but now, when another utterance is demanded, Balaam strives to rise up to God. In delivering the two former prophecies, therefore, he was no more than a favoured instrument, but in giving forth the third, he is invested with all the attributes of an inspired interpreter of Divine decrees, which he unravels by the light of a more than ordinary discernment. As the import of Balaam's speeches advances from stage to stage, so also his own gifts and privileges; and he is now seized by the true power of prophecy so perfectly and so completely, that, while he seems to speak in strains of unfettered independence, he yet says nothing 'of his own mind,'^b and that his human powers are not merely merged in his office, but have become one with the Divine spirit. Therefore, he may now introduce himself with all the usual designations of a chosen messenger of God, who fully compasses the depth of the words he pronounces, because he reads the Divine revelations with his own 'opened eyes,' and expounds them with his own 'unclosed vision'; who, when he receives celestial manifestations, is able to

^a xxiii. 5, 16.

^b Ver. 13.

fathom them with certainty and to explain them without diffidence, because the humility with which he bows^a before God, lifts him up to His knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, in the poet's intention—for it is his conceptions into which we are endeavouring to enter, in order to illustrate the consummate art and unity of his composition—it is no pride, no 'boastful vanity,' which prompts him to begin his prophecy, 'So speaketh (בַּשֵּׁן) Balaam, the son of Beor,' and to make this equivalent to 'So speaketh the Lord,' whose spirit is in him. Such terms could no more strike Hebrew readers as conceited grandiloquence than the words of king David, which, written probably not long after these prophecies, seem to be an imitation of this passage, 'So speaketh (בַּשֵּׁן) David, the son of Jesse, and so speaketh the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet minstrel of Israel; the spirit of the Lord speaketh through me, and His word is on my tongue';^b and at no time did the men of God hesitate to set forth their uncommon endowments and superior enlightenment with the most emphatic assurance.^c Appropriate, indeed, is such higher tone in this speech, the last that is directly devoted to Israel and their destinies, for it may fairly be called the combination and the seal of the two previous oracles. It blends the idyllic peace of the first with the martial challenge of the second; it extends the one, strengthens the other, and then hastens to that utterance with regard to Israel, which sounds like an immutable principle of Divine government, and to which the whole narrative gravitates as to its centre, 'Blessed are those that bless thee, and cursed are those that curse thee.'^d

As if carried away by the imposing aspect of Israel's spreading hosts, the prophet addresses *them*, exclaiming:

^a בַּשֵּׁן, vers. 4, 16.

^b 2 Sam. xxiii. 1, 2.

^c Comp. Deut. xxxii. 1, 2; Isa.

xlix. 1, 2; l. 4; Ps. xlix. 2-5 (see *Hupfeld*, in loc.); Gal. i. 11; 2 Cor. xi. 1 *sqq.*, etc. ^d Ver. 9.

'How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, thy tabernacles, O Israel!' These words, in the first instance, describe indeed the scene which, on the eminence of Peor, met Balaam's gaze glancing over the wide plains of Moab, but, at the same time, they bring before our mind, by poetical imagery, the exquisite abodes of the Hebrews in the land of Canaan, both their rural settlements and their populous towns. Balaam, however, soon remembers that his speech is not meant for Israel, but for the king of Moab, who is riveted to his lips with breathless anxiety. Therefore, changing the form, though not the tenour of his words, he passes to a calmer description, in which Balak, if he has at length learnt wisdom, is to read his fate. He first pictures the Hebrews in peace—the large extent of their territory, 'as valleys that are spread out'; their flourishing and well-established prosperity, 'as gardens by the river's side'; their happy and cheerful enjoyment of life, 'as aloe trees which the Lord hath planted'; and their enduring and indestructible strength, 'as cedars beside the water'; in a word, the high tide of their blessings which stream freely in all directions—'water floweth from his buckets'; and which are shared by an equally successful and favoured posterity—'his seed is by many waters.'

Nothing could impress the idea of felicity and welfare upon the king of Moab more effectually, or upon the Israelites more gratefully, than this constant allusion to water. Both the one and the others understood well what it means, 'I will give you rain in due season,' and what, on the other hand, 'I will make your heaven as iron and your earth as brass.'^a They knew that when Canaan was called 'a land of delight,' or 'a land of glorious beauty' and 'the choicest of all countries,' it was especially because Canaan is 'a land of brooks of water, of fountains and lakes that spring out of valleys and hills';

^a Lev. xxvi. 4, 19; comp. Jer. xiv. 1-6; Joel i. 18-20.

a land that 'drinks water of the rain of heaven.'^a And when a later prophet addressed Israel, 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground . . . and thy descendants shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses;'^b or when a gifted Psalmist described the wealth and glory of Jerusalem in the emphatic words, 'All My springs are in thee;'^c they intimated to their hearers and readers the inexhaustible abundance of boons allotted to them, no more forcibly or more intelligibly than Balaam did with the words, 'Water floweth from his buckets, and his seed is by many waters.'^d They are all familiar and pleasing images vividly calling forth the ideas of ease and comfort, of wealth and plenty; but while the sombre and majestic cedar, with its far-extending, broad, and roof-like branches, conveys the notions of dignity and protection, of unshaken security and permanence; the bright and delicate blossoms and the fragrant resin of the aloe plant conjure up the graces and amenities of life, which, as 'God has planted them,' are no less lasting than lovely.

But all this individual and social prosperity is not to be purchased by an inglorious obscurity. It is coupled with the highest political power and splendour. It is the fruit of famous wars and brilliant victories. It does

^a Deut. viii. 7; xi. 11, 14; xxxiii. 13; Ezek. xx. 6; Jer. iii. 19; Joel ii. 21-24; iv. 18; Dan. viii. 9; xi. 16; Ps. lxxv. 10, 11; comp. Ezek. xvii. 1-12; Zech. xiv. 8.

^b Isa. xlv. 3, 4.

^c Ps. lxxxvii. 7.

^d Comp. Ps. lxxiii. 10; lxxxiv. 7. On Assyrian inscriptions, rain, most devoutly prayed for, is called 'the joy of the year,' and the god Rimmon bears the name of 'Lord of Canals'; comp. Inscript. of Tigl.-pil. i. § 49; Black Obelisk Inscript.

A, line 7, etc.; see Records of the Past, v. 25, 29, 54, 73, 76 ('flowing waters giving pleasure to the people,' etc.). In the 'Great Harris Papyrus' (Plate 3, § 6) we find the expressive prayer of king Ramses III.: 'Give breath to my nostril, water to my soul' (Rec. vi. 26); and the Egyptian writings abound with praises of the Nile, which they describe as 'giving life to Egypt, subsistence to all animals, light to every home, the creator of all good things' (*Ibid.* iv. 107-114; vi. 51).

not engender effeminacy, but affords the means for the indomitable defence of possessions acquired by sanguinary struggles, and thus renders the Israelites unapproachable. A kingdom has been established mightier than that of the proud and hated Amalekites who, alone of all nations, ventured to attack the Hebrews in their toilsome wanderings through the wilderness, but who more than once succumbed to their valiant arms.^a That kingdom has not 'come up in a night,' but is the sure growth of centuries. It has its strong roots in those early conquests and successes to which the miraculous deliverance from Egypt, accomplished by Divine assistance, gave the impulse and the confidence, the courage and the vigour. As it has been founded, so it can only maintain itself, by bitter and implacable severity against its enemies, whom it has striven and has proved able to hurl down, to crush, or to exterminate. Therefore, Israel is now like the lion, whom, couching with his prey, no one dares to assail or to provoke.

To what time does this description apply so well as to that of David? Indeed, it hardly suits any other. It was only towards the end of David's reign, that there prevailed in Israel such watchful and lion-like boldness of resistance, inspired by the apprehension of losing, through the animosity and revenge of keen-eyed foes, the precious boons obtained with unspeakable labour and danger. And to David himself applies almost literally what is here said of Israel: 'He devoureth the nations, his enemies, and crusheth their bones, and pierceth with his arrows.' The Biblical accounts do not conceal the great rigour, nay the fearful cruelty, with which David, in accordance with the barbarous usages of his age or of Eastern conquerors generally, treated his vanquished opponents.^b

^a See notes on ver. 20.

^b Comp. Num. xvi. 14; Judg. xvi. 21; 2 Ki. viii. 12; xxv. 7; Isa. xiv. 17; Am. i. 3, 13; ii. 1; Ps. cxxxvii. 9, etc.; see *supra*, p. 37,

note *d*; although the kings of Israel bore in this respect a favourable reputation: 'We have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings' (רַחֲמֵי מַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), 1 Ki. xx. 31.

More unpitiful he appears from those records than Gideon in the savage period of the Judges, who threatened the princes and elders of Succoth, that 'he would thresh their flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers,' and carried out the threat;^a and more inexorable than Samuel, who 'hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.'^b For however strong and painful our repugnance, a sound interpretation cannot avoid understanding in a literal sense the following words, which conclude the account of David's capture of Rabbah in Ammon: 'And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under threshing wains of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln,' after which the text adds, 'And thus did he to all the cities of the children of Ammon.'^c As if to render doubt impossible, the Chronicler, generally so eager to palliate the offences of his favourites, makes indeed no reference to the brick-kilns, because he seems unwilling to challenge a comparison between David, the anointed, and a later king of Moab himself, who 'burnt the bones of the king of Edom into lime,' and was, for this inhuman ferocity, menaced by the prophet Amos with God's direst anger and punishment;^d but he, the Chronicler, observes distinctly, that David 'cut the Ammonite captives asunder with saws^e and with threshing wains of iron and with axes,'^f deeds that are also imputed to a merciless king of Syria, to Caligula, and the frenzied Jewish soldiers in the revolt under Trajan.^g But we have David's own testimony partially coinciding with our text even in words. For in a Psalm to which no careful critic has yet denied the authorship,

^a Judg. viii. 7, 16.

^b 1 Sam. xv. 33.

^c 2 Sam. xii. 31; comp. viii. 2, 4;

1 Chr. xviii. 4.

^d Am. ii. 1-3.

^e וַיִּטֹּר בַּמִּנְרָה.

1 Chr. xx. 3.

^g Amos i. 3, עַל-דְּרוֹשִׁים בַּחֲרֻצוֹת, הַבְּרוּזִל אֶת-הַנְּקֵדָה; *Sueton. Caligul.* c. 27, 'multos honesti ordinis . . . medios serra dissecuit'; *Dion Cass.*, lxxviii. 32, πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ μέσους ἀπὸ κορυφῆς ἐτέπριον; see *Comm.* on Lev. i. p. 411.

or at least the spirit, of David, he says, 'I have pursued my enemies and overtaken them, nor did I turn again till they were consumed; I pierced them (אֶמְקֶהֱמָם) so that they were not able to rise . . . and I crushed them (אֶמְצִיחֵם) that hated me . . . I pounded them small (אֶמְשֶׁקֵם) as the dust before the wind, I cast them out as the dirt in the streets.'^a Thus Balaam's words stand forth in all their terrible significance: 'He devoureth the nations, his enemies, and crusheth their bones, and pierceth with his arrows.'^b

Is such unrelenting fierceness compatible with that extreme refinement otherwise so prominent in this composition? Both qualities are here as surprisingly united as they were in the character of David himself, who is justly called 'the sweet minstrel of Israel;' or as they are joined in the wonderful Song of Deborah, which strangely couples wild exultation at the murder of a sleeping guest with the most exquisite tenderness in the description of an anxious and trembling mother—a significant warning that æsthetic culture alone is insufficient, and that art must be supplemented by moral elements to shield it alike against callousness and effeminacy.

The monumental records of Eastern monarchs are, for the most part, catalogues of campaigns, in which we again and again meet the phrases, 'I threw down the cities'—the numbers added are often prodigious, two hundred or five hundred, and even one thousand two hundred being mentioned on single occasions — or 'I dug them up, ravaged, destroyed, and consumed them with fire,' so that 'the smoke of their burning like a mighty cloud obscured the face of high heaven;' or 'I reduced them to heaps of rubbish and left them in ruins,' and 'in every direction I made the land a wilderness,'^c which

^a Ps. xviii. 38-43, comp. Hitzig, Delitzsch, and Hupfeld in loc.

^b Comp. xxiii. 24; xxiv. 17.

^c Comp. Isa. xiv. 17, where it is said of the king of Babylon: שָׁם תִּבְנֶה כְּפִירָא וּבָנִי

may well be understood when we learn that corn fields were sown with thistles and made the abode of serpents and wild beasts from the desert,^a that the wells of drinking water were dried up,^b and fruit and forest trees cut down or burnt.^c As regards their enemies, the conquerors constantly boast that they 'scattered their corpses like rubbish,' or 'clay,' or 'water,' or 'chaff,' 'threw them down in the dust,' or 'cut them down like grass.' They punished captives of war by tearing out their tongues, lips, noses, or eyes, or cutting off their hands and feet. They chained them up together with dogs and other ferocious animals,^d or threw them alive into pits 'among stone lions and bulls;'^e flayed,^f crucified,^g impaled,^h burned,ⁱ or starved them to death;^k and they not only 'erected pyramids of heads' and 'built up their corpses into piles,'^l but also built up in this manner 'the bodies while yet alive.'^m Sometimes fuller descriptions are given, of which the following specimen will suffice, forming the conclusion of a very spirited account of Sennacherib's great battle of Khaluli, recorded on the 'Taylor Cylinder': 'My faultless horses, yoked to my chariot, stepped slowly through the deep pools of blood; the wheels of my

^a Records of the Past, i. 28, 88.

^b *Ibid.* i. 86, etc.

^c *Ibid.* iii. 40, 62, 76, 96, etc.; comp. Isa. x. 34; xxvii. 24. One of the titles of king Assur-nasir-pal is 'destroyer of forests and cities' (Rec. iii. 79), and Tiglath-pileser II. glories, 'The groves of palm-trees I cut down, I did not leave one' (*Ibid.* v. 104); see, on the other hand, the considerate command in Deut. xx. 19, 26).

^d *Ibid.* i. 93, 94, 100; iii. 113.

^e *Ibid.* i. 78, 80.

^f *Ibid.* i. 101; iii. 45, 47; comp. 2 Macc. vii. 7; Mic. iii. 1.

^g *Ibid.* iii. 42, etc.

^h *Ibid.* iii. 47, 62, 68, 73, 95.

ⁱ 'I consigned 3,000 of their captives to the flames' (*Ibid.* iii. 49); 'The sons and daughters of their nobles I burned for holocausts' (*Ibid.* p. 85), etc.

^k *Ibid.* iii. 68.

^l *Ibid.* iii. 49, 52, 85-88, etc.; comp. 2 Ki. x. 8.

^m *Ibid.* iii. 50, 57, 61. Tamerlane, A. C. 1387, 'built up a living pyramid of 2,000 people with mortar, like stones'; comp. *Fan-Lenep*. Bible Lands, ii. 691, 692, 743-747. Who is not, alas! reminded of recent 'atrocities'—*intra muros . . . et extra?* Rec. iii. 49-52, 54, 56, 62, etc.

chariot, as it swept away the slain and the fallen, were clogged with blood and flesh; the heads of their soldiers I salted and stuffed them into great wicker baskets.^a And having specified all these horrors, the monarchs often triumphantly wind up their inscriptions with some such sentence as, 'By these things I satisfied the hearts of the great gods my lords.'^b

Seeing in his words nothing else but the praise of Israel's power and indestructible greatness, the prophet addresses them again, as he had done at the beginning, and declares not merely that the Hebrews, blessed by God, are subject to no human imprecation, but he exclaims 'Blessed are those that bless thee, and cursed those that curse thee'—impressing upon the king of Moab to his terror, that the malediction which he had desired to call down upon Israel, would surely rebound upon himself. Balak had believed that he was fighting against a nation like all other nations, but he found, to his dismay, that he had hazarded an impotent warfare against an omnipotent God.

This is the only metaphysical notion contained in the speech. It is the natural complement of the idea of Israel's election as God's people, and it occurs, therefore, also in the accounts of the patriarchal promises.^c Yet even that dogma admits the intelligible meaning, that he who turns to Israel, turns to God and His truth; while

^a Inscript. col. v., lines 80-85; Rec. i. 49.

^b *Ibid.* i. 78, 93, etc. The 'Moabite Stone' (lines 11, 12, 15), after relating that king Mesha slew all the captured Israelites, adds that he did this 'for the delight of Chemosh and Moab' (רִית לְכַמִּישׁ וּלְמֹאָב). Comp. Rec. i. 63, 70, 71, 84, 87, 101; ii. 32; iii. 40, 41, 44, 62, 76, 87, 107; iv. 45, 46; v. 9, *sqq.*, 58, 96; vi. 19, 91; vii. 25-56 *passim*, 63, 64.

etc.—Comparatively very rare are phrases like, 'I, Assur-bani-pal, of generous heart, forgiver of sin'; 'he trusted to the goodness of my heart'; 'I granted favour or grace'; 'I had mercy on him and washed out his rebellion'; or, not without a certain dignity, 'I left him in life to learn the worship of the great gods from my city of Asshur' (*Ibid.* i. 76, 77, 90; iii. 95, 117; v. 17).

^c Gen. xxvii. 29; xii. 2, 3.

he who opposes Israel, sinks into pernicious falsehood and depravity. In every other point, the oracle so clearly breathes the purest and simplest humanity, that it seems to move in the sphere of art and history, rather than of religion and doctrine.

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—While in the first two speeches the poet depicts the destinies of the Hebrews and their relations to God in general outlines, he portrays, in the third, more fully, his own age—the time of Israel's greatest prosperity and power. Indeed, looking at the introductory or idyllic portion of the address (vers. 5-7), we might even be tempted to apply the description to Solomon's reign, when 'Judah and Israel dwelt safely (יָשָׁבוּ) every man under his vine and under his fig tree from Dan to Beer-sheba' (1 Ki. v. 5; comp. Mic. iv. 4; Zech. iii. 10; 2 Ki. xviii. 31), and when 'they were numerous as the sand which is by the sea, eating and drinking and making merry' (1 Ki. iv. 20), if the second part did not too clearly speak of armament, war, and conquest, (p. 43; comp. 2 Sam. vii. 10; Ps. lxxxix. 23-28; 1 Chr. xiv. 2, etc.). We accept it as no mean confirmation of our historical analysis, that one of the ablest and most consistent of modern apologists arrived at the result: 'As the statements in ver. 8 were realised under David, so the declaration in ver. 9 found its fulfilment under Solomon' (*Hengstenb.*, Bil., p. 155). There is nothing that compels us to refer the description to Saul's time; for David also fought successfully against the Amalekites (2 Sam. viii. 12); and the words 'his kingdom shall be exalted,' are little suitable to Saul, whose royal authority declined, if it did not practically cease, after his victory over the Amalekites.—Many interpreters have employed the strongest terms of censure to condemn Balaam's prefatory sentences (e.g. *Calvin*, eum ad se jactandum impulit fastus et ambitio elogiis se ornat, quibus propheticum munus sibi arroget, etc.)—an injustice both to the author and his composition.—It is as inappropriate to force upon the designation 'Balaam, the son of Beor' a deeper significance as to take these and the following words as a part of the narrative, so that the speech would only begin with ver. 5

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(so *Philo*, Vit. Mos. i. 52).—נָאֵם, that which is uttered or utterance, the ordinary term introducing prophetic or Divinely inspired speech (נָאֵם being cognate with נָהַם and הִמָּה, to speak in a low or murmuring voice), is always used in the constr. state נָאֵם, commonly יְהוָה נָאֵם, speech or revelation of *Jahveh* (of which נָאֵם in Jer. xxiii. 31 is elliptical), very often occurring in the three greater prophets and in *Amos* and *Zechariah*, occasionally in the Pentateuch (besides this passage in Gen. xxii. 16; Num. xiv. 28), but very rarely with the human speaker or author following, as here נָאֵם בְּלִעָם (vers. 3, 15), נָאֵם דָּוִד (2 Sam. xxiii. 1), and נָאֵם הַנְּבִיָּא (Prov. xxx. 1), that is, only in old or archaic compositions, written at periods when נָאֵם יְהוָה had not yet become a fixed and almost technical expression, and when a combination as נָאֵם פְּשָׁע, a speech concerning wickedness (Ps. xxxvi. 2) was still possible (comp. Isa. v. 1, יְצִירַת דָּוִד, a song concerning my friend). The translation 'speech (of God) to Balaam' is not countenanced by any analogy. The rarer appellation for prophecy נִשְׂאָה, from נָשָׂא, sc. קוּל, is, on the contrary, a speech delivered with uplifted voice (Isa. xxi. 1, 11, 13; Nah. i. 1; Hab. i. 1; comp. Jer. xxiii. 31 and 34); though, of course, in either case the etymological signification was gradually effaced, and no such shade of meaning is implied in the most frequent phrase הִבֵּר יְהוָה עֵינָי, see on xxiii. 18.—נִשְׂאָה הָעַיִן can only be 'with unclosed eye,' analogous to נָלְוִי עֵינַיִם (ver. 4), 'with opened eyes,' an intelligible metaphor employed in various modifications (comp. Ps. xl. 7, 'Thou hast opened—פָּרִיתָ—my ears'; cxix. 18, 'open—נָלְ—my eyes'; Gen. iii. 5, etc.). In the Mishnah (*Avod. Zar.* v. 3, 4), the verb נִשְׂאָה is employed side by side with סָתַם as its opposite, viz. כְּדִי שִׂישְׂתָם וּיִסְתָּם 'while he opens (or bores) a hole and stops it again' (explained by *Barten.*, כְּדִי שִׂיבָה נִקְבָּה . . . וַיִּחְזַר וַיִּסְתָּם הַנִּקְבָּה); and in this sense translate *Targ. Onk.* (רִישְׁפִּיר הַיָּוִי, seeing clearly), *Syr.* (דְּנִלְיָא, whose eye is unveiled), *Samar. Vers.* (זוּרִים הַזּוֹתָה), *Saud.*, *Kimchi* (בַּתּוֹחַ הָעַיִן), *Sept.* (ἀληθινῶς ὁρων), and the greater part of ancient and modern interpreters. But many, following some Greek versions and the Vulgate (ἐμπεφραγμένοι, cujus obturatus est oculus), and urging the analogy of נִשְׂאָה with סָתַם and נִשְׂאָה (Lam. iii. 8), to close or to stop, translate, 'with

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closed eye,' and explain this very variously to mean either that Balaam's eyes had, up to that time, been blind with respect to the true nature and essence of things (*Aburban.*), or to future events, and especially the destinies of Israel (*Deyling, Lengerke*); or, on the contrary, that they could see hidden things (*Calv.*, se pollere arcanis visionibus); or that they were unable to perceive the angel on the road (*Cleric.*); or that 'Balaam described himself as the man with closed eye in reference to that state of ecstasy during which the shutting of the outward senses goes hand in hand with the opening of the inward faculties,' so that 'we must consider Balaam to have pronounced all his prophecies with closed eyes' (*Hengstenb., Baumgart., Oehler, Kurtz, Hupfeld, Rödiger, Bunsen,* and others). But, if so, why did Balak make such scrupulous efforts that Balaam should see the Hebrews during his utterances, the first times a part of them, and the third time the whole people? That explanation is a branch of the same strong stem of invidious prejudice which yielded the corresponding conception of the entire piece. 'With men like Balaam,' it is asserted, 'who was on a low level of spiritual life, the closing of the eyes was the necessary condition of their opening; the spirit could only disclose itself by withdrawing him, the defiled heathen, from the staining influences of the baser world' (*Hengstenb., Bil.*, pp. 137-139). But what did Balaam see, when he opened his eyes? That people, which he extolled as the purest, noblest, and most pious. Yet here again—it might seem incredible—recourse is taken to 'second sight.' 'Balaam,' so says a follower of the author just quoted, 'having his outward eyes closed, as is the case with second sight, beheld the meaning of the Divine revelations with his mental eye opened' (*Keil, Num.*, p. 317). The Rabbins understand indeed שְׂתוּרָה as 'unclosed,' but infer from the singular אֵינָהּ, the *one* eye which was opened, that Balaam was blind on the other eye (*Talm. Sanhedr.*, 105*a* and *Rashi* in loc.; see *supra*, p. 31; but comp. וְנִלְוִי עֵינָיִם, ver. 4). —אֵלֵי, the *Almighty* (ver. 4), is here used for אֵלֵי שָׁמַיִם (Gen. xvii. 1; xxviii. 3; Exod. vi. 3, etc.), as in the contemporary Book of Ruth (i. 20, 21), in the Book of Job (v. 17; vi. 4, 14; viii. 3, etc.), and some other poetical compositions (Gen.

xlix. 25; Isa. xiii. 7; Ezek. i. 24; Joel i. 15; Ps. xci. 1), because it is pithier, not because the latter term was deemed too sacred in connection with Balaam, as some have supposed (*Herder*, 'mächtige Geister,' etc.).—The word נָפַל, *falling down*, may possibly refer to those violent trances which overcame inspired persons, and during which they 'fell down on the ground' and prophesied; and though such remarkable affections are not recorded with regard to Samuel himself, we learn that they seized his disciples in his presence (compare 1 Sam. xix. 24, נִפְּלוּ עִירָם). But hence it does not follow that that word retained exactly the same meaning in all times. As μάρτις (of μαινομαι) is properly a 'maniac,' and yet no one easily figured to himself the venerable seer Tiresias as raving and raging when he was called a μάρτις; so the Hebrews, setting aside the original and literal sense of נָפַל, and merely preserving its deeper or essential signification, may very soon have understood it of a seer or prophet in general, as here indeed נָפַל is co-ordinated with גָּלוּי עֵינַיִם. Similar modifications in the meaning of words are natural and frequent; so, for instance, was קָרַיִם, properly *eunuch*, later employed for *official* generally, because, at first, all officials were eunuchs (see *Comm. on Gen.*, p. 617); and the Arabic writer, El Kifti, observes with respect to Aristotle: 'for about twenty years he poured water on the hands of Plato,' meaning that Aristotle was Plato's disciple, because, in the East, that duty devolves on disciples, as is recorded of Elisha, 'who poured water on the hands of Elijah' (2 Ki. iii. 11; compare the phrases 'to be brought up' or 'to sit at the feet' of somebody, Luke x. 39; Acts xxii. 3, etc.). It seems impossible to represent to ourselves the writer of these calm and thoughtfully measured prophecies as a man who 'in the moment of supreme frenzy feels himself grasped by the mighty hand of Jahveh and hurled to the ground' (*Ewald*), 'lying there like dead' (*Bunsen*); much less is it permitted to draw from that word נָפַל the inference that Balaam's prophesying assumed such a vehement form because 'it found him in an unripe state' (*Hengstenb.*). It is not even necessary to bring the terms נָפַל and גָּלוּי עֵינַיִם into the relation of cause and effect, as has frequently been done (*Syr.*, 'when he falls

down—**כר רמא**—his eyes are opened'; *Vulg.*, qui cadit et sic aperiuntur oculi ejus; *Luth.*, *Michael.*, dem die Augen geöffnet werden, wenn er niederkniet; similarly *Onk.*, *Calmet*, *Herd*, *Ewald*, and others); and it is certainly questionable to place them in juxtaposition (*Rashi*, in old MSS., 'although he falls down . . . yet his eyes are open'; *Engl. Vers.*, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open; *Keble*, 'thy tranç'd yet open gaze,' etc.) It is enough that **נִזְכָּר** recalled, in the then familiar phraseology, the idea of prophetic inspiration, and perhaps also implies that humble submission with which Balaam listened to the Divine suggestions—though not awestruck and overwhelmed by a special vision (as in Ezek. i. 28; iii. 23; xliii. 3; Dan. viii. 17, 18; x. 9, 15; comp. Rev. i. 17); for not from without, but by his own spiritual elevation, did Balaam learn God's will and decree. Jonathan, in his copious paraphrase, renders **נִזְכָּר** twice—'who, because he was not circumcised, fell upon his face when the angel stood before him,' and 'he fell upon his face, and the sacred mysteries hidden from the prophets were revealed to him'; and Targ. Jerus., 'prostrate on his face,' and 'he prophesied that he would fall by the sword.' The addition of the *Sept. ἐν ὕπνῳ* is certainly unjustifiable (comp. *Saad.*, وهو نائم; *Luzzatto*, in sonno profetico).—The parallelism in ver. 4, it must be admitted, is strikingly inferior to that of almost every other sentence in Balaam's genuine prophecies (see *infra*, on ver. 8); it consists of three rather irregular and monotonous members, the mutual relation of which is not clear, and which include the prosaic particle **וְאֵיךְ** found nowhere else in these speeches. But of the most perfect structure is the sixteenth verse, which corresponds to the fourth, and which, by offering the words **וידע דעת עלין** instead of **איך**, forms two excellent synonym parallelisms of a truly poetical character; it might, therefore, be supposed with some confidence that ver. 4 should be read like ver. 16. This point, unessential in itself, obtains importance as one of the proofs of the corruptions and interpolations discoverable in this section (p. 41).—**אֲנִי לְיָדְךָ** (ver. 5) points to the Israelites as Balaam sees them encamped before him, while **מיטבתך** aptly leads over to the people domiciled in Canaan and to their future fortunes.—As **יְהִי**

(ver. 6) is originally a *river*, and then a valley through which a *river* flows (a *Wady* or watercourse; *Germ.*, Quellthal), that word also brings before the mind the agreeable notion of water designedly repeated in this passage again and again (*Louth*, *Sacr. Poes.*, xx., fitly and elegantly, 'ut rigua vallis fertilem pandens sinum'); yet the parallelism of בְּנָנוֹת does not favour the translation 'like streams' (the *Targ.*, *Syr.*, *Gr. Ven.*, *Rosenm.*, *Zanz*, *Luzzatto*, and others).—Before נָטְיִי the relative אִשֶּׁר is to be supplied—'like valleys that are spread out'; we cannot take נָטְיִי as a principal verb, 'they are spread out like valleys,' as in the whole of this speech the singular is used in reference to Israel, and it seems less suitable to take 'the tents' as subject (inaccurately, *Sept.*, ὡσεὶ τάπαι σκιάζουσαι; *Vulg.*, ut valles nemorosae, etc.).—נָטְיִי, the past of Niphal (comp. *Jer.* vi. 4; *Zech.* i. 16), instead of נָטְיִי, the original י of נָטָה re-appearing, as is not seldom the case (comp. נָטְיִי, *Ps.* lxxiii. 2, *Keri*; see *Gram.*, § lxvii. 1. a). The *Samar. Text* has נָטְיִי plantations (like well-planted valleys); some MSS. read נָטְיִי extended or spread out (is Israel); and the *Targ.* render freely in accordance with their acceptation of נָטְיִי (viz., דְּמִתְנַבְּרִין and דְּמִתְנַבְּרִין).

If we consider, on the one hand, the connection in which the אֲהָלִים are here mentioned, and on the other hand, the graphic distinctness of this description in every detail, we can hardly doubt that the אֲהָלִים were not less familiar to the Hebrews and not less indigenous in their country than the cedars, with which they are named in conjunction. It seems, therefore, most natural to understand some of the many varieties of the *aloe*, a succulent plant of the genus *asphodelus*, frequently found in Palestine, Arabia, and other countries adjoining the Mediterranean, and often growing into stately trees with stems twenty to twenty-five feet high, and presenting a palm-like appearance. The most common species—*aloë succotrina*—has numerous tufts of light-green, lanceolate and thorny leaves, from the midst of which, on long, separate stalks, rises a cluster of bright orange-yellow blossoms (whence perhaps the name, from אֲהָלִים to shine, *Job* xxv. 5). The inspissated sap prepared from this plant hardens in the air, has a myrrh-like odour (*Cant.* iv. 14)

and a spicy taste, and was, together with myrrh, used for the fumigation of garments and beds (Ps. xlv. 9; Prov. vii. 17) and abundantly placed in graves as a protection against decay (John xix. 39). It is, therefore, unnecessary, if it is not inadmissible, *here* to identify the אֵילֵי הַסֹּאֵם with the Agallochium (*ἀγάλλοχον* or *ξυλαλόη*), the product of a resinous tree, which grows in China, western India, and some of the Indian isles, and about which there exists a very extensive though still rather confused literature (comp. *Dioscorid.* i. 21; iii. 25; *Celsius*, Hierobotan., i. 135-171; *Gesenius*, Thesaur. p. 33; *Royle* in *Kitto's* Cyclop., i. pp. 94-97; *Rosenm.*, Morgenl., ii. 280, 281, etc.). It is, however, not impossible that that wood, at a later period introduced in Palestine under its native name of *aghil*, was designated by the Hebrews with the similar word *ahal*, since it has several qualities in common with the indigenous *ahal*; therefore, where, in the *later* Books, this term is mentioned, it may likewise mean that foreign product.—Some earlier translators do not render אֵילֵי הַסֹּאֵם but אֵילֵי הַסֹּאֵם tents (*Sept.*, ὡσεὶ σκηναὶ ἅς ἔπηξε κύριος; *Vulg.*, tabernacula; *Samar. Vers.*, מִיִּטְכָּנִים; *Syr.*, *Saad.*, *Luther*, Hütten, etc.), which is made more than doubtful by the parallelism of אֵילֵי הַסֹּאֵם cedars, though the verb נָטַע is also used in connection with tents (Dan xi. 45).

The aloe trees 'which God has planted' are, like the cedars 'which God has planted' (Ps. civ. 16), pre-eminent in excellence and duration—and so are the Israelites, whom God has firmly established; this notion is included in the very expression 'planting'; thus God says to the prophet Nathan, 'I have given an abode to My people Israel and have planted them (וְנָטַעְתִּינִי), that they may dwell in a place of their own and be moved no more' (2 Sam. vii. 10; comp. Amos ix. 15; Jer. xxiv. 6; Ps. xlv. 3, etc.): that those words 'contain a reference to Paradise' (Gen. ii. 8) is not evident (*Louth*, Sac. Poes., xx., 'Sacris Edenæ costi ut in sylvis vivent,' and others); nor that they mean 'such trees as grow independently of the cultivation of man,' which, if applied to the people of Israel, would involve a questionable simile.—As all the four parts of the sixth verse are metaphors, so also the first half of the seventh verse, 'water

floweth from his buckets,' etc.; for water is a common figure for happiness and abundance in general (comp. Isa. xlv. 3; lxvi. 12; Ps. lxx. 10, 11, etc.; *Rashi*, לִשְׁנֵי הַצְּלָחִים הַזֶּה (הוּא): the blessings of Israel will be as copious as the water of full and overflowing buckets, and they will continue undiminished in later generations—'and his seed is by many waters' (עַד לְדוֹרֹתָיִךְ for *posterity*, as in Gen. xvii. 19; xlviii. 19; Ps. xxxvii. 25, etc.). Very languid is the sense, if, as is usually done, the words 'וְיִלְמְדוּ מִיַּם וְעַד' are taken literally, viz., that the wells and cisterns of the Hebrews will always be supplied with water for themselves and their cattle, and that their seed (עַד לְדוֹרֹתָיִךְ, Gen. xvii. 19; Lev. xxvi. 5) will be irrigated by abundant showers (*Coccej.*, *Bunmygart.*, *Knob.*, and others; *Mendels.*, sein Samen fällt in feuchten Boden; *Ewald*, seine Saat wird an reichen Wassern stehen; similarly *Bon-en*, and others). This is, to some extent, already included in the preceding verse, and forms but a part of the blessings which the Hebrews enjoy, since these blessings comprise, besides, power, glory, peace, and other boons. Still less acceptable is the opinion that water is here a metaphor for numerous posterity (comp. Isa. xlviii. 1; see also Deut. xxxiii. 28; Ps. lxxviii. 27; Nah. ii. 9)—'metaphora ab aqua de situla destillante ad semen virile translata' (*Gesen.*, s. v.; *Luth.*, sein Saame wird ein grosses Wasser werden; *Michaelis*, *Herder*, viele Ströme werden ihm Söhne sein; *Rosenm.*, multos procreabit liberos, etc.): but how could וְיִרְעוּ בְּמֵי רַבִּים be understood and justified? The Sept., the Syriac translation, and the Targumim render the first half of the verse very freely, as if following a different reading, and connect it, in sense, with the second half—*Sept.*, ἐξελεύσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτοῦ καὶ κυριεύσει ἐθνῶν πολλῶν; similarly the *Syr*; *Onk.*, 'the king anointed from his sons shall increase and have dominion over many nations'; *Jonath.*, 'from them their King shall arise, and their Redeemer be of them, and the seed of the children of Jacob shall rule over many nations'; while the *Targ. Jerus.* translates plainly מַלְכוּתוֹ by 'the Kingdom of the Messiah,' to which unwarranted conception Christian interpreters have given their assent (comp. *Origen*, In Num. Hom. xvii. 5, 6, and others), contending that, as

the Hebrews arrived at their full power only by the establishment of the monarchy, so 'the monarchy realised its full destination only by the advent of the Messiah' (*Hengstb.*, Bil., 154; *Keil*, and others); or that this King, 'after having crushed all enemies, will break his own arrows (ver. 8), because then all instruments of war shall have become unnecessary' (*Lange*, Bibelwerk, ii. 315).— לָרַץ *to run, to flow*, a poetical word occurring elsewhere also in the Pentateuch (compare Exodus xv. 8, and Deut. xxxii. 2), is occasionally employed in connection with לָדוּ *dew* (Deut., l. c.), or is metaphorically introduced in various ways (Cant. iv. 10; Isa. xlv. 8, etc.), but usually chosen in reference to מַיִם , which is here construed with the singular of the verb, as elsewhere also (Lev. xi. 34; Num. xx. 2; 2 Ki. iii. 9, etc.); a translation, therefore, like 'rieseln wird er (Israel) vom Wasser seiner Eimer' (*Ewald*), is doubtful and needless.— בְּכַדָּיִם *his buckets* (for בְּכַדָּיִם , as בְּכַדָּיִם , Deut. ii. 33, etc., see Gram., § xxx. 5. c) is by many taken as the *dual* of כַּדָּיִם (for כַּדָּיִם , Isa. xl. 15), buckets for drawing water being generally used and carried in pairs; but it may also be a shortened *plural*, like מַיִם (Prov. xxv. 11), of כַּדָּיִם , and other segolate nouns (see Gram., § xxiv. 5). The proper meaning of *bucket* yields here a suitable sense; it is unnecessary to take the word as *clouds*, which, like 'the bottles (נִבְלֵי) of heaven' (comp. Job xxxviii. 37), pour down the water upon the earth (*Ewald*), or as *boughs*, equivalent to כַּדָּיִם , Jer. xi. 16, etc. (so *Kimchi*, ענפי ענבים, *Ebn Ezra*, *Bechai*, *Bunsen*, and others).—The result of Israel's numerous and varied blessings will be that 'their king shall be higher than Agag'; the conjunction וְ , therefore, in וְיָרַם denotes the consequence, but the verbs יָרַם and תִּשְׁמַע are simple futures announcing later events, and do not express a wish (*Hengstb.*, *erhabener sei*; *Knob.*, *Keil*, and others).—It is an unfounded assertion, dating from very early times and still extensively upheld, that *Agag* (אַגַּג or אַגִּי) is no proper noun, but was an honorary title (supposed to mean the *fiery*, comp. אַרְסִית *arsit*; or the *sublime*, comp. אַלְטִיתוּד *altitudo*), and belonged to the kings of the Amalekites generally (*Nachman.*, $\text{בְּלִ מֶלֶךְ בְּעַם עַמְלֵק נִקְרָא אַגַּג}$, and others), as *Pharaoh* to the kings of Egypt; or applied to a particular dynasty of

the Amalekite kings. The historical Books of the Old Testament mention only one King Agag, who was defeated by Saul and killed by Samuel (1 Sam. xv. 8, 9, 20, 32, 33), and to this Agag and none else can Balaam's prophecy refer (comp. *Bechai* in loc., מלך אגג את תפיט הוא מלכו הוא יאול והוא תפיט את אגג מלך עמלק; so *Kether Torah*, and others). None of the apologetic devices which, with noteworthy timidity, shrink from admitting the distinct prediction of historical names (as Agag and Cyrus), is of any avail (see, for instance, *Heugsteb.*, Auth. d. Pentat., ii. 306–309; *Bil.*, p. 149; comp., however, *Mendels.* in loc.), and least of all is it possible to identify אגג with *Ogyges*, who led a Phœnician colony into Bœotia and reigned in Thebes, the 'Ogygian' town (*Michael.* in loc.; *Specileg. Geogr.*, ii. 16, 17, etc.), which opinion has no other support than the reading מננג for מאנג found in the Samaritan text, and the corresponding version of the Sept. and Symmachus ἡ Γώγ, since in later times Gog was frequently employed as the type of powerful and dangerous kings (comp. Ezek. xxviii., xxix.). It will merely be necessary to mention that this improbable explanation has been blended with the conjecture that 'his king,' in this passage, is God Himself (comp. xxiii. 21), so that the words under discussion would mean, 'and Israel's God is higher or mightier than Ogyges' (*Bunsen*, *Bibelwerk*, v. 607)—a sense which not even the desire of proving a favourite theory ought to have forced on the context (see *supra*, p. 47). But the Assyrian King Assur-bani-pal boldly declared in his deciphered 'Annals' (col. vii., lines 9–18) that, 1,635 years before his time, he had by the gods been proclaimed by name as a future ruler of Assyria, and appointed to certain holy duties.—The *Vulg.* renders, 'tolletur (אגג) propter Agag rex ejus et auferetur (אגג) regnum illius,' a translation not permitted by the verbs.—אגג, future of *Hithpael*, instead of אגג, as אגג (Dan. xi. 14), אגג (Jer. xxiii. 13) for אגג, etc.; see *Gram.*, § xlvi. 8. *b.*—The noun אגג occurs indeed almost exclusively in the latest Books of the Hebrew Scriptures, as the Chronicles and Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, Esther and Ecclesiastes; but this is no proof that it was never used in earlier times instead of the more frequent אגג (comp. Ps.

xlv. 7; 1 Sam. xx. 31; 1 Ki. ii. 12, etc.); for, in the words of Horace, 'Multa renascentur quæ jam cecidere, cadentque Quæ nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus.'—However strong the expressions are, with which here (ver. 8) the treatment of Israel's vanquished enemies is described, they do not, as has been confidently asserted, imply the abomination of human sacrifices (*Ghillany*, Menschenopfer, pp. 770, 771; see Com. on Lev. i., pp. 410, 411, 415); for לָרַס is simply to *destroy*, especially enemies (comp. Jer. x. 25, where $\text{לָרַסְתֶּם$ is joined with לְעַלְתֶּם ; xxx. 16; li. 34; Deut. vii. 16; xxxi. 17; Isa. ix. 11, etc.), and is, therefore, used not only in connection with fire, but also the sword, pestilence, and other agencies of destruction; and נָרַם is most probably to *crush* or *break bones* (נָרַם being a denominative verb of נֶרֶם *bone*, as עָצָה , which is employed in the same sense, is of עֵצָה ; comp. the close parallel in Jer. l. 17: 'first the king of Assyria devoured him— $\text{אָכַלְתִּי$ —and last the king of Babylon crushed his bones'— עָצָמוֹ), and then, in a wider sense, to *break into fragments* generally (Ezek. xxiii. 34; *Sept.*, ἐκμυλῶ, he will take out the marrow; *Vulg.*, confringent; *Luth.*, zermalmen; *Menahem ben Saruk*, לִיטֵן יַבְבִּירָה, etc.). Less plausibly the verb נָרַם has been understood as *gnawing* the bones (*Gesen.*, *De Wette*, *Ewald*, and others: Ezek. xxiii. 24 is not conclusive, and does not counterbalance the clear analogy of נָרַם and עָצָה ; comp. פָּצַח in Mic. iii. 3; נָרַם in Zeph. iii. 3 is to *reserve a bone*). 'Devouring' the enemies, 'crushing their bones,' and, as has before been announced, 'drinking their blood,' are metaphors the more readily justified by remembering that they properly describe the prey of the lion introduced immediately afterwards (ver. 9). As these images are so systematically adhered to and carried out, it is indeed surprising to find them interrupted by words so heterogeneous as $\text{וַיִּקְרַע אֶתְּיָדָיו$, which may either mean 'and he (Israel) pierces with his arrows' (וַיִּקְרַע used absolutely, as in Deut. xxxii. 39; Job. v. 18; and the simple noun taken as the instrument see Gram., § 86. 4); or, 'he pierces *them* with his arrows' (the objective case omitted, *Sept.*, καὶ ταῖς βολίσις αὐτοῦ κατατοξέσει ἐχθρόν, the last word being added; *Vulg.*, et perforabunt sagittis, sc. ossa; *Luth.*, und mit seinen Pfeilen

zerschmettern, etc.); or, 'he shatters their arrows' (viz., of the enemies, with an *anallage* in the suffix of וְהִצֵּי, instead of וְהִצִּי, comp. Hos. i. 5); or, 'his arrows pierce' (viz., the enemies, the plural of the noun in וְהִצֵּי taken collectively, comp. ver. 9, מְבַרְכֵיךָ בְרוּךְ, and Gen. xxvii. 29; see Gram. § 77.9); or, as has been proposed, 'he shakes his arrows in blood' (*Rishi*, *Gesen.*, *Luzzatto*, and others, after the analogy of Ps. lxxviii. 24, where, however, בָּדָם is added, and where, moreover, הַיָּרֵי is perhaps to be read instead of הַיָּרֵי). The first of these interpretations seems to deserve the preference — 'he causes slaughter by his arrows' (comp. Ps. xviii. 39); but even this, we confess, appears hardly satisfactory, and we cannot help suspecting here, as in ver. 4, a corruption of the text; yet it would be hazardous to propose emendations, as, for instance, to read, instead of וְהִצֵּי, either וְהִצִּי (*Michael.*), explained after the Syriac אֲחַצֵּי and his thighs (*Syr. Vers.*, וְחֲצוֹהֵי, and his back), or וְהִצִּי, and his loins (*Gesen. Thesaur.* p. 783), or וְהִצִּי (Ewald, *Jahrb.* viii. 34, 'und die so ihn zerschellen, wird er zerschellen), or וְהִצִּי (*Knob.*; comp. Deut. xxxiii. 11), none of which conjectures seems to improve the rhythm or the sense. For it cannot be denied that the 8th verse in general is constructed with an irregularity greatly contrasting with the usual symmetry of Balaam's oracles (p. 178); and it is indeed surprising to find here the words 'God brought him forth out of Egypt', he hath the fleetness of the buffalo,' reiterated from xxiii. 22 — a repetition very different in character from another and intelligible one in this chapter (vers. 3, 4, and 15, 16), and here almost devoid of force and significance. It seems to have been inserted by a later reader, who, after the mention of Agag, which clearly points to the time of Saul, considered a statement desirable which should distinctly lead back to the period of Moses. Thus also the greater grammatical correctness of those words in the passage before us may be accounted for (וְהִצִּי for וְהִצֵּי, p. 206).—Onkelos, evidently anxious to soften the harshness of the prediction, renders the verse freely: 'God, who brought them from Egypt, is mighty and high, and through Him shall Israel use the wealth of the nations, enjoy the spoils of their kings, and inherit their lands.'—It has been well observed: 'The image of the lion

has here (ver. 9) not the same meaning as in xxiii. 24. In the previous prophecy, the lion goes out for his prey, and has not yet lain down; in the later speech, appears the triumphant lion after having couched, and in a majesty which no one dares any longer to approach' (*Lange*, *Bibelwerk*, ii. 315). The author describes, in clear gradation, Israel's combats and victories; but while the former extended through all the earlier epochs of their history, the latter were at no time so conspicuous—at least not in the manner here depicted—as in the reign of David.

13. BALAK'S ANGER AND BALAAM'S REPLY. XXIV. 10-14.

10. And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, I called thee to curse my enemies, and behold, thou hast ever blessed *them* these three times. 11. Therefore now, flee thou to thy place; I thought to honour thee indeed, but behold, the Lord has kept thee back from honour. 12. And Balaam said to Balak, Did I not also speak to thy messengers, whom thou hast sent to me, saying, 13. If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go against the command of the Lord, to do *either* good or bad of my *own* mind; *but* what the Lord says, that will I speak? 14. And now, behold, I go to my people; come, I will tell thee, what this people is destined to do to thy people in later days.

The tragical development of the story is approaching its culmination. Rage, vexation, and despair struggle in Balak's heart. Even he is now certain that, after a threefold blessing has been pronounced upon Israel, he

must no longer hope for a curse from Balaam's mouth. But against whom does he direct his wrath? Not against the God of the Hebrews, whose awful power fills his mind, in spite of himself, with a mysterious horror, but against the stubborn prophet, whose conduct he regards with amazement and burning indignation. Agitated by confusion and perplexity, he hardly knows how to act. Anger urges him to take revenge upon the self-willed traitor who so tenaciously and so ardently sides with rapacious invaders; but he is checked not only by fear of the God whom that traitor serves, but by fear of Balaam himself, to whom he had confessed, 'I know that he whom thou . . . cursest is cursed,'^a and whose ire he is, therefore, reluctant to provoke. As if anxious to remove all temptation of violence, the consequences of which he instinctively dreads, he bids Balaam speedily 'escape' to his own home.^b But it is indeed fear alone by which he is actuated, not reverence. Striking his hands together in wild excitement, he dismisses the prophet with a sneering irony against the God whose heavy hand, he feels, is already upon him: 'I thought to honour thee, but behold, the Lord (יהוה) has kept thee back from honour.' Why need he fear a god—what can he expect from a god (he recklessly implies to deaden his agony) who so ill requites his most faithful servants? Distracted by contradictory feelings inexplicable to himself, he can neither reward the seer nor punish him; he can neither acknowledge nor oppose the God of Israel. Once more the name of Jahveh has fallen from his lips, thenceforth for ever to vanish from his horizon. Wonderful indeed may a narrator's art be called, that draws the subtlest psychological shades at once so delicately and so strongly.

But that art is still further manifested in a higher sphere. The most consummate skill is allied with the

^a xxii. 6.

^b Ver. 11, ברה־לך.

greatest depth and power of thought, and while appearing to sketch the infatuated enterprise of a single monarch and his inevitable failure, the author really delineates the great laws and principles that rule the destinies of the world and all nations. For how does Balaam act after the taunting provocation of the resentful king? Does he evince personal irritation or animosity? Does he even show haste or excitement? Immoveable like fate itself, he does nothing more than again declare his dependence on the God of Israel in that emphatic form which he had employed in his answer to the second royal embassy, 'If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go against the command of the Lord, to do either good or bad:'^a but with marked significance he adds that word which is the key-stone of all his actions and of his whole life, '*of my own mind.*'^b Balaam is the very embodiment of the Divine will, and Balak, fighting against Balaam, has fought against God. Therefore, the prophet, in uttering that momentous principle, is, by the Divine spirit which rests upon him,^c impelled to exercise the office of Judge and Avenger. The king had taken no warning from a first and second repulse; he dared again and again to storm heaven and to substitute his own scheme for that of Omnipotence. It is, therefore, not sufficient that he should merely be annoyed and mortified by hearing a blessing invoked upon the people he desires to hear cursed. It is not sufficient that his punishment should be announced to him in obscure allusions and faint outlines. By the eternal plans of Divine justice and government, it has become necessary not only that his ruin should be unmistakeably proclaimed, but that he should fall into the pit he has dug for others. Therefore, Balaam declares, without agitation and without bitterness, that, in obedience to the king's command, he is ready to return

^a Comp. xxii. 18, p. 117.

^b מִלִּבִּי, see *supra*, pp. 7, 8.

^c Ver. 2.

to his home, but that, before departing, it is his duty to reveal to the monarch the councils of God^a—to reveal to him, what 'the people of Israel is destined to do to his people in later days.' The retribution is, indeed, not to be executed upon Balak forthwith, as it was upon the contumacious king of Egypt, who perished together with the flower of his armies, but 'in later days,'^b after more than four centuries; but Balak feels the misfortunes of his descendants as his own. He must consider them so, since they are aggravated and partially caused by his guilt. He is, moreover, the unchanging type of all kings of Moab, both of those that preceded and those that followed him; and there is no glimmer of a hope left, that the latter would, by greater moderation and righteousness, and by pious submission to the God of the Hebrews, deserve and obtain a reversal of the fated decree.

One of the most interesting points in connection with the Book of Balaam, is its history in reference to the powerful influence it exercised upon the later literature of the Hebrews. We have already dwelt on more than one adaptation, but none is more instructive than the echo which the verses under discussion found in the fresh and original mind of the prophet Amos.^c So essentially analogous is the account he furnishes of his own connection with King Jeroboam to that here given of the relations between Balaam and Balak, that the one seems almost to be moulded on the other. Amos is a native of Judah, but prophesies in the kingdom of Israel. Indignant at his oracles, the king bids him flee or 'escape'^d to his own country. Amos quietly complies, but protests that he does not speak his own words, but delivers the inspirations of the Lord; and before he departs, he announces in the strongest terms the king's and his country's downfall. If we consider the altered times and the essential difference in the circumstances and

^a Ver. 14, איעצך. ^b באחרית הימים. ^c Amos vii. 10-17. ^d ברחילך.

surroundings, the resemblance in the two records may well be called remarkable, and serves as an additional proof of the zeal and veneration with which the best and most gifted among the Hebrews studied this masterly composition.

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—The parallels just pointed out would lose much of their interest if the passage in Amos were considered as the original and earlier one (comp. for instance, *Ewald*, Jahrb. viii. 34); but Amos wrote considerably more than two centuries after our author.—‘Smiting (ספק) the hands together,’ is here naturally expressive of anger, impatience, and annoyance—almost as if the king had made a strong effort of self-control to refrain from striking the distasteful prophet; though the same gesture elsewhere conveys derision and mocking exultation (Job xxvii. 23; xxxiv. 37; Nah. iii. 19; Lament. ii. 15).—In repeating the answer previously given to the ambassadors (ver. 13; xxii. 18), Balaam, besides adding the weighty word מִלְּבַי, modifies one term not without some significance, substituting ‘good or evil,’ instead of ‘a small or a great thing’; for, following the Divine suggestions of the moment, he now only, after having delivered the speeches, knew himself that it was evil and not good which he had to pronounce with respect to Balak. The omission of אֱלֹהֵי, which, from the tenour of the verse, can have no importance, is by Rashi explained: ‘Because Balaam knew that נבאשׁ בהקב׳ה ונטרר.’ Some MSS., however, have אֱלֹהֵי (see *De-Rossi*, Var. Lect. in loc.), and the *Vulg.* translates Dei mei.—The apparent abruptness of the words לכה איעצך וכו׳ (ver. 14) produces an excellent effect, the inspiration falling suddenly on Balaam. The verb אִיעָצְךָ, most happily chosen, recalls the עֲצַת יְהוָה, the counsel or decree of God, which it is Balaam’s mission to unfold to the king of Moab (comp. Isai. xiv. 24, 26, הַעֲצָה הַיְעֹצֶהָ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ; xix. 17; Jer. xlix. 20; 1. 45; Rom. xi. 34, etc. *Origen*, In Num. Hom. xviii. 2, ‘consilium divinum, quod in novissimis diebus implendum est, mihi nunc revelatum, aperio tibi et manifesto, ut scias quid populus hic faciet populo tuo;’ *Nachmanides*, אָנִיד לך העצה אשר יען האלהים וכו׳, and similarly

Rashi). It seems less appropriate to translate, 'I will declare to inform thee' (comp. *Joseph Kavo* ap. *Berliner*, *Pletath Sophirim*, וְבִי אֶזְכָּר אֶת הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי); and although אֶעֱצֶנְךָ occurs also in the sense 'I will give thee advice' (*Exod.* xviii. 19; *1 Ki.* i. 12; *Jer.* xxxviii. 15), it is certainly questionable to explain that Balaam intended 'to give counsel and warning to Balak what would befall the Moabites, if they persisted in their enmity against Israel' (*Hengstenb.*, *Bil.*, p. 156); the ruin of the Moabites is irrevocably fixed, as their constant perverseness and future conduct towards the Hebrews is fully anticipated and known. Jewish tradition, entirely disregarding the context, renders, 'I will give thee counsel what thou shouldst do to cause the destruction of Israel' (*Onkel.*, *Rashi*, *Bechai*, and others), which, brought into connection with xxxi. 16, is thus carried out: 'Go, furnish tavern houses, and put therein seductive women to sell food and beverages below their value, and to bring this people together to eat and drink and be intoxicated and commit fornication, that they may deny their God; then in a brief time they will be delivered into thy hand and many of them will fall' (*Targ. Jon.*); or 'Lead this people into sin, for else thou shalt have no power over them' (*Targ. Jer.*; *Talm. Sanhedr.* 105*b.*; see *supra*, p. 25). The Vulgate, perhaps merely by an oversight, strangely renders, 'dabo consilium quid populus tuus populo huic faciat'—the reverse of the Hebrew text.—בְּאַחֲרֵי יָמַי is here *in later* or *future days*, in the time of David; that those words have indeed this meaning also, and do not always signify *the end of days* (*Sept.*, ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν; *Vulg.*, extremo tempore; *Targ. Onk.*, *Jon.*, *Jerus.*, בְּסוֹף יוֹמַי; *Syr.*, *Saad.*, *Luth.*, and others), has been shown before (see *Comin.* on *Genes.* p. 729). The efforts made to prove the contrary opinion (comp., for instance, *Hengstenb.*, *Bil.*, pp. 158–160; *Reinke*, *Beiträge*, iv. pp. 236–238, and others), have been fruitless. Objectionable, therefore, is the surmise of an earlier Jewish commentator, that Balaam encouraged Balak to take heart and shake off all fear of the Israelites, since the fall of Moab would not happen in his time, but only at the end of days; but surprising is the remark of a learned modern critic: 'It is proper that Balaam makes the ominous announcement with

respect to Moab only after having experienced ill-treatment from Moab's king' (*Knob.*, Num., p. 144), which suggestion is by others even intensified into 'a revenge' of Balaam (so *Bunseu* and others), so that, when 'the proud seer' has finished his last speech, in which he proves 'his talent for cursing,' he leaves the king 'in anger and rage' (*Lange*, Bibelwerk, ii. 310)—as if Balaam was ever influenced by personal motives, or as if his individuality was of the least account in his prophecies. These can only be fully understood by rising to the author's own lofty eminence of conception.



14. BALAAM'S PROPHECY ON MOAB. XXIV. 15-17.

15. And he took up his parable, and said,
 So speaketh Balaam, the son of Beor,
 And so speaketh the man of unclosed
 eye;
16. So speaketh he who heareth the words
 of God,
 And knoweth the knowledge of the
 Most High;
 Who seeth the vision of the Almighty,
 Prostrate and with opened eyes:
17. I see him, but not now;
 I behold him, but not near:
 There cometh a star out of Jacob,
 And a sceptre riseth out of Israel,
 And smiteth both sides of Moab,
 And shattereth all the children of
 tumult.

Speaking as before from his own enthusiasm, and without special communion with God, because the Divine spirit is upon him, and beginning his new utterance with

the same stately solemnity as the preceding oracle, in order to impart to it the utmost weight and authority, Balaam advances directly to the goal which he has proposed to himself, and in words, in which force, precision, sublimity, and beauty vie for the palm, announces to the king of Moab the fate which, in future days, awaits his people. Uplifted by the force of an irresistible impulse beyond the ordinary measure of human faculties, the prophet looks into 'the seed of time.' Clear before his eye stands that illustrious ruler who, centuries after him, will rise in Israel like a brilliant star, and smite with his mighty sceptre every province and division of Moab, and annihilate her power for ever. Thus the object of the prophecy seems to be accomplished; for Balaam had simply declared, 'I will tell thee what this people is destined to do to thy people.'^a However, while it was necessary, on the one hand, plainly and specially to state Moab's ruin, although it had before been involved in the comprehensive prediction, 'Israel devoureth nations, his enemies, and crusheth their bones,'^b lest any doubt or refuge be left to the hardened king; it was, on the other hand, indispensable for the general plan of the composition that its scope should not be contracted or curtailed in its conclusion. For the work has a twofold aim: to depict, by the king of Moab's example, heathen blindness with its terrible consequences, and to extol the transcendent greatness and glory of Israel. For the former end it would have been sufficient to announce that 'the sides of Moab shall be smitten'; but for the latter object it was essential not to finish Balaam's prophecies with referring to this small portion of Israel's victories, but to return to the wider and central idea of the whole. Therefore the author pithily adds, that Israel's famous ruler 'shattereth all the children of tumult.' Moab is exterminated and Israel has triumphed over all his fierce and restless foes.

^a Ver. 14, לעמך.

^b Ver. 8.

The heathen king's contumacy is broken and the omnipotence of Israel's God established and recognised. The Gentile prophet, inspired by the God of the Hebrews, and readily obeying His dictates, has faithfully proclaimed His distant decrees. The author has accomplished his great task:—'And Balaam rose and went away, and returned to his place, and Balak also went his way.'^a

How perfectly the deeds of 'Jacob's star,' as here delineated, apply to David is apparent by remembering this king's military successes and his implacable harshness against subdued enemies.^b With regard to Moab, which had indeed been defeated by Saul, but soon resumed a hostile attitude,^c it is expressly recorded, 'And David smote Moab, and measured them with a line, making them lie down on the ground, and two lines he measured to put to death, and the length of one line to keep alive'^d—a kind of proceeding which is said to have been adopted by other ancient and Eastern conquerors also;^e although the Chronicler, solicitous for the fair fame of the theocratic king, suppresses that statement, and embodies in his narrative no more than the final issue: 'And the Moabites became David's servants paying tribute'^f—which consisted, at least partly, of a very heavy impost of sheep.^g And there was hardly any

^a Ver. 25. ^b P. 226.

^c 1 Sam. xiv. 47.

^d 2 Sam. viii. 2.

^e Comp. *Doughtai*, *Annal. Sacr.* i. 195-198; *Rosenmüll.* *Morgenl.* No. 553, etc. On the Monolith Inscription of the Assyrian king Samsarimmon, a contemporary of Jehu, that king, describing his victories over Babylon, boasts, 'Three thousand lives with a measuring line I took' (*Col.* iv., line 31; *Records of the Past*, i. 21).

^f 1 Chr. xviii. 2.

^g 2 Ki. iii. 4; Isa. xvi. 1; comp. Ps. lx. 10; cviii. 10. The first of these passages mentions 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams as the amount demanded: whether these figures are exaggerated (so *Colenso*, *Lectures*, p. 361, and others), we have no means of ascertaining, yet even the most recent travellers in those districts were struck by the vast numbers of flocks and herds grazing in the richest and most extensive pastures (*Palmer*, *Desert of the Exodus*, Vol. ii. ch. 10, and others).

other of his hostile neighbours whom David did not attack and curb. He fought against the Philistines and Ammonites, against the Amalekites and Edomites, against the Syrians in all parts of their wide territory, and everywhere with the same success—'And the Lord gave His help to David whithersoever he went.'^a No other Hebrew king so truly 'shattered all the sons of tumult'; and these great and warlike triumphs could be acknowledged and enjoyed by the Israelites with unmingled pride and gratitude, for they did not lead to haughty despotism and dynastic self-aggrandisement, for 'David executed right and justice to all his people.'^b

Not without reason, therefore, might a contemporary Hebrew, having his people's glory at heart, and thoroughly understanding their character and vocation, feel induced to designate King David with the highest appellations of splendour and magnificence he could conceive, and not merely to praise him as 'the light of Israel,'^c but to describe him as a 'star' (כִּכְלָם) shining with a pure light, like David's renown, over the whole earth for ever in undiminished brightness. But as if to preclude all possibility of misconception, the author hastens to identify that star with a 'sceptre' (לְעֹלָם) which 'smites both sides of Moab,' and strikes down other aggressive adversaries—that is, with a worldly power which, at a definite time, discomfits a definite class of foes, and thus seals Israel's temporal dominion as an invincible kingdom. However old, therefore, the interpretation is which associates the 'star' with a Divine Messiah and Saviour, and however large the number of adherents it has at all times obtained among different creeds, it is, from the spirit of the context, wholly inadmissible. The poet says indeed, 'I see him, *but not now*; I behold him, *but not near*;' yet this does not refer to 'the end of days.' Taking our

^a 2 Sam. viii. 1-14; comp. 1 Chr. xiv. 2, etc.

^b 2 Sam. viii. 15; 1 Chr. xviii. 14.

^c 2 Sam. xxi. 17, כִּכְלָם יִגְרָ.

starting point in the time of Balaam, and reviewing the history of Israel down to the end of David's reign, we survey a long and eventful period—upwards of four centuries of struggles and bloody contentions, of humiliations and victories, of barbarism and germinating enlightenment and civilisation; we survey the epochs of Joshua and the Judges, of Samuel, Saul, and David; and we might well consider the closing years of this great king as 'not near.' The 'star' has no other mission than to deliver the political Israel from their dangerous and vexatious enemies, conspicuous among whom are the Moabites: is such the only mission of the heavenly Messiah? After some fitful successes, the Moabites sank into insignificance, and centuries before the beginning of the current era they had disappeared from history.

But the Messianic interpretation was by no means uniformly accepted even by the Jews, and passed among them through considerable fluctuations.^a It is true that Bar Cochba (בר כוכבא), the brave and hereulean but somewhat rough and savage leader of the determined rebellion of Palestinian Jews against their Roman masters under Hadrian (A.C. 132-135), was, by so remarkable and honoured a teacher as Rabbi Akiva, with reference to our passage, 'A star (כוכב) cometh out of Jacob,' hailed with the words, 'Thou art the King Messiah.' But we know also that other and hardly less famous authorities, as the elder Rabbi Judah, though in these days of overwrought excitement supported by a smaller party, as firmly opposed that chief's recognition as Messiah, and after the fatal failure of the sanguinary enterprise called him, instead of Bar Cochba, 'son of the star,' Bar Cosiva (בר כוזיבא), 'son of falsehood,' which name he exclusively bears in Jewish writings.^b

^a See the various opinions *infra*, Philolog. Rem.

^b *Comp. Talm. Sanhedr. 93b, 97,*

98; *Talm. Jerus. Taan. iv. 7; Midr. Rabb.*, Lament. ii. 2, אל תקרי כוכב, אלה כוזב וכי, etc.

So obvious and natural is the comparison of powerful and far-famed persons with stars, that it is found among the most different nations. A later Hebrew prophet, alluding to the king of Babylon in the zenith of his triumphs, addresses him as the 'Shining star, son of the morning.'^a The Hebrews themselves, the people of God or His heavenly host, rising high above all other nations, are designated 'stars.'^b The wise and the righteous shall shine 'as the brightness of the firmament' and 'as the stars for ever and ever.'^c The pious on earth, so declares the Book of Enoch,^d are in heaven represented by stars, which, called by name, are there examined and judged.

- Evidently in allusion to the passage before us, Christ calls himself 'the bright morning star,' because he is 'the root and offspring of David.'^e Very frequent are Greek proper nouns like *Aster* and *Astræa*.^f One of the Argonauts was '*Asterios*, the son of *Kometes*.'^g Anything prominent or renowned is described in analogous terms. Corinth is 'the star of Greece.'^h Fabius Maximus is by Ovid extolled as 'the star of his race';ⁱ and, similarly, are Cæsar and Augustus distinguished by poets, Alexander the Great, Mithridates, and others by historians.^k In

^a Isa. xiv. 12, הילל בן שחר; comp. ix. 1, 5.

^b Dan. viii. 10; comp. ver. 24; hence the Chaldee translator, in Isa. xiv. 13, renders כוכבי אלה the stars of God, by כוכבי אלהים the people of God.

^c Dan. xii. 3; comp. Book of Enoch, civ. 2; Matt. xiii. 43.

^d xliii. 1-4.

^e Rev. xxii. 16, ἀστὴρ ὁ λαμπρὸς ὁ πρωϊνός; comp. ii. 28; 2 Pet. i. 19.

^f Comp. Esther, ἀστὴρ, Ishtar, Ashtoreth, etc.

^g Ἀστέριος Κομήτου, *Apollod.* I. ix. 16.

^h Ἑλλάδος ἄστρον; comp. *Hom.* Il. vi. 401, Ἐκτοριδῆν ἀγαπητόν,

ἀλίγκιον ἀστέρι καλῶ; *Herod.* v. 63; *Soph.* Elect. 66, etc.

ⁱ Ex Pont. III. iii. 2, O, sidus Fabiae, Maxime, gentis.

^k Comp. *Virg.* Ecl. ix. 47, Ecce Dionæi processit Cæsaris astrum; *Hor.* Od. I. xii. 46, 47, Micat inter omnes Julium sidus velut inter ignes Luna minores; *Plin.* Nat. Hist. ii. 24 or 23, eo sidere significari volgus credidit Cæsaris animam inter deorum immortalium numina receptam, etc.; *Sueton.* Cæsar, c. 88, hac de causa simulacro ejus in vertice additur stella; *Curt.* IX. vi. 8, quis deorum hoc Macedoniae columnen ac sidus diurnum fore polliceri potest, etc.; *Justin.* xxxvii. 2, etc.

one of the oldest and most interesting of the Assyrian Inscriptions, King Tiglath-pileser I. (about B.C. 1150) styles himself not only 'the illustrious chief, who, under the auspices of the Sun God, was armed with the sceptre,' or 'held the sceptre of dominion,' but also 'the bright constellation who, as he desired, has warred against foreign countries . . . and subdued the enemies of Ashur,' and again simply 'the ruling constellation, the powerful, the lover of battle';^a while King Assur-nasir-pal is, on his 'Standard Inscription,' denominated as 'the sun of great splendour.'^b No less explicit are the Egyptian records. King Amenophis IV. assumed the title of 'splendour,' or 'glory of the solar disc' (*Chu-en-aten*); in his Annals, Thotmes III. is addressed, 'They see thy majesty like the star Sesht'; and in the fine hymn to Menephtha, son of Ramses II., that king receives almost all the glorious attributes of Amen or the Sun-god himself, as whose living representative on earth he is revered, and depicted in poetic strains like these: 'Give thy attention to me, thou Sun that risest to enlighten the earth by thy goodness—solar orb of men chasing the darkness from Egypt . . . whose beams penetrate every cavern.'^c

^a Inscript. of Tigl.-pil. I., §§ 3, 21, 43; comp. *Rec. of the Past*, v. 8, 18-23.

^b Comp. *loc. cit.* vii. 12. Frequent allusion is made on the Assyrian monuments both to 'the sceptre the dread of man,' and 'the sceptre of righteousness' or 'justice' (comp. Ps. xlv. 7); and the god Nebo is described as the 'Bearer of the high sceptre' (*ibid.* iii. 43, v. 29, 114, 122, 139, etc.). 'Sceptres for the king's hand' and 'staves' (probably 𐎶𐎵𐎲𐎠, Gen. xlix. 10, etc.) were by Assyrian monarchs demanded as tribute from subjected chiefs; as, according to the Black Obelisk In-

scription, Shalmaneser II. received from Jehu, king of Israel (see the remarks on Assyrian invasions in notes on vers. 23, 24).

^c Comp. *loc. cit.* ii. 33; iv. 98; vi. 101, 102. The hymn, with an inconsistency which discloses its allegorical character, contains the lines: 'Bright is thy eye above the stars of heaven, able to gaze at the solar orb.' See also *Horapoll.* i. 13; ii. 1: 'God in his splendour' (Θεὸς ἔγκοσμος) is expressed by a star, which also depicts *forte* and *five*, the number of the chief planets, 'because God's providence determines victory.'

Most happily and skilfully was Moab chosen by the author as the vehicle of his thoughtful creation. For the Moabites were, in his time and long afterwards, not only known as wealthy and honoured, possessing large and populous towns, to which very numerous ruins, still extant, bear ample witness, flourishing in all agricultural and pastoral pursuits, and singularly valiant and martial; but they were notorious above all as proud and elated, vainglorious and boastful, restless and tumultuous, ever disposed to war and violently contentious.^a Fortune, moreover, had done much to foster their arrogance. They were indeed, shortly before the Hebrew immigration, deprived by the king of the Amorites of those provinces which were soon afterwards conquered by the Israelites; but they seem gradually to have regained a large portion of these districts; and it is certain that they re-occupied them all after the deportation of the east-Jordanic tribes.^b Justly, therefore, might Jeremiah say that 'Moab hath been at ease from his youth' (that is, from the time of his dwelling in that country after the expulsion of the indigenous Emim),^c 'and hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, nor hath he gone into captivity': he was not, like Israel, purified and refined in 'the iron furnace of affliction.'^d Hence the prophet significantly added, 'Therefore his (acrid) taste remained in him, and his (evil) scent is not changed':^e the Moabites clung to all their sinful ways, persisted in their moral depravity and religious blindness, and constantly grew in disdainful haughtiness.^f Represented as able to crush such a

^a Comp. 2 Sam. xxiii. 20; Isa. xvi. 6; Jer. xlvi. 29, 30; Amos ii. 2; Zeph. ii. 10; Ps. lxxiv. 23; see also 2 Ki. iii. 4; Isa. xv. 4, 6, 7; xvi. 1, 8-10, 14; and the allusions in Jer. xlvi. 2, 7, 8, 14, 17, 18, 21, 24, 28, 32, 33, 36, 41.

^b See *supra*, p. 72.

^c Gen. xiv. 5; Deut. ii. 10.

^d Comp. Deut. iv. 20; 1 Ki. viii. 51; Isa. xlvi. 10; Ezek. xxxii. 18, 20, 22.

^e Jer. xlvi. 11.

^f Comp. Zeph. i. 12.

people, the power of Israel's illustrious king is seen in the strongest light; while his justice is no less clearly apparent, because that people, 'having impiously risen against the Lord,' deserved destruction.^a

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—From our general comments it will be obvious that this prophecy on Moab is an essential and organic part of the composition, which, without it, would be weak and incomplete, since it would include no direct and positive announcement of the refractory king's subjection. It is, therefore, entirely unwarrantable to separate these verses from the original conception, and to consider them as a later addition (as is done by *Bertholdt*, *Einleitung*, iii. 792, 793; *Bunsen*, *Bibelwerk*, v. 665-608, and others). All the arguments in favour of the genuineness of the first three oracles, plead with equal force for the genuineness of the fourth; and if the latter was written in David's time, then the preceding speeches belong to the same age and not to the period of Joshua or Hezekiah (see *supra*, p.47).—Balaam addresses this prophecy to Balak (לך איענך ובי), who, as the king of Moab, represents the whole people; he is, therefore, not expressly stated to have *seen* the Moabites, since Balak is with him, and we need not assume that 'he turned from north to south in order to obtain a view of Moab' (*Knob.*); the scope of this remark will become more apparent in our observations on vers. 18-24, when we shall discuss the economy of this last part of the section.—Most poetically the seer refers even in the first two verbs (אראנו and איערנו) to David as the 'star' and the 'sceptre,' as he has that king in his mind from the beginning, although he has not yet mentioned him (comp. Deut. xxxiii. 2; Isai. xli. 27; Ps. lxxxvii. 1, etc.); for the suffixes in those verbs do not apply to Israel (so *Fershuir* and others), whom Balaam, while he spoke, really beheld; nor do they mean indefinitely 'something' (*Saal.* אסר, and

^a Jerem. xlviii. 26, 42 וניצמד
מואב מעם כי על יהוה הנדיל.
We are the more justified in noticing
these parallels from Jeremiah, as the

prophet, in his great oracle on Moab,
borrows also the principal idea of
this utterance of Balaam (Jer. xlviii.
45; see *infra*).

others). The futares אִשְׁרֵנוּ and אִשְׁרֵנוּ have, of course, the signification of the present, as the same words possess clearly in xxiii. 9 (comp. Gram. § 94.6); the future time in this connection is hardly intelligible (so *Sept.*, εἰζῶ; *Aqu.*, ὄψομαι; *Vulg.*, videbo; *Luth.*, ich werde sehen, etc.), though we might expect interpretations like that of Origen (In Num. Hom. xv. 3; xviii. 4), 'ut futurum tempus significet . . . quando omnis Israel ad fidem Christi veniens salvabitur et a montibus et a collibus intuebitur,' etc. The *Sept.* reads moreover אִשְׁרֵנוּ and renders אִשְׁרֵנוּ by μακαρίζω, connecting this word with אִשְׁרֵנוּ in Piel (Gen. xxx. 13; Prov. xxxi. 28, etc.).² It would be an almost interminable task historically to pursue the interpretation of the 'star' (כֹּכַב) in detail; nor can we enter into the arguments by which the Messianic conception of that term has been defended, as they lie, for the most part, in the sphere of dogma and not of critical enquiry. It may suffice to remark that that conception is already found in the Chaldee Targumim and was maintained by many Jewish authorities (the Midrashim, Zohar, Nachman., Rashbam, Bechai, Albo, Arama, Abarban., Isaac b. Abraham, Ralbag, and others), though by no means unanimously (e.g., *Rashi*, זה דור; *Ebn Ezra*, זאת הנבואה על דור; *Mendels.*, and others); that, supported by the expressions in the Revelation of St. John, above referred to, and perhaps even more by the star of the wise men (μάγοι) from the east (in Matth. ii. 1-10, εἶδομεν γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀστέρα ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ), since 'the later magicians' were supposed to be 'of the school of Balaam,' the same view was adopted by the Fathers of the Church (Justin, Irenæus, Origen, Athanas., Euseb. Pamph., Basil., Greg. of Nyssa, Cyrill., Theodoret., Cyprian, Ambros., Jerome, Evagrius, Maxim. Taurin., Gregor., and others; see *Reinke*, Beiträge, iv. 187), although not without contradiction from various sides (comp. *Theodoret.*, Quæst. 44 in Num), and was long upheld in the orthodox Church, both Catholic and Protestant (as by Oleaster, Bönfrerius, Corn. a Lapide, Calmet, Bade, Münster, Fagius, Drusius, Calvin, Cleric., Lilienthal, Warburton, Whiston, Parker, Deyling, J. H. Michaelis, and others; see *Reinke*, l.c.); but that in more recent times, though still pertinaciously insisted upon by some, it has

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generally given way to the historical application to king David. Not a few, however, combine both interpretations, and contend, strangely, that indeed, in the first place, David, or the personified and ideal royalty of his house, is meant, but, in a more extended view, the Messiah also, since 'without the Messiah the monarchy of Israel is like a trunk without a head.' Moab, it is further asserted, is merely a type of all adversaries of the kingdom of God; 'wherever, therefore, and as long as there are enemies of Israel, there and so long there are also Moabites' (so Chrysostom., Augustin., Leonh. Marius, Deyling, Dereser, Allioli, Hengstenb., Reischl, Kurtz, Reinke, Lange, and others). Such dialectic subtleties, however ably and learnedly carried out, can be of little profit, as they vainly attempt to volatilize a poetical and graphic creation into a vague and indefinite symbol. The author carries his survey down to his own time and not farther; in his experience, the Moabites and other enemies of Israel are defeated by David and utterly weakened or annihilated; it cannot concern him that, in later times, most of them regained their strength and their liberty, and even conquered or outlasted the Hebrews. An ingenious Jewish commentator urges that, though all the nations here named have long disappeared, the prophecies concerning them are yet Messianic, as they mention the countries by the names which they bore in Balaam's time without reference to their future occupants (*Abarban.*, in loc.); but the object of these prophecies is not to announce the devastation of countries, but the extinction of nations. Michaelis (in loc.) remarks appositely: 'Take heed not to convert the saviour of the human race, the most universal benefactor, into an evil star, into one who is to smite Moab, if not to destroy all the children of men What is praiseworthy in David . . . is a very unsuitable picture for the Messiah' (comp. also *Dathe*, in loc., 'at enimvero qui possunt hæc nisi perquam coacte ad Messie regnum pacificum et generi humano salutare transferri?') and see especially *Hengstenb.*, *Christologie*, i. 1. pp. 78-83, First Ed., 1829, where the author sets forth and defends, with admirable clearness, the anti-Messianic arguments which he subsequently abandoned, and where he even admits (p. 79) that Balaam

is, in this narrative, 'represented as a true prophet of the true God'—a remarkable instance of earlier and juster impressions obscured by later researches or influences). Curious is the explanation of Maimonides (*De Regib.*, xi. 6), who applies the first half of each of the three members of ver. 17 to David, but the second half to the future Messiah (הַמְּשִׁיחַ הַהַרְרֹן), one of David's descendants; *e.g.*, 'I see him, but not now—that is David; I behold him, but not near—that is the King Messiah'; and in a similar manner he understands the first two parts of ver. 18. It need not be remarked that such a mode of exposition is forbidden even by the common rules of parallelism.—The 'star' cannot denote king Uzziah (so *Fürst*, *Gesch. d. bibl. Liter.*, ii. 230), were it for no other reason than that the Moabites were *not* among the nations subdued by that king (comp. 2 Ki. xv. 1-7; 2 Chr. xxvi. 3-15).—But some, though not supposing this passage to refer to a special Messiah, describe the whole piece as 'Messianic.' This view has been most systematically carried out by Ewald (*Jahrb.*, viii. 1 *sqq.*), who observes: 'If Israel is to be that singular people for whose sake an intended curse is turned into a blessing, they must indeed have something immortal and Divine . . . and this is, in a word, the Messianic hope . . . which is also the soul of this narrative relating to the time of Moses' (i.e., p. 22). But a fixed and almost technical expression ought not to be used so loosely. The 'truth of the immortality of Israel' is not 'Messianic' in the ordinary and accepted sense of the word, and 'a national Messiahship' is almost a contradiction in terms, as the very essence of Messiahship is universality. We can discover in this section no allusion whatever pointing to 'the perfection and ultimate triumph of the true religion' (i.e., pp. 3, 38), as it hardly refers to religion at all. It represents God as Israel's Protector and Guide, not as the Revealer of religious truth. The flourishing and youthful time of David was not an age calculated to foster Messianic expectations. The happy reality was too absorbing to create a longing for an indefinite ideal in a distant future. Morality and piety, political power and social prosperity—these are the notions in which this Book of Balaam moves (comp. also i.e., p. 36; *Gesch. d. Volk. Isr.*

i. 142, where Ewald, on the contrary, observes, that our author 'urges the Messianic idea less strongly'; *Baumgarten*, Pent. ii. 372; *Oehler*, Theolog. d. Alt. Test. i. 119; *H. Schultz*, Alttestam. Theol. i. 472, 473, etc.).

As the verb דָּרַךְ (Arab. دَرَج) means to tread or to walk (Lat. *incessit*), דָּרַךְ כּוֹכַב מִיַּעֲקֹב is 'a star comes out of Jacob'; it would be artificial to connect that verb here with the phrase דָּרַךְ הַצִּיִּים, to shoot off arrows (Ps. lviii. 8; lxiv. 4), or דָּרַךְ קִישָׁת, to bend the bow (Lam. ii. 4, etc.); so *Rashi*, 'the star passes like an arrow'; *Ebu Ezra*, shooting-star; see, on the other hand, *Heidenheim* in loc. — The 'sceptre' (שֵׁבֶט), the symbol of regal power (Gen. xlix. 10; Isai. xiv. 5; Am. i. 8, 8, חוֹמוֹךְ שֵׁבֶט, comp. σακηντοῦχος; Ps. xlv. 7), is, by way of metonymy, the ruler himself (*Sept.*, *Philo*, ἀρχηγός; *Onk.*, מִשִּׁיחָא; *Syr.*, רִישָׁא, prince; *Rashi*, מוֹלֵךְ רֹדֵה וּמוֹשִׁיל, etc.), like the star, which properly cannot 'shatter' (וּמַהֲיֵן) nations. The שֵׁבֶט is here not the shepherd's 'staff,' the king understood as the shepherd of his people (Lev. xxvii. 32; Ps. xxiii. 4, etc.); nor directly 'rod' of castigation (Isai. x. 5; xi. 4; Job ix. 34; comp. Zech. x. 11; Prov. xx. 15; *Vulg.*, virga, and so *Saal.*, and others), but only indirectly ('sceptra priscorum virgæ fuerunt'), since the power which it represents chastises rebellious foes (comp. Ps. ii. 9; see *Comm.* on Gen. pp. 748, 749).—The two words כּוֹכַב and שֵׁבֶט have curiously been taken as one notion, 'sceptra stellata,' which meaning, applied to a Divine ruler, has been supported by the usage of the Egyptians, who expressed their king and lord, Osiris, by the pictures of an eye and a sceptre, the former signifying Providence, the latter, Power (*Plutarch*, De Isid. et Osir., chap. 10; comp. *Deyling*, Observatt., iii. 109).—The prince shall smite פָּאֲתָי מוֹאָב the two sides of Moab, that is, every part of the land, or he shall humble it thoroughly and completely (comp. Neh. ix. 22, וְתַחֲלַקְם לְפָאָה, 'thou hast distributed them in all directions'; but יִרְבְּתֵי, Judg. xix. 1, 18; Isa. xxxvii. 24); yet some, following the analogy of Jer. xlvi. 45, translate, questionably, temples (so *Ewald*, Schläfen, and others see *infra*), or even the hair and beards (comp. Lev. xix. 27; Jer. ix. 25; xxv. 23, etc.), supposed to denote ornament or nobles (*Geddes*, De Geer, and others). But a different reading seems, in early times, to have

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been בַּחֲתִימוֹצָב (from פֶּתַח *governor*, equivalent to the more frequent term פֶּתַח and preserved in the proper noun בַּחֲתִימוֹצָב, Ezra ii. 6; viii. 4; Neh. iii. 11, etc.; comp. 2 Ki. xvii. 21, *kethiv* and *keri*, וִידָה and וִידָה), for the *Sept.* renders ἀρχηγός; *Vulg.*, duces; *Onkel.* and *Jonath.*, נְרִבִּי, princes; *Targ. Jer.* and *Syr.*, גַּבְרֵי וְנַבְרֵי the strong ones; and so also *Luth.*, Fürsten, etc. — נִקְרַר, the Pilpel of נִקַּר *to dig* (kindred to פִּיר, פָּרָה, נָקַר, 2 Ki. xix. 24, whence נִקְוֹר *source*), or *undermine* or *destroy* (comp. Gram. § xlvi. 14), instead of נִקְרַר; the *pathach* in the *second* syllable is not surprising, as the Piel, and hence also the modifications formed after its analogy, as Pilel and Pilpel, have frequently *pathach* instead of *tsere*, and we find, indeed, the form נִקְרַר (Isai. xxii. 5; comp. Gram. § xlv. i. 1); but the *pathach* in the *first* syllable is anomalous. The verb is rendered in the sense just indicated by the *Sept.*, *προνομεύσει* (that is, according to *Hesychius* and *Suidas*, ἀπάξειν, ληΐζειν, or αἰχμαλωτίζειν); *Symm.*, ἐρευνήσει; *Vulg.*, yastabit; *Syr.*, וְנִשְׁעֵבֵר, and he will subdue, and others (comp. *Midr. Rabb.* Gen. lxxiv. 6, מִקְרָרִין כָּל הַלַּיְלָה, although another reading is מִקְרָטַעִים leaping; see also *Buxt.*, Lex. Talm. sub נִקְרָרָה, where נִקְרָרָה דְקִיר *destructio parietis* is quoted from *Zohar* in Gen. col. 483). But in Jer. xlviii. 45, we find, instead of the last part of this verse, the following: וְהֵאֵכַל פָּתַח מוֹצָב וְקִרְקַר, ‘and the fire shall devour the side of Moab, and the crown of the head of the sons of tumult.’ That these words were meant as identical with those of our text, it is impossible to doubt, as Jeremiah, in his long prophecy on Moab, freely incorporates or adapts passages from predecessors; yet they are so divergent from our text, that it is difficult to suppose that Jeremiah, or whoever revised and completed that prophecy, took them from this source: it is likely that different copies of Balaam’s speeches were in circulation, and were followed by different writers or revisers. It would not be easy to decide which is the original reading; but judging by that canon of criticism which attributes the greater probability of genuineness to the more difficult version, we are inclined to give the preference to our text; the introduction of a new verb (וְקִרְקַר) in the last hemistich is more emphatic, and the addition of “כָּל” to ‘the sons of tumult’ enlarges the circle of the

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} compare to Jer.

prophecy in the appropriate and comprehensive manner above pointed out, whereas, without that word, the conclusion also would be limited to Moab alone. Yet the reading וְיִרְקַר, which is also found in the Samaritan Codex, has been adopted by several modern critics (as Vater, Ewald, Lengerke, Knobel, Graf, Oort, and others). In Jeremiah, it will be noticed, the word יָרַח is replaced by יָרַחַם (comp. Isai. xiii. 9; Jer. li. 55); that noun, therefore, which occurs also with the *scriptio plena* יָרַחַם (Lam. iii. 47), is most probably to be referred to the same root יָרַחַם to cause a din, from which יָרַחַם is derived, and means tumult; 'the children of tumult' being tumultuous, seditious, and war-loving nations, like many of those by which the Hebrews were surrounded (compare Amos ii. 2, וַיָּמַת בְּיָסָאֵם כְּנוֹאֵב). To take יָרַח as the proper noun Seth, the son of Adam (Gen. iv. 25), and to understand כָּל בְּנֵי יִת as 'all the children of men' (so *Sept.*, *Sam. Vers.*, *Syr.*, *Targ. Jon.*, *Saad.*, *Luth.*, and others; *Onk.* כָּל בְּנֵי אָנְשָׁא, *Rashi* כָּל הָאוֹמֵת, *Ebn Ezra* כָּל בְּנֵי אָדָם, *Abarban.*, and others), is neither appropriate as regards the words nor the sense; for it is difficult to see why men should be represented as descendants of Seth, and not of Adam or Noah; and then, the mighty king of Israel is surely not expected to kill all mankind: without urging that thus the Hebrews also would be included in the general massacre, it cannot be admitted that, 'according to a fundamental notion of the prophets, all pagans must perish,' because 'they are hostile to God and His truth' (so *Bunsen*, *Bibelwerk*, v. 604, and others); it was, on the contrary, the most cheering hope of the prophets to see the holy community so enlarged as to embrace all nations, and they considered it among their holiest tasks to accelerate the time, when 'the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the water covers the sea' (Isa. xi. 9; see *supra*, pp. 35, 36; comp. also *Meudelss.* in loc.). To lessen the difficulty, *Targ. Jerus.* renders יָרַח by 'all the children of the east' (מְרִינְהָא), and *Onkel.* וְיִרְקַר by 'he will reign' (and so *Arabs Exp.*, *Castell.*, and others), which are untenable expedients. Still less defensible are the very numerous other explanations of בְּנֵי יִת, which perplexity has suggested, and which it would be purposeless to review: for instance, 'children of the drunkard' (*Lot*),

or the Ammonites and Moabites, תַּצִּי derived from תַּצִּי; or 'men of might,' תַּצִּי taken as equivalent to תַּצִּי foundations; or 'all the strong walls,' בָּנִי supposed to be equivalent to בָּנִי, etc. Some propose to read תַּצִּי, identical with תַּצִּי (comp. Job xli. 16), in the sense of *haughtiness* or *presumption* (so Vater, Pentat. iii. 147; Ewald, Gesch. i. 145, and others); but there is, as we have shown, no occasion for abandoning the Masoretic reading.

15. SUPPLEMENTS. XXIV. 18-24.

Nothing can be conceived that seems wanting to the absolute completeness or the fullest comprehensiveness of the composition. After blessings had been pronounced upon Israel in threefold gradation, the prophet proposed to reveal how, in due time, God's chastisement would overwhelm the Moabites on account of their malignant hostility to His chosen people.^a He has not only carried out this object, but, in order to enforce once more Israel's universal power and ascendancy, he has included in his admonition and menace 'all the children of tumult.' What else remained but simply to record that thenceforth the paths of Balaam and Balak were for ever separate—that the one 'returned to his place,' and the other also 'went his way'?^b Here, if anywhere, it was a sacred duty to obey the command, 'You shall not add to it, nor shall you diminish ought from it,' as else the beautiful harmony of the Book was certain to be destroyed. And yet the strict limits which the author had imposed upon himself, might appear to later readers unsatisfactory and even inexplicable. Scarcely less brilliant or less gratifying to the nation than Saul's and David's victories over Moab, were their triumphs and those of their successors over the Edomites;^c and the wars against Moab and Edom,

^a Ver. 14.

^b Ver. 25.

^c See *infra*, on vers. 18, 19.

two neighbouring and kindred tribes, are by Hebrew writers constantly and closely coupled.^a Those, therefore, who, disregarding the art and mastership in the form of the composition, looked upon the Book mainly as a national document, might consider it an unaccountable omission that the annihilation of the powerful Edomites, which was of much greater importance to the Hebrews than that of the Moabites, was not specially proclaimed. They felt, therefore, induced to supply this supposed defect, and added significant words concerning Edom, not as a distinct prophecy, introduced, like the other oracles, by the formula, 'And Balaam took up his parable,' but in direct conjunction with the speech against Moab—strangely forgetful of Balaam's clear announcement to Balak, 'I will tell thee what this people is destined to do to thy people.'^b When thus the unity of the work was once deranged, the way was smoothed for further enlargements. It was considered that the admired and popular work offered a convenient framework for the glorification of Israel as a conquering people in general; and one by one, such predictions were appended as, by the side of oracles on Moab and Edom, and in the mouth of an earlier prophet, appeared suitable or desirable.^c

The total difference between these additions and Balaam's genuine vaticinations ought to be felt and recognised, it might be thought, even by the common instincts of literary taste and judgment. That difference extends alike to the spirit and the language. Where is, in these supplements, that lucid simplicity

^a Comp. 1 Sam. xiv. 47; 2 Sam. viii. 12-14; 1 Chron. xviii. 11; Ps. lx. 10; lxxiii. 7; cviii. 10; Isa. xi. 14; Jer. ix. 26; xxv. 21; Ezek. xxv. 8; Dan. xi. 41. We find them also combined in Sennacherib's Inscription on the 'Taylor Cylinder' (col. ii., lines 53, 54): 'Kammuz (Chemosh)-natbi, king of Moab, and

Airammu, king of Edom;' and in the Inscription of Esarhaddon (col. v., l. 14): 'Kadumukh, king of Edom, and Mitzui, king of Moab;' see also 'Annals of Assur-bani-pal,' col. vii., l. 119-121, Edom, Beth-Ammon, Moab.

^b Ver. 14, לַעֲבֹךְ.

^c See also notes on vers. 20-24.

which is never impaired by profoundness or sublimity? Where is that natural splendour or beauty of imagery, which, in every touch, reveals the genius and the poet? Throughout the four speeches of Balaam there is hardly a single obscurity or real difficulty in the Hebrew expression: obscurity and difficulty abound in these last few verses.^a The former display transparency of plan in the whole and every individual utterance; the latter consist of a disconnected and almost monotonous enumeration of facts scarcely adorned or veiled, and yet so dim and shadowy that they sound like Sibylline mysteries. In the one, we find depth and wealth of the most fruitful ideas; in the others, there is hardly a new idea of moment. From noon-day brightness we pass to indistinct and clouded twilight. And yet even these verses are not without their own interest. Though deficient as efforts of prophecy and poetry, they possess a high value as history. While destroying the picture of Davidic times in its rounded and finished completeness, they expand it to an almost panoramic view comprising eventful centuries; and while they exhibit youth's soaring elevation and aspiring vigour lowered and weakened, they offer in compensation the maturity, though alas! also the bitterness, of manly experience.

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—The numerous and singular attempts that have been made to vindicate an organic connection between these verses and the preceding portions, prove sufficiently the hopelessness of the task. Some contend that Balaam's words, 'I will tell thee, what this people is destined to do to thy people' (ver. 14), are intended *a potiori*, that is, that Balaam indeed restricted his announcement to Moab alone, as the people of the greatest immediate importance, but that he really, at the same time, had other

^a J. D. Michaelis writes: 'I honestly confess, that from the 18th to the 24th verse, the Hebrew text is not only difficult, but seems partly not

to have come down to us in correct transcriptions'—yet there is no reason to doubt the general accuracy of the received readings.

enemies of Israel in his mind. But is it likely that the author should, with a rude hand, destroy a finely drawn plan, which he had carried out from the beginning with such thoughtful care? The king of Moab dares to oppose Israel and their God, and must, therefore, hear the prediction of his ruin; no other people is directly concerned; the conclusion 'and he shattereth all the children of tumult' is not so much meant to depict the annihilation of the heathen world, as to extol the victorious Israelites, and thus once more to condense, in a few emphatic words, a chief idea of the three preceding speeches.—It is, therefore, hardly necessary to refute the vague opinion that the narrative aims at delineating 'Israel's relations to their enemies in general,' or to announce 'the downfall of all the empires of the world,' which theme, it is asserted, the fourth prophecy carries out in detail, and in special applications (*Hengstb., Bil.*, p. 150, etc.). But if so, why are the Ammonites not mentioned? Why not the Philistines and Midianites, nor the powerful Syrians, nor any other people in Canaan or Gilead, with whom the Hebrews exchanged constant and bitter feuds? and why not Egypt? It is, of course, not difficult to put forth specious reasons for all these omissions, but they do violence both to the sense and the words of the text. For who will find acceptable an expedient like this: 'Balaam, standing on the height of Peor, has turned round to the south, in order to cast his eye upon Moab; he then looks farther southward and southwestward, in which posture he does not behold Ammon and Aram, and therefore, delivers about them no prophecies (*Knob.*, Numer. p. 145). It is very questionable whether Balaam must not have seen Ammon from the point and in the position described (see p. 214). But supposing he saw no part of their territory, could he not turn round a little more eastward if he desired or was able to make a prophetic announcement on their future career? And was it indeed indispensable for him to behold those concerning whom he prophesied? This was certainly necessary according to the plan of the main or genuine narrative; but in these additions Balaam speaks of the Cyprians and Assyrians, whom he surely could not see from an eminence in the east of the Jordan—which constitutes an-

other notable divergence (see p. 18; about Amalek, on ver. 20). If even an approximately systematic series of prophecies had been intended, in accordance with the events narrated in the Book of Numbers, it would have been impossible to exclude the Midianites. These were in alliance with the Moabites in their contemplated execration of Israel (xxii. 4, 7), and lived in their immediate vicinity; they were soon afterwards attacked by the Hebrews and routed with fearful slaughter (xxx. 1-20), and for a long time they never ceased, either alone or in conjunction with other enemies, to annoy and to harass the Israelites in Canaan (pp. 85, 86). But why, in spite of all this, are they not introduced? Because, after having been completely overwhelmed by Gideon, the Judge, they had, in David's time, lost all power and importance. This one point alone ought to lead to correct inferences, and it will serve to show the weakness of the assertion that the Ammonites are passed over because, unlike Moab, Edom, or Amalek, they had 'till then' come into no contact whatever with the Hebrews, whether of a friendly or a hostile nature (so *Kcil*, Num. p. 323). But without insisting that the same might be said of the Cyprians and Assyrians, who are yet noticed (vers. 23, 24), what does 'till then' mean? The author takes regard throughout of his own time, not of that of Balaam; and the Ammonites were, like the Moabites, defeated by Saul and David, were by the latter most rigorously treated, and required the continued vigilance of Hebrew kings (1 Sam. xi. 11; xiv. 47; 2 Sam. viii. 12; x. 14; xi. 1; xii. 26-31; xxiv. 2; 2 Chr. xxvii. 5; Ezek. xxv. 2-7, etc.). Or if it is urged, on the other hand, that in these prophecies Balaam 'surveys the time from David to Hezekiah' (*Knobel*, Num. p. 144), it is permitted to ask, why in all the four preceding oracles no allusion is found, however faint or indirect, which leads beyond the time of David? For if Balaam, represented as prophesying in the age of Moses, did not hesitate to describe events reaching to the reign of David, why should he have shrunk from hinting at subsequent facts, if they lay within the circle of his knowledge or experience? How little, therefore, is gained by the remark: 'As the historical events which unroll themselves before the prophet's spirit become more

distant in time, they become also less determinate in outline! Is there for the prophet who portrays scenes occurring four centuries after his age, a distinction between near and distant? Must not all future be to him like the present? But, in reality, Balaam, that is the author of the first four oracles, is not the same as the author, or any of the authors, of these additions; the former lived in David's time, but the additions reach at least down to the age of Hezekiah. The following finely conceived theory has been proposed. The speech on Edom, observes Ewald (Jahrb. viii. 37), turned out so brief because Balaam felt already exhaustion coming upon him; 'but for this very reason he collected himself again and again after a few moments of rest, as if impelled by the spirit finally still to say all that without which the circle of his prophecies would not be truly complete.' But was that exhaustion felt by the author also? To attribute it here to Balaam, would not be art, but playfulness. The nations forming the subjects of the last oracles, were partly, like Edom and Amalek, much more dangerous enemies to Israel than Moab; the *same* author would not so palpably have missed the just proportions in the various predictions. The perplexity created by assuming one writer indiscriminately, is well exemplified by the same great critic, who, on the one hand, praises the skill and art of this composition in the highest terms of admiration, but, on the other hand, declares, with surprising self-contradiction, the author's style to be deficient in 'quiet beauty and harmony,' supporting his assertion by the verses under discussion, which he calls 'abrupt and quite ghostlike' (abgerissen und ganz geisterhaft; compare Ewald, Geschichte, i. 143, and Jahrbücher, viii. 1 *sqq.*, *passim*).

16. PROPHECY ON EDM. XXIV. 18, 19.

18. And Edom is *his* possession,
 And *his* possession is Seir, his enemies,
 And Israel acquireth might.
19. And *he that cometh* out of Jacob ruleth,

And destroyeth the remnant from the
cities.

It would be unnecessary here to dwell on the history of the Edomites in their relations to the Hebrews, as it has been sketched in another place with some fulness.^a For the illustration of the words before us, it suffices to remind the reader that the Edomites, after having been vanquished by Saul, and still more decisively crushed by David, who made them tributary, liberated themselves completely in the reign of Jehoram, king of Judah (B.C. 890), since the advantages obtained against them by some later Hebrew kings, as Amaziah (B.C. 838) and Uzziah (B.C. 809), were so far from important or permanent, that, in the time of king Ahaz (B.C. 741) they were able to make a successful invasion into Judea.^b Before the reign of Jehoram, therefore, these verses must have been added, possibly as early as the life-time of David or soon afterwards. They recall the subjugation of the Edomites and the dominion of Israel, the indelible enmity of the two nations and the merciless severity of the Hebrew victors. Not only did David slay, in the Salt-valley, 18,000 Edomites, and placed Hebrew garrisons in all parts of their territory, but, by his direction, Joab remained for six months as commander in those districts with his whole army, and slaughtered and devastated 'till he had cut off every male in Edom.'^c To these occurrences especially may apply the words of this prophecy: 'And he that cometh out of Jacob ruleth, and destroyeth the remnant from the cities.'

It appears that the Hebrews harboured so strong a feeling of kinship, that they were reluctant to estrange themselves from the Edomites in spite of the most

^a Comp. Comm. on Gen. pp. 486-489.

^b Comp. 2 Ki. viii. 20-22; xiv. 7, 22; 2 Chron. xxviii. 17.

^c 2 Sam. viii. 14 (וַיִּשֶׁם בְּאֶדְוֹם); 1 Ki. xi. 15, 16; 1 Chron. xviii. 12, 13; Ps. lx. 2, 10; cviii. 10.

aggravating provocations. Leniency and humanity were indeed deplorably violated both on the one side and the other. The prophet Amos complains bitterly that Edom 'pursued his brother — the Hebrews — with the sword, and cast off all pity, and his anger raged perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever.'^a And on the other hand, the Chronicler records that, after the Hebrews under King Amaziah (B.C. 838–811) had killed ten thousand Edomites in battle, 'they carried away other ten thousand captive, and brought them to the top of a rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock that they all were dashed in pieces.'^b And yet, Hebrew tradition painted Esau's character, if not favourably, at least not invidiously. It represented him as the perfect man of nature, recklessly indifferent indeed to the higher boons and privileges of religion and truth and swayed by violent passion, but generous and forgiving, brave and confiding, and even capable of deep attachment. And when, in the seventh century, under King Josiah, the early history of the people was written or compiled, Edom's old and persistent hostility against Israel could, naturally, not be concealed *in the facts*. 'We turned . . . and compassed Mount Seir many days,' observes the author, because the Edomites refused the Hebrews a passage through their country. But even on that occasion the historian alludes to them in terms of friendship and affection. By God's command Moses tells the Israelites, 'You are to pass through the land of your brethren (אֶדְוִיכֶם), the children of Esau . . . take good heed, do not strive against them . . . because I have given Mount Seir to Esau for a possession'; and then the account concludes, 'So we passed by our brethren the children of Esau, who dwelt in Seir.'^c Even in the *legislation* the rigorous principles ordinarily applied with respect to foreign nations were relaxed in their favour,

^a Amos i. 11.

^b 2 Chron. xxv. 11, 12; comp. 2 Ki. xiv. 7.

^c Deut. ii. 1–8.

because they were hardly regarded as strangers: 'Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother, . . . the children that are born of them shall enter into the congregation of the Lord in their third generation';^a that is, after three generations the Edomites were allowed to intermarry with the Israelites and were admitted to all the prerogatives of the holy community.

But this sympathy found among the Edomites no echo or response. They saw in the Hebrews only their former masters, against whom they had been compelled, for centuries, to make the strongest efforts to assert and to maintain their independence. Both nations had no higher interests of faith or intellectual pursuit in common. When, therefore, not long after Josiah, ruin overtook Judah, when their capital was destroyed by the Babylonians, and king and people were carried away into captivity, the unbridled fierceness of the Edomites broke forth without restraint; in wild exultation they fired the ravaging Chaldean: 'Destroy, destroy, to the very foundation'; they seemed to bear their own affliction more willingly when they saw the cruel sufferings of the Israelites; and from this time of ungenerous and ignoble vindictiveness, a hatred against the Edomites took root so bitter and implacable, that the Hebrews thenceforth designated their most detested foes, like the Romans in a later age, as Edomites. From this period the Hebrew writings abound in indignant invectives, and even virulent outbursts of rage, against the unbrotherly people. Jeremiah and Obadiah, Ezekiel and the second Isaiah, and later Psalmists, vie with each other in portraying Edom's ignominy and debasement, devastation and slavery, as a punishment of their taunting mockery and shameless defiance—'because they had a perpetual hatred and shed the blood of the children of Israel by the sword in the

^a Deut. xxiii. 8, 9; comp. *Mishn. Yevam.* viii. 2, 3.

time of their calamity.’^a Therefore, the later narrative in the Book of Numbers does not state, like Deuteronomy, ‘The Edomites shall be afraid of you, take ye therefore good heed to yourselves’;^b but it represents the Edomites as haughtily saying to the Hebrews, ‘Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword’;^c and it designedly expresses the entreaty of the Israelites for permission of a free passage in words the most pathetic and most insinuatingly suppliant, in order to make the conclusion stand out in harsher contrast: ‘And Edom answered, Thou shalt not go through; and he came out against the Hebrews with a mighty army and with a strong hand.’^d But even in these later times, when the Edomites, by no means politically extinct or dispossessed of their land, but, on the contrary, successful in enlarging it, continued to foster their ineradicable spirit of turbulence and revengefulness, the Hebrews might still, with a peculiar satisfaction, point not only to the vaticinations attributed to the patriarch Isaac,^e but especially to this prophecy ascribed to an old and famous seer: ‘And Edom is his possession, and his possession is Seir, his enemies.’ This hope seemed at last to be completely realised, when John Hyrcanus (B.C. 129) subjected the Edomites and forced them to submit to circumcision and to adopt all other Jewish rites and laws, although a century after this time, thoughtful men might have been roused to serious reflections, when they saw the Idumæan Herod acquire the sovereign rule over the Jewish commonwealth, and when they beheld the Idumæan districts still untouched and flourishing, and not, as they read in their sacred predictions, ‘a desolation . . . like the over-

^a Ezek. xxxv. 5; comp. Jer. xlix 7-22; Lam. iv. 21, 22; Obad. 1-21; Ezek. xxv. 12-14; xxxv. 2-15; Isa. xxxiv. 5, *sqq.*; lxiii. 1-6; Psalm cxxxvii. 7; Mal. i. 3, 4.

^b Deut. ii. 4.

^c Num. xx. 18.

^d Ibid. ver. 20.

^e Gen. xxvii. 29, 40, הנה גביר, ואת-אחיו תעברך, and לאחיו.

throw of Sodom and Gomorrah . . . in which no man shall abide and no son of man shall dwell.’^a

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS. — None of the attempts which have been made to prove the agreement between the two accounts on the Edomites (in Deut. ii. and Num. xx.) has been successful (comp. *Hengstenb.*, Auth. d. Pent., ii. 283–288; *Wiener*, Real-Wört. i. 293; *De Wette*, Kritik, i. 359, 360, etc). — From the explanation above proposed, it cannot be surprising that the speech on Edom is not given as a distinct oracle premised by וַיִּיטֵא מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. But it may be observed that this phrase occurs in the whole section *seven* times, and it is possible that the desire of establishing this holy number of prophecies may not have been without influence in determining the additions, though it cannot have prompted the amalgamation of the oracle on Edom with that on Moab, because that oracle was probably the earliest supplement, made at a time when the composition comprised no more than the four original prophecies. In no case is the remark justified that ‘the arrangement and number of predictions imperatively require the whole of them to be attributed to one and the same period’ (*Hengstenb.*, Eil., p. 273); the symbolical significance of the numbers was but gradually developed, and an adaptation of earlier writings to subsequent notions entertained of the holiness of certain numbers is quite conceivable. On the application of the number *three* in the interpolated incident on the road (xxii. 22–35) see pp. 147, 148; on the number *seven* in the preliminaries to the oracles, p. 165.—It is hardly necessary here to enter into the relation between these verses and the Jahvistic blessing of Isaac (Gen. xxvii. 29, 40): as the former must be placed *before* King Jehoram of Judah, so the latter, on account of the allusion it contains to Edom’s liberation (ver. 40), *after* that king; and as both are identical in the chief idea that he who blesses Israel is himself blessed, so they relate to the same chief enemy of Israel; for in the Jahvist’s time these verses on Edom had long been

^a Jer. xlix. 17, 18; Mal. i. 2, 3; | 17; xii. 32, *sqq.*; *Jos. Ant.* XIII.
comp. 1 Macc. v. 65; 2 Macc. x. 15– | ix. 1; XV. vii. 9; etc.

incorporated with the Book of Balaam.—To יְרִשָּׁה, *possession* (equivalent to יְרִשָּׁה, Deut. ii. 5, 9, 19; Josh. xii. 6, 7; *Sept.*, κληρονομία), we must supply *his*, viz., Israel's, or of Israel's victorious king (ver. 17), as can hardly be doubtful from the context; and to the same proper noun refers the suffix in אֲרָבִי; while this substantive is in apposition to אֲרָבִים and יְעִיר, analogous to, but by no means so clear and appropriate as, גְּנִימֵי צָרִי in ver. 8; the sense being, that Edom and Seir, Israel's adversaries, shall become his possession (*Vulg.*, distinctly the first part, 'et erit Idumæa possessio ejus'; *Sept.*, the second part, καὶ ἔσται κληρονομία Ἡσαῦ ὁ ἐχθρὸς αὐτοῦ). The construction is even less simple if the suffix in אֲרָבִי is applied to Seir, 'a possession is Seir of his enemies' (*Vulg.*, hæreditas Seir cedet inimicis suis; *Luth.*, Seir wird seinen Feinden unterworfen sein; *Eng. Vers.*, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; *Rosenm.*, *Verschuir*, and others; but *Vater*, questionably, 'Seir, seiner Feinde Land'; *Maur.*, Seir hostium suorum, i.e., Seir terra hostium, etc.). By taking אֲרָבִים and יְעִיר not as synonymous, like יַעֲקֹב and יִשְׂרָאֵל, but in a somewhat different sense, we avoid a languid repetition in the first two parts of the verse; for those terms may either be understood as Edomites and Horites (so also *Knob.* and others; comp. Gen. xxxvi. 9, 20, 'Esau, the father of the Edomites—אֲרָבִים—in mount Seir,' and 'The sons of יְעִיר the Horite, הַחֹרִי'; see *Comm.* on Gen. pp. 352, 598); or, though less suitably, as the people and the country (so *Hengstenb.*, *De Wette*, and others; comp. Gen. xxxii. 4).—As 'Edom' and 'Israel' are in juxtaposition, so are וְהָיָה יְרִשָּׁה and עֵשָׂה חֵיל; and as יְרִשָּׁה includes also the notion of 'dispossession' or 'expulsion' (comp. יָרַשׁ in this sense in Deut. ii. 12; ix. 1, etc.), עֵשָׂה חֵיל must here denote an increase in property or power, as that phrase frequently involves (Deut. viii. 17, 18; Ruth iv. 11; Prov. xxxi. 29, etc.)—'and Israel acquireth might'; yet חֵיל should not be restricted to 'wealth' alone (*Targ. Onkel.* and *Jonath.*, צִלָּה בְּנִכְסִים, etc.). Other translations, though not taking full account of the parallelism, imply a kindred sense (*Sept.*, καὶ Ἰσραὴλ ἐποίησεν ἐν ἰσχύϊ; comp. 1 Sam. xiv. 48; Ps. lx. 14; cviii. 14, etc.; and so *Vulg.*, *Eng. Vers.*, *Vat.*, *Gezen.*, *Knob.*, and others; or *Luth.*, Israel wird

Sieg haben; *Herder, Ewald*, and others). — The subject to יִרְדֵּי (ver. 19) is indeed indefinite, ‘and one’ or ‘he that cometh out of Jacob shall rule’ (comp. Mic. v. 1, כִּיכָר לִי יֵצֵא); but if we consider that the prophecy on Edom is designedly joined to that on Moab as closely as it could be joined, this ruler can be no other than the ‘star’ or the ‘sceptre’ that humbles Moab also (ver. 17), that is David, to whom alone the following words likewise apply, וְהֶאֱבִיר יִרְדֵּי כַעֲרֵי. It is inappropriate to understand ‘the whole race of Hebrew kings’ (*Hengstenb.*, Bil., p. 187; *Reinke*, Beiträge, iv. 202, and others), as the individual conception should be adhered to as far as possible. Some consider indeed that in the first part of ver. 19 David is meant, but in the second part Joab, with respect to the passage, 1 Ki. xi. 15, above quoted (so *Ebn Ezra*), upon which others have improved by the still more untenable expedient of taking כַּעֲרֵי as *avenjer* (*Michael*, *Mendels.*, and others, ‘one who rouses or stirs up’; comp. Isai. xiii. 17). — יִרְדֵּי, the fut. Kal of יָרַד, to be master or to rule (Gram. § lxxvii. 15. b., not of יָרַד, to descend, as *Onk.*, וַיִּיחֹת; *Syr.*, וּנְחֹת; *Sam. Vers.*, וַיִּנְעַת; *Sept.*, ἐξεγερθήσεται), is used as an intransitive verb (as in 1 Ki. v. 4; Ps. lxxii. 8); it is, therefore, unnecessary to read יִרְדֵּי יַעֲקֹב or יִרְדֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל (Isai. xli. 2; so *Gaub*, *Vater*, *Knob.*, and others), even if the plural of the suffix admitted the conjecture. As יִרְדֵּי, abandoning its strictly etymological meaning of ‘one who has escaped’ (comp. יִרְדֵּי, Josh. x. 20; Arab., شرد, like פָּרִיט), has almost uniformly the sense of ‘remainder’ or ‘remnant’ (Num. xxi. 35; Deut. iii. 3; Judg. v. 13; Job xx. 21; comp., especially, Josh. x. 20, וְהִשְׁרִידִים שָׂרָדוּ), it seems preferable to connect כַּעֲרֵי with יִרְדֵּי; thus the word was construed by the Masorites, who furnished יִרְדֵּי with a distinctive accent; and וְהֶאֱבִיר כַּעֲרֵי (with כֶּן) is ‘to destroy away from’ or ‘out of the city’ (Gram. § 105.4; not as the *Vulg.*, et perdat reliquias civitatis; the *Sept.*, indistinctly, καὶ ἀπολείσσωζόμενον ἐκ πόλεως, etc.), or rather ‘out of the cities,’ since יַעֲרֵי is here used in a collective sense (comp. Job xxiv. 12) — all or the principal cities of Edom which David captured and the population of which he *partially* destroyed; for the words וְהֶאֱבִיר יִרְדֵּי כַּעֲרֵי must, it is hoped, be understood as a poetical hyperbole. The translation ‘Out of Jacob ruleth *Jehovah* and

destroyeth those that remain out of the town of *Zion*' (so *Ewald* and others, with doubtful reference to Ps. cx. 2), presupposes a corruption of the text for which there is no proof or trace; it yields, moreover, the artificial sense that 'God completes the subjection of all nations from *Zion* as His abode,' and is at variance with the context, as then the verse could hardly apply to Edom alone. Such an extension of its meaning has indeed been asserted by the defenders of that interpretation: 'the prophetic view stretches out into the distant future—far beyond David; his aspirations become in a wide sense *Messianic*; they long for and foretell a glorious time of conquest, of which David was but the prelude.' To this opinion apply all the difficulties and objections above pointed out with respect to a *Messianic* acceptance of these verses in any sense. The 19th verse was at least not so explained by the prophet *Obadiah*, who refers it literally to the Edomites, and reproduces some words very distinctly (vers. 17–19, וְלֹא יִהְיֶה שָׂרִיר לְבֵית עֲשָׂו וְכוּ'; comp. Am. ix. 12). Nor do these sentences in general seem to have been understood as *Messianic* by the ancient Hebrew writer or writers who appended the following predictions; for, if so, they would have made the additions superfluous, as they would have included the subjugation or destruction of the Amalekites and all other heathen nations. Similarly some Jewish interpreters (as *Ebn Ezra* and others) inferred from the very place which this prophecy occupies that it cannot foreshadow the Messiah, who is expected 'at the end of days,' and would, therefore, have been introduced at the conclusion, after the announcement of Asshur's annihilation. Yet other Jewish authorities uphold the *Messianic* conception: 'the principal empire of Edom,' says *Rashi*, 'is Rome, and these words refer to the king Messiah'; and a modern critic goes so far to contend that 'Edom is the immediate end and object of the whole piece' (*Ewald*, *Gesch.*, i. 148; *Jahrb.* viii. 36); whereas we have shown that, in the author's original plan, Edom is not even specially comprised (p. 263).—It is impossible to associate these verses with Amaziah's expedition against Edom above alluded to (2 Ki. xiv. 7; 2 Chr. xxv. 11, 12), because that war was waged in the open field and not in

towns, and because, in Amaziah's time, Israel's *rule* over Edom had long ceased, although desultory successes were occasionally achieved.

17. PROPHECY ON THE AMALEKITES. XXIV. 20.

20. And he saw Amalek, and he took up his parable and said,

Amalek is the first of the nations,
But his end is for destruction.

Long and changeful had been the warfare carried on by the Hebrews against the Amalekites. It began when the children of Israel had hardly left Egypt,^a was renewed when they had reached the southern border of Canaan,^b and continued, with varying fortunes, in the period of the Judges and Kings.^c At length, in the reign or age of Hezekiah, a band of Simeonites annihilated the last remnants of the Amalekites in their strongholds of Mount Seir.^d At that time, the prophecy we read in this verse might have been added: 'Amalek is the first of nations, but his end is for destruction.' Such a supplement must have seemed particularly desirable for more than one reason. First, it might appear that, as Agag had before been incidentally mentioned,^e his humiliation and fate ought to be proclaimed with all possible distinctness and emphasis. A similar announcement, moreover, forced itself upon the Hebrews almost spontaneously. For though, according to the Biblical records, the Amalekites were a branch of the Edomites,^f the Hebrews regarded them by no means with the same fraternal feelings, but, on the contrary, conceived against them a hatred so

^a Exod. xvii.

^b Num. xiv. 25, 40-45.

^c Judg. iii. 13; vi. 3, 33; vii. 12, x. 12; see Commentary on Exodus, pp. 309, 310.

^d 1 Chron. iv. 42, 43.

^e Ver. 7.

^f Gen. xxxvi. 12, 16; comp. 1 Chr. i. 36; the sons of Esau, Eliphaz . . . , the sons of Eliphaz . . . Amalek.

intense and inextinguishable, that it can only be compared to the fierce enmity of later Jews against the Samaritans. The older account, given in Exodus, of the first conflict with the Amalekites, after stating God's resolve, 'I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven,' concludes with the sentence which sounds like a real battle-cry in a holy campaign, 'War of the Lord against Amalek from generation to generation.'^a For centuries, this was the spirit in which both nations met. Nothing is so much calculated to convey an idea of the untamed ferocity of those times, which the mellowing rays of a true civilisation had hardly reached beyond the surface, as the ruthless command given by the great and highly cultivated leader Samuel to the king he had anointed in the name of Jahveh, 'Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.'^b For when Saul, having marched out with a prodigious army of two hundred and ten thousand men,^c believed, in the joy and pride of his heart, he was announcing to his prophetic guide the successful execution of the command in telling him that 'he had taken Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and had utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword ;'^d it became clear what Samuel had meant by the injunction 'thou shalt utterly destroy them' (וההרמתם). The total reduction and submission of the Amalekites did not suffice. They and their memory were to be effaced without leaving a vestige. As long as the faintest trace remained which recalled their unhallowed existence, heaven and earth seemed outraged and defiled. The very

^a Exodus xvii. 13-15, מלחמה ליהוה בעמלק מדר דר

^b 1 Sam. xv. 3, וההרמתם וכ; comp. ver. 18; xxviii. 18; also the brief statement in xiv. 18.

^c xv. 4; comp. on this verse and figure *Nöldeke*, Ueber die Amalekiter und einige andere Nachbarvölker der Israeliten, p. 14.

^d xv. 8; comp. ver. 20.

cattle that belonged to them was an abomination, and detested by God as sacrifices. For such an object, their king Agag alone was deemed acceptable, and so 'Sammuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.'^a

It might be supposed that this was enough of wrath and fierce persecution; but new wars and marauding expeditions followed, which were repulsed by David with a strong hand;^b and under later kings also, as Amaziah, Amalek eagerly made common cause with Edom and other adversaries of Israel.^c But not even their all but absolute extermination by Hezekiah could appease the burning animosity of the Hebrews. When, a century later, the Deuteronomist fixed Israel's relations to the surrounding tribes, he did not fail to enjoin upon his countrymen, 'Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.'^d This feeling was, in subsequent times, most zealously fostered; it received new nourishment when the popular belief stamped Haman, 'the Agagite,' the arch-enemy of the Jews, as an Amalekite;^e and it was carefully cherished by the Synagogue, which takes Amalek, like Edom, as the perpetual type of all wicked and malignant foes of Israel; although, in this respect also, a milder spirit has long since arisen, which considers it the noblest form of the festive joy of Purim, to efface all distinction between 'Blessed be Mordecai' and 'Cursed be Haman.'

If we enquire after the causes of such deep and persistent aversion, the Hebrew documents declare that it originated in the base and reckless conduct of the Amalekites at the time when the Hebrews had but just escaped from an oppressive servitude and a perilous flight; not waiting till the embarrassed hosts arrived in

^a Ver. 33; see Comm. on Lev. i., p. 414; compare 1 Sam. xxviii. 18, וְלֹא עֵשִׂיתָ חֶרֶן אִפְּו בְּעַמְלֵק.

^b 1 Sam. xxvii. 8; xxx. 1-20; 2 Sam. viii. 12; 1 Chron. xviii. 11.

^c 2 Ki. xiv. 7; comp. Ps. lxxxiii. 8; *Jos. Antiq.* IX. ix. 1, 2.

^d Deut. xxv. 19.

^e Esth. iii. 1, 10; vii. 6; viii. 5; ix. 24.

their districts, the Amalekites marched out and met them at Rephidim, not far from the northern ridges of Mount Sinai, attacked and 'smote their rear, all the feeble behind them, when they were faint and weary;' and thus acted as 'sinners' who 'do not fear God,' nay, as 'enemies of the Lord.'^a If we recollect that the Hebrews thus saw their young liberty and new power menaced in the bud, and, instead of marching northward direct into Canaan, were compelled to long and weary wanderings round Mount Seir into the east-Jordanic country, we shall at least understand that vehement antipathy which outlasted the political existence both of the Hebrews and the Amalekites; although it cannot be fully estimated without, besides, taking into account their constant and violent collisions. For the Amalekites seem indeed to have been ubiquitous. We find them at the southern frontiers of Canaan, spreading almost to the coast of the Philistines and the approaches of Egypt; we meet them in Arabia Petraea and the rugged fastnesses of Mount Seir; we see them scattered throughout the peninsula of Sinai, and yet also in the tracts of Ephraim, where even a mountain chain bore the name of 'Mountain of the Amalekites.'^b And wherever they dwelt or roamed, they fanned the old flame of hostility by pillage, bloodshed, and every barbarous provocation.

Now the full import of this verse may be intelligible: 'And he saw Amalek;' even from the summit of Peor, by the plains of Moab, branches of that far-extending tribe might be beheld, or might be supposed to be visible. 'Amalek is the first of nations,' Balaam said—first in power and first in wantonly displaying this might against the distressed Hebrews; 'but his end is for destruction'—so literally and so emphatically to utter destruction, that he became a type and an emblem of national extinction.

^a אַמְלֵכֵי יְהוָה; comp. Exod. xvii. 8-15; Deut. xxv. 18; 1 Sam. xv. 2, 18; xxx. 26.

^b Judg. v. 14; xii. 15; comp. Num. xiii. 29; 1 Sam. xv. 7; xxvii. 8; xxx. 1.

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—The author of this verse evidently meant that the prophet saw the Amalekites really, and not merely ‘in his mind’s eye’; the addition was framed so as to harmonise with the plan of the entire composition, and the words *וירא את עמלק* correspond to *וירא את ישראל* (ver. 2). It may be difficult to prove that a division of the Amalekites actually resided in a district that could be surveyed from the height of Peor; but such a settlement, at some time at least, is not impossible on the part of a tribe so ramified and so roving; and this ideal possibility the author might plead as a sufficient justification. For he desired to describe the Amalekites as *ראשית גוים*, that is, as the head or chief and most powerful of nations; one of the principal attributes of such a people is wide extent of territory; and that impression of almost unlimited abodes is produced upon the reader by the supposition that the prophet ‘saw Amalek’ from Peor.—In a sense similar to this passage, *ראשית גוים* is employed in Am. vi. 1, where the Israelites are so characterised, and whence the phrase may have been borrowed (*Sept.*, ἀρχὴ ἔθρων; *Vulg.*, principium gentium, etc.; comp. Am. vi. 6, where the chief or choicest ointments are called *ראשית שמנים*; 1 Sam. xv. 21, etc.). Israel’s king has before been described as mightier than the king of the Amalekites (ver. 7); this statement is exhibited in all its force and significance by intimating that the Amalekites were the most powerful and most important of all heathen nations. It is true that Arabic writers designate the Amalekites as a very *old* people of true Arabs, older not only than the Ishmaelites, but even than the Joktanites, and forming the primitive population not only of Shemitic but of many other countries (comp. *D’Herbelot*, *Bibl. Orient.*, p. 110, etc.). But this was not the opinion of Biblical historians, who, as we have above observed, regarded Amalek as a grandson of Esau from a subordinate wife (Gen. xxxvi. 12, 16); and the almost absurdly fabulous, confused, and fictitious character of all Arabic accounts of the Amalekites, has been satisfactorily proved (comp. *Nöldke*, *Ueber die Amalekiter*, etc., pp. 29–42). The mention of the district of *ישרה העמלקי*, in the time of Abraham (Gen. xiv. 7), is easily explained, by historical anticipation, as a country inhabited

by Amalekites in the author's time (see Comm. on Genes. pp. 355, 597). The translation 'the oldest of nations is Amalek,' seems, therefore, less appropriate (so *Sam. Vers.*, קרמאות נועיה and many others); it is, at least, not required by the antithesis, evidently meant as pointed, of ראשית and אחריתו, which is sufficiently distinct in the other acceptation also.—גוים is not *heathen* or *hostile* nations, so that the first words of the prophecy would denote the *enmity* which the idolatrous Amalekites were the *first* to evince against Israel (so *Onk.*, ריש קרבני דישראל; *Jon., Jerus., Rashi*, כלם להלחם בישראל, and others), but, as usual, nations in general (comp. ver. 8, where גוים is qualified by צריו; and xxiii. 9, where בגוים is 'among the *other* nations').—'His end is ערי אבר,' that is, literally, 'as far as those who perish,' אבר being taken collectively (comp. Job xxix. 13; xxxi. 19; Prov. xxxi. 6), or 'his end will reach destruction,' the concrete, by way of metonymy, used for the abstract noun, or simply 'his end is destruction.' With respect to the Amalekites, Samuel commanded Saul: 'thou shalt fight against them עד-פלותם אוקם, till they are destroyed' (1 Sam. xv. 18), and the preposition עד is similarly employed in other passages (comp. 1 Chr. iv. 27; Hag. ii. 19; Job xxv. 5; Ps. xc. 3, etc.). It is, therefore, unnecessary to read ער יאבר (so *Sam. Cod. and Vers., Syr., Michael.*, and others, and a few MSS.), and to understand this, as the Syriac Version does, 'his posterity will perish for ever' (חרתה תאברי לעלמי), which would require תאבר in the Hebrew text; and similarly *Sept.*, καὶ τὸ σπέσμα αὐτοῦ ἀπολεῖται, and others; see *supra*, p. 183; but *Onkel.*, 'in his end he will perish *for ever*' לעלמא, and similarly *Mendelss.* and others).

18. PROPHECY ON THE KENITES. XXIV. 21, 22.

21. And he saw the Kenite, and he took up his parable and said,

Strong *is* thy dwelling place,
And build thou thy nest in the rock:

22. Yet for destruction is Kain—
Until Asshur carrieth thee away captive.

In their relations to the Hebrews, the Kenites formed the most striking contrast to the Amalekites. From the beginning of their history down to its close, as far as it has been preserved to us, those relations were marked by the sincerest friendship and goodwill; and no less strong and indelible than the hatred entertained by the Israelites against Amalek, was the gratitude they evinced towards the Kenites, on which it is more grateful to dwell. They never forgot that, in remote times, Jethro or Hobab, the Midianite priest or Emir, whom they associated with the Kenites,^a afforded them advice and assistance in the toils and dangers of their desert wanderings, that he was to them 'like eyes' on their journeys and in their encampments, and that he consented to accompany them into their new homes to share their fortunes.^b Indeed, from the earliest parts of the period of the Judges, we find the Kenites settled in the southern districts of Palestine, especially in the territory of Judah, to which they were almost reckoned, inhabiting their own towns and forming independent communities, but constantly exchanging with the Hebrews acts of kindness.^c A portion of their number, separating from the principal stock, settled, it is true, or lived as nomads, in more northern provinces of Canaan among tribes hostile to the Hebrews; but even there they remained strongly mindful of the old bonds of sympathy. When the Israelites were compelled to encounter the powerful northern king Jabin of Hazor, it was a Kenite woman, 'Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite,' living near Kedesh in Naphtali, who delivered them from their most dangerous foe, the valiant general

^a Judg. i. 16, iv. 11.

^b Exod. xviii. 1-26, and notes in loc.; Num. x. 29-32.

^c Judg. i. 16; 1 Sam. xxvii. 10; xxx. 29, David sent presents from the booty also לאִישׁר בַּעֲרֵי הַקִּינִי.

Sisera; she committed that sanguinary deed in spite of the alliance of friendship which existed between her house and King Jabin, and in spite of the sacredness of hospitality inviolable even to enemies, so deep was her attachment to Israel; and for that deed she was extolled, with fiery eulogies, by the Hebrew prophetess: 'Blessed above women shall Jael be, the wife of Heber the Kenite, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.'^a And on the other hand, when Saul, engaged in his war of extirpation against the Amalekites, had advanced to their capital, he sent to the Kenites, who had established themselves among that tribe, this message: 'Go, depart, remove from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them; for you showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt.'^b Even the Chronicler connects the Kenites with Caleb, a descendant of Judah, and counts among them the Rechabites, who, living as nomads and Nazarites, were by Jeremiah praised as bright examples of filial piety and obedience.^c All the Hebrew records confirm this genial attachment and mutual harmony, which Jewish tradition of later times maintained with equal unanimity.

It would, therefore, be extremely surprising were we here to find a hostile utterance against the Kenites similar to that on Amalek or Edom. But are these verses indeed conceived in such a spirit? Carefully examined, the prophecy is not hostile, but sorrowful; it does not breathe hatred, but compassion; it proclaims a sad fate, but without exultation or bitterness. It simply enunciates that the rocky mountain strongholds, in which the Kenites believed themselves unassailable, proved a vain protection, and that the people, weakened by repeated losses and reverses, were at last carried away into captivity by the Assyrian conquerors. Indeed, weighing

^a Judg. iv. 11, 17; v. 24.

^b 1 Sam. xv. 6.

^c Comp. 1 Chron. ii. 42, 55; Jer.

xxxv.

the context, we are justified in referring to this prophecy also the author's plaintive and sympathetic exclamation immediately following: 'Woe, who may live, when God doeth this!'^a

But how, it may be asked, could such an oracle find a place in this Book of Balaam? A correct insight into the origin of the 'Supplements' explains this point. It appeared suitable to join to a prophecy on the Amalekites an announcement concerning a people which, though partly domiciled among the former, and perhaps being with them of kindred race, was held by the Hebrews in deep affection, but did not escape affliction and misery. In setting forth this memorable contrast, the tone of violent indignation is naturally changed almost into mournful elegy. Such a connection is indeed loose if not extraneous, but it fully corresponds to the character of additions in which the strict plan and close unity of the main composition are disregarded. The destinies of Moab alone were to be delineated;^b with some appearance of fitness, speeches on Edom and Amalek were appended, as these nations also were inveterate enemies of Israel; but how great is the anti-climax of annexing an oracle concerning a peaceful and comparatively insignificant tribe which, even if slight collisions should have occasionally arisen, never made itself conspicuous by animosity against the Hebrews!

We are not informed what disasters the Kenites suffered in the course of time. Those who had taken up their abodes in the northern districts, probably participated in the fate of the ten tribes of Israel, which Shalmaneser deported into Assyria, if they had not already belonged to those whom Tiglath-pileser carried away in the reign of Pekah, king of Israel, since among the captives we find distinct mention made of the people of Kedesh and all the

^a Ver. 23.

^b Ver. 14.

inhabitants of Naphtali.^a After this time, therefore, the verses before us must have been added, probably by the same hand that wrote the preceding prophecy on Amalek and the following words concerning Kittim; all at least refer to the Assyrian period. We learn indeed from the Inscriptions, that the Assyrians began to come into contact with the Hebrews, and to make them tributary, from a time as early as the first half of the ninth century;^b but an actual abduction into Assyria is only recorded in connection with much later expeditions, and these verses manifestly imply more than a mere menace or a vague apprehension of danger.

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—Among the nations whose possessions God promised to Abraham after the conclusion of the Covenant (Gen. xv. 19–21), the Kenites are indeed also mentioned. But the object of that enumeration was merely to describe the extent of the future *territory* of the Hebrews, which was to reach ‘from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates’ (*ibid.*, ver. 18). Not all those tribes need necessarily be considered as hostile to the Israelites, who were, of course, at liberty to allow residence among them to whomsoever they chose. It is, therefore, also an unfounded supposition to identify the Kenites with those Canaanites who, in conjunction with Amalek, fought unprovoked against the wandering Hebrews on the southern frontiers of Palestine (Num. xiv. 25, 43, 45), since even those portions of the Kenites that lived among the Amalekites were amicably disposed towards the Hebrews (comp. also *Nöldeke*, Ueber die Amalekiter, pp. 19–23; *Kuenen*, Relig. of Israel, i. 179–182, and others).—It has been conjectured that the capital of the southern Kenites was Hazezon-Tamar, later called En-gedi (the present *Ain Djüdi*), in the desert of Judah, famous for its beautiful palm plantations and vineyards and the precious

^a 2 Ki. xv. 29; comp. the Inscription of Tiglath-pileser: ‘The land of Beth-Omri (Samaria), the population, the goods of its people I sent

to Assyria’ (Records of the Past, v. 52).

^b See the events referred to in notes on vers. 23, 24.

opobalsamum (Gen. xiv. 7; 1 Sam. xxiv. 1-3; 2 Chr. xx. 2; Cant. i. 14; comp. *Joseph. Ant.* IX. i. 2; *Plin. Nat. Hist.* v. 17; *Robinson, Bibl. Researches*, i. 500-509, etc.), while others fix upon the summit of the cliff rising perpendicularly from the level of the western shore of the Dead Sea, about ten miles south of En-gedi, where afterwards the famous city of Masada was built: the position of either place is indeed suitable; but proofs are wanting in the one case and the other, and En-gedi is, in earlier times, described as peopled by the Amorites (Gen. xiv. 7).—The friendly spirit of Jewish tradition towards the Kenites is reflected in Rashi's explanation: 'Blessed art thou in being so strongly fortified, for surely thou shalt no more be humbled in the world; for even if one day expelled from the place of thy habitation, and led into captivity with the ten tribes of Israel, do not be concerned; this is no humiliation but merely a change of abodes, and thou shalt certainly return with the other captives.' The last idea is also expressed in the reading of the Samaritan Codex, ער מאיטור תוּשְׁבֵךְ, 'till thy inhabitants return from Assyria,' and in the Sam. Vers., כְּעַר מְאִיטוֹר עוֹרוֹתֶךָ. The Targum of Jonathan renders הַקְנִי by 'Jethro who had become a proselyte' (similarly *Mendelss.* and others, 'Balaam saw Jethro and his family in the Hebrew camp'), and the Chaldee translators generally represent הַקְנִי by שְׁלֵמָה or שְׁלֵמָיָה, probably meaning 'the peaceful people' (compare, however, *Talm. Bab. Bathr.* 56a, where שְׁלֵמָה stands for הַקְרָמוֹנִי, Gen. xv. 19, but נַפְתוּחֵי for הַקְנִי. According to 1 Chr. ii. 51, 54, שְׁלֵמָה—with שְׁ—is kindred with the Kenites).—The hypothesis of two tribes distinct from each other and both accidentally bearing the same name of Kenites, the one of Midianite descent, friendly to the Hebrews, the other of Canaanite origin, hostile to them, can neither be supported nor is it required; it was chiefly suggested by the supposed necessity that these 'prophecies of Balaam' must certainly include some representative of the Canaanites, those most troublesome and most obnoxious foes of Israel. But this opinion rests on an estimate of the economy of the last speeches (vers. 18-24), which we have proved to be untenable. And even if that necessity were admitted, why should the small and peaceful people of the

Kenites have been selected to serve as such a representative, since from the height of Peor many much more conspicuous tribes, both east and west of the Jordan, could be seen or imagined? More consistently, though of course unwarrantably, some Jewish writers (as *Abarbanel* and others) consider the Kenites here to mean the *Ammonites*. Hence it is also utterly against the context to assume that it was the Hebrews who caused the ruin of the Kenites; for though they executed punishment upon Moab, Edom, and Amalek, they were certainly not instrumental in the downfall of Asshur and Eber (ver. 24): a uniform plan, as is evident from all sides, is not carried out in the Supplements. ‘The words are not a prediction of evil to the Kenites, but a promise of safety to be long continued to them,’ says the author of the Commentary on Numbers in Canon Cook’s Holy Bible—the only modern interpreter, as far as we are aware, who takes this view, which is alone borne out by the facts of history. If any relation be intended between this and the preceding oracle, it is that of antithesis contrasting the enmity of the Amalekites with the friendship of the Kenites, and comparing the satisfaction felt by the Hebrews at the annihilation of the one with the pity and sympathy evinced by them in the misfortunes of the others.—The first ancestor of the Kenites is קֵנִי (ver. 22), of which word was formed the patronymic קֵנִי, also written קֵנִי (1 Sam. xxvii. 10), or קֵנִי (1 Chr. ii. 55; Sept., *Kenāiōi*); but then קֵנִי itself was used as the name of an individual (Judg. i. 16, קֵנִי קֵנִי), and conversely, what is more natural, קֵנִי was employed to denote the whole tribe (ver. 22; Judg. iv. 11), as קֵנִי or קֵנִי stands for קֵנִי or קֵנִי. Whether the name is to be connected with קֵנִי *lance* (2 Sam. xxi. 16), so that it would mean *lance-bearer*, or with קֵנִי in the sense of *possession*, like קֵנִי (Gen. xxxiv. 23, etc.), is doubtful.—If we consider this passage by itself, the simplest construction seems to be to take קֵנִי as imperative Kal, which yields a good and poetical sense: ‘Strong (קֵנִי) is thy dwelling place, and put thou thy nest in the rock, yet’ etc., *i.e.*, fortify yourselves as strongly as you may, yet, etc. We are certainly not compelled to interpret these words from the text of Obadiah (ver. 4), who freely adapted them (קֵנִי קֵנִי . . . קֵנִי . . . קֵנִי), and to

assume an irregular or Aramaic participle passive of Kal, **יָשִׁי** instead of **יָשִׁים**, for the existence of which a *ketiv* of the feminine (**יָשִׁיָהּ**) is but a feeble support (2 Sam. xiii. 32; *Sept.*, freely, *καὶ ἐὰν θῆς*; *Vulg.*, *sed si posueris*, etc.); still less plausibly, therefore, has **יָשִׁי** here been taken as the infinitive with the force of the finite verb.—**קָנְךָ** is no doubt chosen as forming a paronomasia with **קָנִי** and **קָנָן**, and the same word has been preserved both by Obadiah and Jeremiah, although, in reproducing this verse, they apply it to the *Edomites* (Obad. 3, 4; Jer. xlix. 16, **כִּי־תִנְבְּיֶיהָ כִּנְיָרָהּ קָנְךָ וְכִי**); but the metaphor is by no means unusual and occurs, for instance, in the Assyrian Inscription of the 'Taylor Cylinder' (col. iii., lines 66–70), where Sennacherib records, 'In my fifth campaign the people of . . . Kua and Kana, who had fixed their dwellings like the nests of eagles on the highest summits and wild crags of the Nippur mountains.' etc. (comp. also the same king's Inscription on the slab of the Kouyunjik bulls, § 38; Annals of Assur-nasir-pal, col. i., §§ 49, 50, 64, 65; see *Rec. of the Past*, iii. 44, 45; vii. 63).—The conjunction **כִּי** can here have no other meaning but that of an adversative—*except that* (Gen. xxxii. 27; xlii. 15), or simply *but* or *however*: though the Kenites fix their abodes on rocky strongholds, they yet do not escape destruction (comp. Gen. xxviii. 17; Lev. xxi. 2; Num. xxvi. 65, where **כִּי** is the preposition *except*; and Job xlii. 8, where it is the adverb *only*). The translation 'for Kain shall surely not be destroyed' (*Keil, Geiger*, and others), **כִּי** taken in the negative sense which it bears in oaths (xiv. 23, etc.), is syntactically not so simple, destroys the obvious antithesis to the preceding verse, and gives an incongruous sense.—'Kain **יִהְיֶה לְקַבֵּר**,' literally, 'shall be for destroying,' *i.e.*, shall be destroyed, a not uncommon application of **הָיָה** with the infinitive (comp. Deut. xxxi. 17, **וְהָיָה לְאֹכֵל**, 'he shall be consumed'; Josh. ii. 5; 2 Chr. xxvi. 5, etc.); which does not necessarily, as in the frequent phrase **וּבְעֵרָתָהּ הָרַע מִקְרַבָּךְ** (Deut. xiii. 6; xvii. 7; xix. 19, etc.), involve utter and permanent annihilation, but may merely mean serious loss and injury (comp. Isai. iv. 4; vi. 13).—**וְדָבַר אֲשֶׁר** for **עַד־אֲשֶׁר**, *until*; comp. xxiii. 3, **וְדָבַר מֵהָ** for **עַד־אֲשֶׁר**. The translation: 'How long? Asshur shall carry thee away,' is

not inadmissible (comp. Ps. iv. 3; lxxiv. 9, etc.), but seems here abrupt. The rendering of the *Sept.*, καὶ ἂν γένηται τῶν Βεῶν νοσσία παρουργίας, ‘and if to Beor a nest of cunning is made,’ is evidently based on the reading וְאִם יִהְיֶה לְבַעַר קִין וְאִם יִהְיֶה לְבַעַר קִין וְאִם יִהְיֶה לְבַעַר קִין, that is, even if Beor most shrewdly chooses his dwelling, he will be carried away by the Assyrians, which may be meant to predict the destruction of Balaam’s own house; whereas the version of the *Vulg.*, ‘et si fueris electus de stirpe Cin, quam diu poteris permanere?’ pre-supposes the reading וְתַהִיָּה לְבַחֲרֵךְ קִין, *i.e.*, even if thou provest thyself to be a strong and elected band of Kain, thou shalt not be rescued. The text appears, from early times, to have been uncertain, but the received reading is evidently the most appropriate.—The first part of the 22nd verse, in which the Kenites are not, as in the rest of the prophecy, addressed in the second person, implies an anallage; for it cannot be doubted that the suffix in תִּשְׁבֹּךְ, ‘until Asshur carries thee away captive,’ refers to the Kenites; to apply it to the Hebrews (*Hengstenb.* and others), who are not mentioned in the whole oracle, would be as unsuitable in this speech, which begins, ‘And he saw the Kenite,’ as it is natural in a former prophecy introduced by ‘And he saw Israel’ (vers. 2, 5, 9); yet, contrary to logic and contrary to the plainest rules of construction, that explanation has been insisted upon, because it was believed that every single statement in these verses must import enmity against the Hebrews; and the sense is supposed to be this: Asshur carries Israel into captivity in defiance of right and mercy, thus commits grave sins against God’s people, and must therefore himself sink into ruin (ver. 24; see *supra*). No dexterity or skill, even if ready to sacrifice all philological accuracy, can establish that unity or continuity of sense, which is irreparably destroyed by the appendages. Something of this irregularity has been felt by all careful and unprejudiced critics, though a clear result is impossible without distinguishing between the genuine and the interpolated parts of the piece; so, for instance, by *Schultz* (*Alttestam. Theol.*, i. 93, ‘The allusions to Asshur, very surprising in these verses, were probably added by the last redactor,’ etc.), *Vater*, *Lengerke*, and others. *Bertholdt*, how-

ever (Einleitung, Vol. III., pp. 792, 793), goes too far in placing the whole passage from ver. 14 to ver. 24 in the time after Alexander the Great; the objections to which this and analogous opinions are open will be apparent from our notes on these verses.

19. PROPHECY ON ASSYRIA. XXIV. 23, 24.

23. And he took up his parable and said,
Woe, who may live, when God doeth
this!

24. And ships from the coast of Kittim,
They humble Asshur and humble Eber,
And he also is for destruction.

‘Until Asshur carrieth thee away captive.’^a What Hebrew citizen in the time of Hezekiah could write or read these words without being agitated by the strongest and most conflicting emotions? They naturally prompted another prophecy, which, however, in a still higher degree than the preceding utterance, is covered by uncertainty and mystery. Will it be possible to lift the veil of so many ages?

After an unbroken and almost unparalleled succession of brilliant victories and conquests, east and west of the Euphrates; after Assur-nasir-pal (Sardanapalus), as early as the first part of the ninth century, had exacted heavy imposts from Tyre and Sidon, Arvad, and other Phœnician towns;^b when his successor Shalmaneser II. had repeatedly, in the battle of Karkar and elsewhere, routed with terrible slaughter twelve allied kings of

^a עֲרִימָה אֲשׁוּר תִּשָּׁבֵק, ver. 22.

^b On his ‘Standard Inscription’ (§ 5) he calls himself ‘the king who subdued all the regions from the great stream of the Tigris unto the land of the Lebanon and the great

(Mediterranean) sea’ (compare his ‘Annals’ in Records of the Past, iii. 70-74, 99, 100; vii. 12; *Schrader*, Keilinschriften und das Alte Test., pp. 66, 309, etc., and Art. *Assyrien* in Riehm’s Handwörterbuch).

Syria and the adjoining countries, among whom were *Rimmon-Hidri* (Ben-hadad) of Damascus and *Akhabbu* (Ahab) of the country of the Israelites' furnishing a force of ten thousand men and two thousand chariots,^a and had again and again defeated and weakened Hazael, Ben-hadad's successor, and levied tribute not only from the towns of Phœnicia, but also from Jehu, king of Israel, as the famous Black Obelisk of Nimroud explicitly records both in word and sculpture;^b after Pul, or Tiglath-pileser, had, by rigorous extortions, asserted his authority over King Menahem of Israel, Rezin of Damascus, and Hiram of Tyre, and had reduced Edom, Arabia, and Philistia to obedience and tributary dependence, had carried away large numbers of Hebrews from the northern districts,^c and even interfered in the internal affairs of the country so far as himself to appoint, after Pekah's assassination, Hoshea as king of Israel;^d and when at last Sargon, among other acquisitions extending from Armenia and Media to Egypt and Libya, captured Samaria, and the ten tribes were deported to Halah, Habor, and the towns of the Medes:^e then the Assyrian

^a Monolith Inscript. of Shalman., col. ii., §§ 90-100; Black Obelisk Inscript., Face D, lines 58-66; and Face A *base*, lines 87-89, 'Eighty-nine cities I took; a destruction I made of the kings of the Hittites.'

^b Face B *base*, lines 97-99, 102-104; Face C *base*, line 127, Epigraph ii., 'the tribute of *Yahua* (Jehu), son (a successor) of *Khumri* (Omri) —silver, gold, bowls of gold, vessels of gold, goblets of gold, pitchers of gold, lead, sceptres for the king's hand and staves;' see Comm. on Genes. pp. 290, 296; Records of the Past, iii. 99, 100; v. 32-41.

^c *Supra*, pp. 285, 286.

^d Comp. the Inscript. of Tiglath-pileser II. in *G. Smith's*, Assyrian

Discoveries, pp. 254-287; Rec. of the Past, v. 43-52, etc.; 'Pakaha, their king, they had slain . . . Husih to the kingdom I appointed; ten talents of gold, one thousand of silver . . . I received from them as their tribute;' comp. however, 2 Ki. xv. 30, where the Assyrian king's share in the appointment of Hoshea is not mentioned.

^e See Comm. on Genes. p. 291; 'Annals of Sargon,' in Records of the Past, vii. 25-56, 'In the beginning of my reign—B.C. 721—I besieged the king of Samaria, occupied the town of Samaria, and led into captivity 27,280 souls; I took them to Assyria, and in their stead I there put people whom my hand had con-

empire, under the rule of Sargon's son, Sennacherib, seemed to have reached the very zenith of its might and splendour. This monarch, as we now know his history and exploits from the deciphered inscriptions on the ruins of his magnificent palace at Kouyunjik, from famous cylinders, and other contemporary records, discomfited the king of Babylon, Merodach Baladan (*Marluk-beladon*) and his allies, the Elamites, so completely, that the Babylonian monarchy, which, for many centuries, had been to Assyria a constant source of vexation and danger, never recovered, but thenceforth remained in subjection.^a Then Sennacherib, after a short repose, during which he directed the enlargement of his palaces and the improvement of Nineveh, which 'he made as splendid as the sun,' crossed the Euphrates, marched into Syria, defeated the kings of Tyre and Sidon, and captured other Phœnician cities, over which he placed Tubaal as tributary chief, took Ashkelon and many other coast towns, subdued Moab and Edom, scattered the united armies of Egypt and Ethiopia, 'in the plains of Altaku,'^b or Albaku,^c and then turned his arms against the kingdom of Judah. 'Forty-six of Hezekiah's strong towns,' he declares in his Annals,^d 'his castles, and the smaller towns in their

quered,' etc., *ibid.* p. 28; comp. also pp. 26, 34, 'I plundered the district of Samaria and the entire house of Omri;' on the extent of Sargon's rule, see *ibid.* p. 27.

^a 'I entered rejoicing,' states the Inscription on Bellino's Cylinder, 'into his palace in the city of Babylon; I broke open his royal treasury . . . his wife, the men and women of his palace . . . I carried off . . . In the power of Asshur, my lord, eighty-nine large cities, and royal dwellings in the land of Chaldea, and eight hundred and twenty small towns . . . I assaulted, captured, and carried off their spoils' (lines 6-12; comp. lines

13-34). The same events are related in an Inscription on a slab belonging to the Kouyunjik bulls (see Records of the Past, vii. 57, 63). Subsequent revolts, as those under Esarhaddon and Assur-bani-pal, Sennacherib's son and grandson, were easily quelled (see l. c., i. 73-75, 79; iii. 104, 105; comp. also v. 104; vii. 26, 40-42, 47, 48).

^b Eltekon in Judah, Josh. xv. 59, 𐤏𐤍𐤏𐤍, Taylor Cylinder, col. ii., line 76.

^c Sennacherib's Inscription on the Kouyunjik slab, § 24.

^d The Taylor Cylinder, col. iii., lines 11-11. These incidents and

neighbourhood beyond number, I attacked and captured. I carried off from the midst of them two hundred thousand one hundred and fifty people, male and female, and horses, asses, camels, and cattle beyond number. Hezekiah himself I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city, like a bird in a cage, and constructed siege towers against him. The cities which I plundered and cut off from his kingdom, I gave to the kings of Ashdod, Ekron, and Gaza. I diminished his kingdom and augmented his yearly tribute and gifts. The fearful magnificence of my kingdom overwhelmed him, and he sent me thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver . . . precious stones of large size, couches of ivory, movable thrones of ivory . . . a great treasure of every kind; and his daughters and the male and female inmates of his palace, he sent after me to Nineveh, my royal city, and his envoy to pay tribute and do homage.^a Seeing all these misfortunes, a Hebrew patriot, filled with grief and anguish, might well exclaim, 'Woe, who may live, when God doeth this!' But a faint ray of hope might have animated even the desponding, when the irresistible conqueror—his Inscriptions are naturally silent on this point—in the midst of his eager preparations for the utter demolition of Jerusalem, almost without a humanly manifest cause, and as if compelled by the invisible hand of God, suddenly retreated and left the land, whether induced by a fearful plague, or by terrifying rumours of the approach of southern armies.^b

facts are, with slight modifications, also recorded in Sennacherib's Inscription on slab 1 of the Kouyunjik bulls, §§ 27-32.

^a See Comm. on Genes. pp. 291, 297; Records of the Past, i. 38, 39; vii. 61-63, where the concluding lines read: 'The bullion treasure of his palace, his daughters, the women of his palace, male and female musi-

cians to Nineveh, the city of my power, he caused to carry, and for the payment of the tribute he sent his messenger.'

^b 2 Kings xviii. 13-xix. 37; Isa. xvii. 12-xviii. 7; xxxvi., xxxvii.; Tobit i. 21. The Inscriptions are in disharmony with the Biblical account, which does not express or imply that Hezekiah sent the priso-

It is not impossible that, encouraged by this unhopedor change in the schemes of the powerful foe, the Cyprians, strengthened by the inhabitants of other islands and coasts, attempted hostile attacks upon the Assyrian possessions in Syria, and then extended their expeditions eastward to the Euphrates, although neither the Biblical nor the monumental accounts allude to any such enterprise. We know not only that Sennacherib's predecessor, Sargon, had accomplished a successful campaign against Cyprus, where his memorial tablet has not long since been discovered;^a but we learn from an

ners and the envoy after Sennacherib to Nineveh, and which, moreover, seems to convey that the Assyrian king was killed shortly after his return to his capital (2 Ki. xix. 36, 37; Isa. xxxvii. 37, 38)—the Book of Tobit says distinctly after fifty (or fifty-five) days: whereas according to the Inscriptions, his campaign against Judea took place in the third year of his reign, which lasted upwards of twenty years. In accordance with the spirit of Hebrew historiography, the Biblical writer desired to let the heathen monarch's early and unnatural death appear as a direct retribution for his impious designs against the people of God (see *supra*, p. 65). The 'Inscription of Esarhaddon,' found at Kouyunjik, throws no light on the discrepancy (comp. Rec. of the Past, iii. 101 *sqq.*). The 'Will of Sennacherib,' see *ibid.* i. 136). There are very probably mythical elements in the Biblical statement, 'It came to pass that night that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when they rose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses' (2 Ki. xix. 35; compare I-sa. xxxvii. 36, also

2 Chron. xxxii. 21; Sir. xlviii. 21; see *Herod.* ii. 141, where Sennacherib's sudden flight in his war against the Egyptian king Sethos is attributed to swarms of field mice, which, in the night, devoured all the quivers, bow-strings, and shield-thongs of his soldiers; see *Wilkinson* in loc.); for criticism has long since proved that the chapters xxxvi. to xxxix. of Isaiah are not authentic, but belong to the Babylonian period: yet that statement may enclose an historical kernel referring to some unexpected event which induced the Assyrian king to an abrupt retreat.

^a See 'The Annals of Sargon,' in Rec. of the Past, vii. 26, 'I made tributary the people of *Yatnan* (Cyprus), who have established their dwellings in the midst of the Sea of the setting sun' (comp. page 27 *ibid.*). Whether the name *Yatnan* or *Atnan* has any connection with the promontory of *Acamas* (now Cape Arnaviti) on the western side of Cyprus (*Strab.* XIV. vi. 2-4), is uncertain. In the Egyptian 'Decree of Canopus' (§ 9), important in many respects, Cyprus is described as 'the island *Nabinaitt*, which lies in the midst of the Great Sea' (comp. Rec. of the Past, viii. 84).

elaborate inscription of Sennacherib's son, Esarhaddon, that, at that time, the Assyrian rule extended in those parts over 'twenty-two kings of Syria, and the sea-coast and the islands;' that among them were, besides 'Baal, king of Tyre,' and 'Manasseh, king of Judah,' also 'ten kings of Cyprus which is in the middle of the sea;'^a and that the great monarch exacted from these subjected chiefs both heavy contributions and humiliating homage.^b What is, therefore, more natural than that fear and revenge alike stimulated the Cyprians, assisted by others who shared their subjection, to dare even hazardous ventures? Of one such attempt that had before been made in Sargon's reign, the deciphered 'Annals' of this sovereign contain distinct mention: 'The kings of Jahmagi of the land of *Yatman* (Cyprus), whose dwelling is situated at a distance of seven journeys in the middle of the western sea, refused to pay their imposts.' The attempt failed, and the Cyprians were compelled to send to the king additional gifts of enormous value, and again to pledge their allegiance.^c But they doubtless renewed their efforts after Sargon's death and Sennacherib's first great calamity, and then most likely directed their operations not only against Assyria, but also against Eber (עֶבֶר), the inhabitants of Mesopotamia and Babylonia, which countries, by Sennacherib's extensive conquests, had almost become parts of the Assyrian empire, and probably furnished their contingent of troops for foreign wars. Recent discoveries and decipherments have imparted to this subject a fresh and higher interest. On Cyprus, inscriptions have been found written in characters analogous to the Assyrian and Babylonian cuneiform signs, but com-

^a The kings of *Edihal* (Idalium), *Kittie* (Citium), *Sillami* (Salamis), *Pappa* (Paphos), *Silla* (Soloë), *Kuri* (Curion), *Tamisus*, *Anti-Khadusta* (Ammochoستا), *Lidini*, and *Upri* . . . (Aphrodisium).

^b See Inscription of Esarhaddon, col. v., lines 12-26; comp. Rec. of the Past, iii. 107, 118, 120.

^c Comp. the explicit statement in 'Annals of Sargon,' ii. 35; see Rec. of the Past, vii. 51.

posed in a language kindred to the *Greek*, and it will thus be easier to trace the relations of the Cyprians, on the one hand, to Assyria, and, on the other hand, to Greece.^a It can hardly be questioned that the Cyprians, as they had the disposition, possessed, to a certain extent, also the power for such military undertakings. For their island, which formed the chief westward station of Phœnician navigators, was eminently prosperous by commerce, natural fertility, and mineral wealth. They could command the support of many allies and kinsmen, and might, above all, count upon the assistance of the Phœnicians, who, even more oppressed and imperilled by the Assyrians, hardly separated their destinies from those of the neighbouring island, the independence and friendship of which was almost a necessity for their export trade and maritime supremacy.^b In the enthusiasm of the moment, some slight advantages gained by the Cyprian forces over the powerful nations of the east, may have been invested with an exaggerated importance; but certainly, although the Assyrian empire maintained itself about a century longer, a Hebrew statesman, considering its pomp and luxury, its presumption and recklessness, and firmly relying upon the judgment and retribution of a just and all-seeing God, could not be doubtful as to its ultimate fate, and he might declare with confidence, ‘And ships from the coast of Kittim (Cyprus), they humble Asshur and humble Eber, and he (Asshur) also is for destruction;’ although we know that the Cyprians remained tributary to the later Assyrian kings Esarhaddon and Assur-bani-pal. But beyond this circle the scope of the prophecy does not reach. It does not intend to intimate the future triumphs of the western over the eastern world, such as the conquests of the Macedonians or Romans; for the Cyprians and their

^a Comp. the works of *Brandis* and *Moritz Schmidt*,

^b Comp. Isa. xxiii. 1, 12; Ezek. xxvii. 6; see Comm. on Gen. p. 244.

Phœnician allies were themselves, in religion and manners, emphatically *eastern* populations. Nor is it the author's chief object to supply 'an utterance respecting the destinies of the world at large,' but he desires to show how the Cyprians were specially chosen by God as instruments to bring ruin and annihilation upon those ruthless tyrants who had also inflicted so many and such cruel sufferings upon His elected people. However, not from the west, but from the east, ruin and annihilation came upon the Assyrians—from the rugged mountain tracts of Kurdistan, which poured forth the rapacious and pitiless Chaldeans like a scourge over the lands of Asia.

Thus, in considering this section, we have passed from the happy and prosperous age of David to the fatal epoch of the Assyrian invasion; from the time when Israel, acting with independence and self-conscious power, 'devoured nations, his enemies, and crushed their bones,' to the years of decline when weakness and disunion compelled the people to leave the repulse of their enemies to other and inferior communities, and when they found their sole gratification in impotent wishes and denouncements. How many centuries of sorrowful experience separate 'Balaam's' joyous prophecies from the sad utterances which have been linked to them with so little fitness!

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—In the depth of his sorrow the author proclaims *אִי טִי יִחִיֶה*, 'woe, who may live,' *i.e.*, who can wish to live to see such dishonour and misfortune! (comp. Rev. ix. 6) not 'who can hope to live!' which is less pathetic; and still less 'who will' or 'can live,' as if *all* were to perish (comp. Mal. iii. 2). Those who start from the principle of literal inspiration are, perhaps, justified in accounting for Balaam's grief by the circumstance that it is his countrymen whose ruin he announces (xxii. 5; xxiii. 7; xxiv. 14; comp. *Hengstb.*, Bil., p. 263); but it is not probable that the author of these verses, living at a much later time, had such considerations in his mind; in the Supple-

ments the strictly historical background is abandoned, and in the genuine portions Balaam's individuality is never obtruded.—A foreign idea is associated with the words by the rendering of Targum Onkel. and Jonath., 'Woe to the sinners (וַי לְחַיִּיבֵי) who shall live,' etc.; and entirely against the context and the words (וַי אֲסָ) is the interpretation of Origen (In Num. Homil. xix. 4) and others, 'quis erit tam beatus, tam felix, qui hæc videat?' viz., the abolition of all idolatry and the destruction of all demons through the Messiah. Nor does the reading אֲסָ, instead of וַי אֲסָ, offered by some MSS. (*De-Rossi*, Var. Llection. ii. p. 18), in any way recommend itself.—מִיָּמֵינוּ אֲסָ, literally, 'from the time that God does this'—מִן denoting the *terminus a quo*, and, therefore, simply *after* or *when* (comp. Prov. viii. 23; Ps. lxxiii. 20; 1 Chron. viii. 8; 2 Chron. xxxi. 10, etc.; *Sept.*, ὄραν θῆ ῥαῦρα ὁ θεός; *Vulg.*, quando, etc.), which seems simpler than the sense of *because* or *on account of* (comp. Deut. vii. 7; Isa. liii. 5, etc.). The suffix in מִיָּמֵינוּ refers, grammatically, to the statement of the next verse (the 24th), but, logically, rather to the preceding prophecy—to Asshur's implacable cruelty in carrying away captives, which reminds the author of the same sad fate of his own nation; for the import of the next verse implies nothing that was painful to the Hebrews, but, on the contrary, alludes to the longed for punishment of their oppressors. It is unnecessary, though it may be admissible, to take אֲסָ as an abbreviated form of אֲסָ (1 Chron. xx. 8), and then to refer the suffix in מִיָּמֵינוּ to God; the sense would not be different from that of the former interpretation. A possible exposition is also: 'who may live *when he considers this*' (comp. Job xxiv. 12); but it is certainly strained and artificial to understand those words thus: 'when God appoints him,' viz., appoints (comp. Hab. i. 12; 1 Sam. viii. 1, etc.) the Assyrian as His instrument to punish sinful nations (*Zanz, Baumgart., Knob.*, and others), which idea is indeed familiar to the prophets (Isa. vii. 20; x. 5, 6, etc.; comp. Jer. xxv. 9; xxvii. 6; xliii. 10), but cannot be grafted on the two words מִיָּמֵינוּ אֲסָ. Moreover, if Asshur was the chosen rod of chastisement, it would have been impious to fight against him or to desire his destruction;

for we do not find here the slightest or remotest allusion to his 'having haughtily overstepped the Divine commission, especially with regard to Israel' (comp. Isa. x. 7-11).—It may be curious to observe that the Talmud (*Sanhedr.* 106*a*; comp. *Rashi* and *Yalkut*) interprets the words 'אוי מי יהיה וכ' by 'אוי למי שמחיה עצמו בישם אל', which is supposed to involve another of those points of contact between Balaam and Christ, to which we have above referred (pp. 30, 31); that the Sam. Vers. renders, 'כִּן יִחִי מִיִּשְׁמָה הַיּוֹלֵה, 'who shall live, if he (Asshur) destroys his (Israel's) power?' and that Abarbanel explains: 'Who can live in those days, when he—Nebuehadnezzar—makes himself a god' ('ישים עצמו אל'); but it would be impossible to notice the large number of untenable interpretations which the brevity of those words has rendered possible (for instance, *Vater*, 'wer übersteht sein Verwüsten?' *Michael*, 'wenn Gott ihn unglücklich macht;' *Mendelss.*, 'wenn Gott es ihm zugebracht,' etc.; *Granberg*, 'Wehe! wer überlebt, was Gott festgesetzt;' *Kuenen* ap. *Oort*, i.e., p. 45, 'Vae quis præteribit vitæ terminos, quos ei Deus constituit;' *Luzzatto*, 'Who can live when God shall have put him—the Assyrian—into the world!' etc.; comp. also *Pirke Rab. Eliez.*, chap. 30).—צ, a rare word, synonymous with יִן *ship* (*Vulg.*, trieres; *Targ. Jerusal.*, לִבְרִנָּא *liburnae*, light ships, comp. Isa. xxxiii. 21; less accurately, *Onkel.*, יִן־וֹ hosts; *Jonath.*, צִיִּין armies; *Syr.*, לְגִיּוֹן legions); the plural is both צִיִּים (Ezek. xxx. 9) and צִיִּים (Dan. xi. 30, where we find צִיִּים בְּתִים, as if in allusion to this passage; see *Gram.*, § xxiii. 2. *a*). In the 24th verse some of the ancient versions point to another early fluctuation in the Hebrew text; for in the *Sept.* צִיִּים is represented by ἐξελεύσεται, in the *Samw. Cod.* and *Vers.* by יוציאם and אפסקין, so that there was evidently in the original some form of יצא, which several modern interpreters have unnecessarily adopted (*Michaelis*, Von der Seite her kommen; *Dathe*, exeunt; so *De Geer*, and others; comp. *De-Rossi*, i.e., p. 18; *Vater* in loc.).—ר, properly, *side* (Ex. ii. 5; Deut. ii. 37), and then *coast*.—בְּתִים is undoubtedly the island of Cyprus, in which one of the most ancient towns was *Citium* (Κίτιον or Κίτιον), although in subsequent periods that name comprised nearly all the shores

and islands of the Mediterranean, as Rhodes and Sicily, Greece and Italy, and even Macedonia (1 Macc. i. 1; Dan. xi. 30; comp. Comm. on Gen., p. 244). 'Ships from the coast of Kittim' may include auxiliaries assembling in Cyprus as a convenient station, since the Cyprians would hardly have entered upon the daring enterprise single-handed.—Josephus (Ant. IX. xiv. 2) relates on the authority of Menander, who, in writing his 'Chronology,' is supposed to have availed himself of the archives of Tyre, that, in the reign of Eluleus of Tyre, the Assyrian king Shalmaneser invaded Phœnicia, and subjected many districts; that, however, after his return to the Euphrates, some towns revolted, and among them Tyre; upon which the Assyrian monarch re-appeared, but was opposed by twelve ships of the Tyrians, who dispersed the enemy's fleet and took five hundred prisoners, by which deed 'the reputation of all the citizens of Tyre was greatly enhanced.' It is not probable that this is the event to which our text alludes, as many have asserted; for, on the one hand, it has no direct connection with the Cyprians, who in our verses are the chief actors, and, on the other hand, it does not include עֲבָר at all; moreover, the result was too insignificant to kindle the hopes of even the most sanguine; for soon afterwards 'the king of Assyria returned and placed guards at the rivers and aqueducts, so that the Tyrians were hindered from drawing water, and this siege continued for five years.' According to the inscription on the Taylor Cylinder (col. ii., lines 35–37), and an inscription on a slab belonging to the Kouyunjik bulls (Rec. of the Past, vii. 61), *Luliah*, supposed to be identical with Eluleus, is mentioned as king of *Sidon*, who fled before *Sennacherib* 'to a distant spot in the midst of the sea,' or *Yatna* (Cyprus); and Assur-bani-pal, the son of Esarhaddon and grandson of Sennacherib, again defeated and weakened the Tyrians; 'their spirits I humbled,' he recorded, 'and caused them to melt away' (see 'Annals of Assur-bani-pal,' col. ii., lines 84–98). Still less suitable is the application of this passage to such unimportant occurrences as the invasion of the Greeks in Asia at the time of Sennacherib, who, besides, was victorious, as the Assyrian annals relate in

unison with other accounts (comp. *Alexander Polyhistor* in *Euseb. Chronic.* i. 14). And yet most critics base their estimate of this *entire* composition upon similar conjectures, either contending that the whole was written about B.C. 710, or that, at this time, the verses under consideration were added to the principal portion, which they consider to have been composed about B.C. 750 (as *Lengerke*, *Ken.*, i. 597; *Bunsen*, *Bibelwerk*, v. pp. 602, 603, who assigns vers. 20–24 to that period, although ver. 20 stands in no certain relation to the Assyrians; see *supra*, pp. 46, 47).—**פְּתִימִים** has by Jewish and Christian interpreters frequently been understood to mean the Romans (*Onk.*, גְּרֹמָאִי; *Jon.*, לְמִפְּרַנְיָא, *Lombardy* and the land of אִטְלְיָא, *Italy*, in conjunction with the legions that will come forth from קִיסְטַנְטִינִי, *Constantinople*?; and similarly *Targ. Jerus.*, *Rashi*, רְמַיִים; *Vulg.*, *Italia*, etc.)—which is, of course, out of the question.—The verb עָנָה is not a very strong or emphatic term—for it is used to express the trials which God imposes upon Israel from love (*Deut.* viii. 2, 3, 16; comp. *Gen.* xxxi. 50)—and may merely imply that the Cyprians caused to the Assyrians loss and annoyance; but even slight victories over an all but invincible enemy must have excited lively hopes, and no doubt called forth the utmost exultation.—עֲבָרִי, used in the wider sense of בְּנֵי עֲבָרָה (*Gen.* x. 21, 24; xi. 15–17; comp. *Isai.* vii. 20), are the inhabitants of the land beyond the Euphrates, or of Mesopotamia (*Onk.*, לְעִיבֵר פֶּרֶת; *Jerus.*, עֵבֶר נְהָרָא; *Rashi*, אֹתָם שְׁבַע עֲבֵר הַנְּהָר), and embrace, in this passage, especially the Babylonians (comp. *Comm. on Genes.* pp. 278, 279). The context forbids to take עֲבָרִי in the stricter sense of *Hebrews* (so *Sept.*, *Vulg.*, and others), who, throughout the section, are mentioned by the names of יַעֲקֹב and יִשְׂרָאֵל, and who cannot be coupled with the Assyrians as common enemies of the Cyprians; for this reason, probably, a modern critic unwarrantably identifies אֲשִׁירִי with the Syrians (*Ewald*, *Gesch.*, i. 147), contrary to the meaning which that word clearly bears in the preceding oracle (ver. 22; comp. the full arguments of *Hengstenb.*, *Bil.*, p. 206–210).—נִגְזָרִים, and also, points to the prediction on the Amalekites (ver. 20)—like these inveterate and most detested foes of the Hebrews, the Assyrians are

devoted to annihilation. Grammatically, 'the ships from the coast of Kittim,' are indeed the subject; but we must suppose an inversion or irregularity of construction and explain the singular of the pronoun הוּא by remembering that the author had in his mind Asshur alone, the principal of the two nations, which included Eber (comp. ver. 22). הוּא cannot refer to Kittim (כִּי־תִי); for, independently of the syntactical inaccuracy, a Hebrew seer would have refrained from announcing the extinction of those who humbled the dangerous enemies of his own people. But supposing even that the ruin of Kittim were meant, it would not involve the idea that 'before the seer's eye the whole heathen world had become one great Golgotha, over which God's people rises triumphantly' (*Oehler*, *Theol. d. Alt. Test.'s*, i. 119): for these verses contain no direct allusion to Israel whatever, much less to a victorious Israel. The *Sept.* premises this oracle with the words: Καὶ ἰδὼν τὸν Ὄγ, which addition, whatever its origin (comp. *supra*, p. 239), can certainly not be used to support the very strange and hazardous conjecture that the earlier and genuine reading of this verse was וַיֵּרָא אֶת־אַגַּג וַיִּקַּח אֶת־פָּרָבֹהוּתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵי־מִי יִחְיֶה . . . אֵי־מִי יִחְיֶה, 'And he saw Agag and took up his parable and said, Woe, who shall live before Samuel!' (so *Geiger*, *Urschrift*, p. 367). Though many MSS. write מִטְּמוֹאֵל in one word, all ancient versions render two words and not the proper noun (comp. *De-Rossi*, *Var. Lect.* in loc.) — It has often been asserted that Balaam's speeches, vague and indefinite as they are, include nothing which, in the time of Moses, any intelligent observer, having seized the idea of Israel's election, and weighed their hostile relations to their weaker neighbours, would have been unable to predict with confidence (so, for instance, *Hengstenb.*, *Bil.*, pp. 17, 19, 259–263, 268–270; *Rosenm.*, *Schol.* ad xxiii. 7; xxiv. 29, etc.). Granted that, to a certain extent, this might be possible with respect to Moab, Edom, and Amalek, does the same hold good in regard of the Assyrians and Cyprians, with whom the Hebrews, in the fifteenth century, came into no contact, however distant or indirect, whether friendly or hostile? It is even doubtful whether Assyria existed, at so early a time, as an independent empire and, if so, whether her armies crossed

the Euphrates for centuries after the commencement of her rule (comp. *Dunker*, *Gesch. des Alterthums*, i. 266 *sqq.*; *Oppert*, in *Zeitsch. der D. M. G.*, 1869, p. 144, who places the foundation of the kingdom at B.C. 1318; *Records of the Past*, iii. 27, etc.; Tiglath-pileser I., about B.C. 1150, seems to have made an expedition against certain 'rebellious tribes of the Kheti or Khatte,' that is the Hittites or Syrians; *Records*, v. 12, 18, 20. The statements of classical and later writers about the antiquity of Assyria are mere surmises). 'The ships from the coast of Kittim,' which 'humble Asshur,' refer to distinct and special occurrences, which could only be foretold by virtue of supernatural inspiration or announced as *vaticinium post eventum*.—Nothing but the determined endeavour to vindicate the whole of the story of Balaam to the 'Supplementer' (*Ergänzer*), and to prove this writer not to have lived later than the time of Solomon, could have induced a scholar of Tuch's critical tact and sound judgment to assert that this section exhibits merely an *acquaintance* of the Hebrews with the existence of the Assyrians, not a hostile conflict between both nations, and that 'the prophet, in these verses, rises to a general prediction concerning that great power advancing from the east, and as indefinitely opposes to it a western power destined one day to break its influence' (*Tuch*, *Comment. über die Genes.*, pp. lxxvi., lxxvii., 2nd ed.). What can the sad exclamation, 'Woe, who may live, when God doeth this!' mean, if it does not refer to calamities actually inflicted by the Assyrians? (comp. ver. 22, ער כיה אישר תישבך). And how can 'ships from the coast of Kittim' be considered ideally to *represent* a power mighty enough to crush the vast Assyrian empire?

20. CONCLUSION. XXIV. 25.

25. And Balaam rose, and went away, and returned to his place, and Balak also went his way.

Previous to the announcement of the tenth and last Egyptian plague, Pharaoh said to Moses in vehement

anger: 'Go away from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more;' upon which Moses replied: 'Thou hast spoken right, I will see thy face again no more'^a—the Divine messenger and the obdurate heathen king could only meet to come into terrible collision, and then for ever to move in opposite directions. Like Moses and Pharaoh, those great primeval types, Balaam and Balak are absolutely without a real tie or bond. The former has been employed as the mouthpiece of the God of Israel, the latter does not comprehend this God and dares to defy Him, although he dreads His power. The community of the 'righteous' and the community of the worshippers of falsehood cannot dwell together in harmony or sympathy; therefore, 'Balaam rose and went away . . . and Balak also went his way.'

Commenting on the statement of Deuteronomy, that God changed Balaam's intended curse into a blessing for Israel,^b the Midrash observes: 'The Lord gave power to Balaam's voice, so that it is heard from one end of the world to the other.'^c Taken in that figurative sense in which this remark is no doubt intended, it implies an incontestable truth. Balaam's words have passed from age to age and from nation to nation, and they will be read and admired as long as men shall delight in sublimity of thought, largeness of soul, and perfection of art.

PHILOLOGICAL REMARKS.—How is it possible even to make the attempt at reconciling the clear conclusion of this verse with the later Elohistic account in the Book of Numbers? (see xxxi. 8, 16; comp. Josh. xiii. 22). Language and logic alike must be violently strained to effect the faintest appearance of plausibility. Balaam is, in those later portions, related to have given to the Moabites and Midianites the fiendish advice to ensnare and corrupt the Hebrews by licentious seduction, and subsequently, fighting in the ranks

^a Exod. x. 28, 29.

^b Deut. xxiii. 6.

^c *Midr. Rabb.* Num. xx. 13.

of Israel's enemies, to have been killed in battle. Which are the proposals made to harmonise these facts with the verse before us? The words 'and he returned to his place' (וַיָּשָׁב לְמִקְוֵמוֹ), it is contended, do not mean that Balaam repaired to his home in Mesopotamia—which would be the only possible interpretation, even if Balak had not, immediately before, expressly bidden Balaam, 'Escape to thy place' (אֶל-מִקְוֵמוֹךָ), and Balaam himself had not distinctly said, 'And now, behold, I go to my people' (הֲנִי הוֹלֵךְ לְעַמִּי), vers. 11, 14; comp. Gen. xviii. 33; xxxii. 1; 1 Sam. xxvi. 25; 2 Sam. xix. 40)—but they mean, it is asserted, that Balaam went back to the place in the east of the Jordan, where he had been the day before; or they signify, 'he went away whither he would,' or 'he went to hell,' which is 'his place' (*Talm. Sanhedr. 105a.*, etc.; comp. Acts i. 25); or 'he resumed his sorceries,' since he prophesied this time only for the honour of Israel (*Bechai*); or, 'he merely started to return,' or 'went in the direction of his home' (וַיֵּצֵא taken in *inchoative* sense); or 'he intended to go and to return,' but was kept back by the Midianites. It would be unnecessary to refute interpretations which would never have been advanced had this verse been explained from its own context, and not in the light of heterogeneous accounts. But some maintain that Balaam indeed returned to Mesopotamia, but came back again to the plains of Moab. We will not stop to inquire whether there was time for such a double journey, the war against the Midianites being fought very soon afterwards, in the same year, and the distance from Moab to the Euphrates through the desert requiring not less than twenty days; nor what object so shrewd a man as Balaam could have for this waste of time and exertion, if he entertained the plan imputed to him. But the exegetical question is not what the simple words וַיָּשָׁב לְמִקְוֵמוֹ ought to mean if the unity of the Book of Numbers is to be upheld, but what they really mean according to all sound rules of interpretation—and in this respect not the slightest doubt can prevail among men who have the Scriptural text more at heart than their own theories or preconceptions.—The *Targ. Jon.* inserts in these verses explicitly: 'Balak put the daughters of the Midianites in tavern

rooms at Beth-jeshimoth, by the snow-mountain, where they sold various kinds of pastry (וַיֵּי בִיכְנִי) below their value, after the counsel of Balaam the wicked, at the parting of the road' (see p. 247).—It is usually contended that Balaam, 'who, as God's mouthpiece, had blessed the Hebrews with inward repugnance, soon returned to his own hostile disposition and joined the Midianites, another enemy of Israel' (so even *Winer*, *Real-Wört.* i. 184, see *supra*, p. 50). In these chapters, Balaam is neither represented as an unwilling instrument of God, nor as an enemy of Israel, and his passive conduct in reference to Balak is in direct contrast to the restless eagerness ascribed to him in his intercourse with the Midianites. And if he indeed played so important and so fatal a part in the following events, it is surprising why, after having once been introduced so conspicuously as the proclaimer of these prophecies, he is in the next sections either not mentioned at all or mentioned quite incidentally. But still more astonishing is the amicable intercourse in which, immediately afterwards, we find the Hebrews engaged with the Moabites (xxv. 1, 2, p. 69). Almost the only point of harmony between the chapters under discussion and those which follow is the alliance or friendship which both the former and the latter state to have existed between Moab and Midian (xxii. 4, 7; xxv. 1, 6, 14–18; xxxi. 1 *sqq.*). All these circumstances can be satisfactorily explained under no other supposition than that the 'Book of Balaam,' having originally formed a complete and separate work, was incorporated in the Book of Numbers without being thoroughly amalgamated with the other parts of the narrative. Even the Talmud, in declaring that 'Moses wrote his own Book, and the section of Balaam, and the Book of Job' (*Talm. Bab. Bathr.* 15*a.*), seems to intimate that it considers the 'section of Balaam' as a composition distinct from the rest of the Pentateuch. Hence it is not sufficient to say that 'the historian, as if touched with a feeling of the greatness of the prophet's mission, drops the veil over its dark close': the historian had, with respect to Balaam's life, evidently nothing more to add that could be of interest to Hebrew readers, or that was in direct connection with Israel's destinies.

APPENDIX.

THE ORIGINAL FORM OF THE BOOK OF BALAAM.

IN order to exhibit the Book of Balaam in its admirable symmetry, we subjoin it, in the English Translation, as we believe it to have been originally written.^a

XXII.—2. When Balak, the son of Zippor, *king of Moab*, saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites [vers. 3, 4], 5. He sent messengers to Balaam, the son of Beor, to Pethor, which is by the river (Euphrates), into the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt; behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. 6. Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me; perhaps I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed. 7. And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam, and they spoke to him the words of Balak. 8. And he said to them, Stay here this night, and I will bring you word, as the Lord shall speak to me. And the princes of Moab remained with Balaam. 9. And God came to Balaam, and said, Who are these men that are with thee? 10. And Balaam said to God, Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, 11. Behold, the people that is come out of Egypt, it covers the face of the earth; come now, curse me them; perhaps I shall then be able to fight against them, and drive them out. 12. And God said to Balaam, Thou shalt not go

^a The additions we have made to the received Hebrew text are marked by *italics*; the omissions from that text by square brackets []; and the alterations by CAPITALS.

with them, thou shalt not curse the people; for they are blessed. 13. And Balaam rose in the morning, and said to the princes of Balak, Go to your country, for the Lord refuses to give me leave to go with you. 14. And the princes of Moab rose, and they went to Balak, and said, Balaam refuses to come with us.

15. And Balaam sent yet again princes, more numerous and more distinguished than those. 16. And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus says Balak, the son of Zippor, Do not, I pray thee, withhold thyself from coming to me; 17. For I will honour thee greatly, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest to me: come, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people. 18. And Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go against the command of the Lord my God, to do a small or a great thing. 19. Now, therefore, I pray you, remain you also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say to me more. 20. And God came to Balaam at night, and said to him, If the men are come to call thee, rise and go with them; but only that which I shall tell thee, that shalt thou do. 21. And Balaam rose in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

[Vers. 22-35.]

36. And when Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him to the city of Moab, which is at the border of the Arnon, which is at the utmost boundary (of the land). 37. And Balak said to Balaam, Did I not earnestly send to thee to call thee? wherefore didst thou not come to me? am I not forsooth able to honour thee? 38. And Balaam said to Balak, Behold, I am come to thee; have I now any power at all to say anything? the word that God shall put in my mouth, that shall I speak. 39. And Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kirjath-huzoth. 40. And Balak killed oxen and sheep, and sent thereof to Balaam and to the princes that were with him.

41. And on the next morning, Balak took Balaam, and brought him up to Bamoth-Baal, and thence he saw the extreme part of the people. XXIII.—1. And Balaam said to Balak,

Build for me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven bullocks and seven rams. 2. And Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on every altar a bullock and a ram. 3. And Balaam said to Balak, Stand by thy burnt offering, and I will go, perhaps the Lord will come to meet me; and whatsoever He will show me, I shall tell thee. And he went to a solitude. 4. And God met Balaam, and he said to Him, I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram. 5. And the Lord put words in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return to Balak, and thus thou shalt speak. 6. And he returned to him, and, behold, he was standing by his burnt-offering, he and all the princes of Moab.

7. And he took up his parable and said, From Aram hath Balak brought me, the king of Moab from the mountains of the east: come, curse me Jacob, and come, execrate Israel! 8. How shall I curse, whom God doth not curse? and how shall I execrate, whom the Lord doth not execrate? 9. For from the summit of the rocks I see them, and from the hills I beheld them: lo, a people that dwelleth apart, and is not reckoned among the nations. 10. Who counteth the dust of Jacob, and by number the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and be my end like them!

11. And Balak said to Balaam, What hast thou done to me? I took thee to curse my enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them indeed. 12. And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord puts in my mouth? 13. And Balak said to him, Come, I pray thee, with me to another place, whence thou mayest see them—only the extreme part of them shalt thou see, but shalt not see them all—and curse me them from thence. 14. And he brought him to the Field of Seers, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar. 15. And he said to Balak, Stand as before by thy burnt-offering, while I go to meet (the Lord) as before. 16. And the Lord met Balaam, and put words in his mouth, and said, Go back to Balak, and speak thus. 17. And when he came to him, behold, he was standing by his burnt-offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said to him, What has the Lord spoken?

18. And he took up his parable, and said, Rise, Balak, and hear, hearken unto me, son of Zippor! 19. God is not a man, that He should lie, nor the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said and shall He not do it, and spoken and shall He not fulfil it? 20. Behold, I have received command to bless, and He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it. 21. He beholdeth no iniquity in Jacob, nor seeth distress in Israel; the Lord their God is with them, and the trumpet-call of the King is among them. 22. God brought them out of Egypt—they have the fleetness of the buffalo. 23. For there is no enchantment in Jacob, nor divination in Israel; in due time it is told to Jacob and to Israel, what God doeth. 24. Behold, they are a people that rise as the lioness, and lift themselves up like the lion: they do not lie down till they eat their prey, and drink the blood of the slain.

25. And Balak said to Balaam, Neither shalt thou curse them, nor shalt thou bless them. 26. And Balaam answered and said to Balak, Have I not told thee, saying, All that the Lord speaks, that I must do? 27. And Balak said to Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will take thee to another place; perhaps it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence. 28. And Balak took Balaam to the summit of Peor, that looks over the plain of the wilderness. 29. And Balaam said to Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams. 30. And Balak did as Balaam had said, and he offered a bullock and a ram on every altar. XXIV.—1. And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as the first and second time, to meet God, and he turned his face towards the wilderness. 2. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel encamped according to their tribes; and the spirit of God came upon him.

3. And he took up his parable, and said, So speaketh Balaam, the son of Beor, and so speaketh the man of unclosed eye; 4. So speaketh he who heareth the words of God [רָצָא], *and knoweth the knowledge of the Most High*, he who seeth the vision of the Almighty, prostrate and with opened eyes: 5. How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, thy

tabernacles, O Israel! 6. As valleys that are spread out, as gardens by the river's side; as aloe trees which the Lord hath planted, as cedars beside the water. 7. Water floweth from his buckets, and his seed is by many waters: and his king is higher than Agag. 8. [אֵל מוֹצִיאֵם מִפְּצֵרִים כְּהַעֲבֹת לִי] He devoureth nations, his enemies, and crusheth their bones, and pierceth with his arrows. 9. He coucheth, he lieth down like a lion and like a lioness; who shall stir him up? Blessed are those that bless thee, and cursed those that curse thee.

10. And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, I called thee to curse my enemies, and, behold, thou hast ever blessed them these three times. 11. Therefore now, flee thou to thy place; I thought to honour thee indeed, but, behold, the Lord has kept thee back from honour. 12. And Balaam said to Balak, Did I not also speak to thy messengers, whom thou hast sent to me, saying, 13. If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go against the command of the Lord, to do either good or bad of my own mind; but what the Lord says, that will I speak? 14. And now, behold, I go to my people; come, I will tell thee, what this people is destined to do to thy people in later days.

15. And he took up his parable, and said, So speaketh Balaam the son of Beor, and so speaketh the man of unclosed eye; 16. So speaketh he who heareth the words of God, and knoweth the knowledge of the Most High; who seeth the vision of the Almighty, prostrate and with opened eyes: 17. I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: there cometh a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre riseth out of Israel, and smiteth both sides of Moab, and shattereth all the children of tumult.

[Vers. 18-24.]

25. And Balaam rose, and went away, and returned to his place, and Balak also went his way.

- דָּרַךְ כּוֹכַב מִיַּעֲקֹב
 וְקָם שִׁבְט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל
 וּמַחֲיִן פְּאֲתָי מוֹאָב
 וְקִרְקַר כָּל-בְּנֵי-שֵׁת :
 18 וְהָיָה אֲדָוָם יִרְשָׁה
 וְהָיָה יִרְשָׁה שַׁעִיר אֲבִיו
 וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל עֲשָׂה הָיִל :
 19 וַיִּרְדּוּ מִיַּעֲקֹב
 וְהֶאֱבִיד שָׂרִיד מַעִיר :
 20 וַיֵּרָא אֶת-עַמְלֹק וַיִּשָּׂא מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר
 רֵאשִׁית גּוֹיִם עַמְלֹק
 וַאֲחֵרֵיתוֹ עַדֵי אַבְד :
 21 וַיֵּרָא אֶת-הַקִּינִי וַיִּשָּׂא מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר
 אֵיתָן מוֹשֶׁבֶךְ
 וַיֵּשִׁים בְּפִלְעַ קַנְזָד :
 22 כִּי אִם-יִהְיֶה לְבַעַר קִין
 עַד-מָה אֲשִׁיר תִּשְׁבֶּךְ :
 23 וַיִּשָּׂא מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר
 אֹהִי מִי יַחֲיֶה מִשְׁמוֹ אֵל :
 24 וַצִּיִּם מִיַּד פְּתִיִם
 וַעֲנוּ אֲשִׁיר וְעַנּוּ-עֶבֶר
 וְגַם-הוּא עַדֵי אַבְד :
 25 וַיִּקָּם בַּלְעָם וַיִּלֶּךְ וַיֵּשֶׁב לְמַקְוֹ וְגַם-בָּלַק הִלֵּךְ לְדַרְכּוֹ :

9 פָּרַע שָׁכַב בְּאָרְי

וּבְלָבִיא מִי יְקִימֵנוּ

מִבְּרִכְיָךְ בְּרוּךְ

וְאֶרְרִיךְ אֲרוּר :

10 וַיַּחֲרֹאֲף בָּלַק אֶל-בְּלָעַם וַיִּסְפֹּק אֶת-פִּפְּיוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר

בָּלַק אֶל-בְּלָעַם לֵקֵב אִיבִי קְרֵאתִיךָ וְהִנֵּה בִּרְכַת בְּרוּךְ

זֶה שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים : 11 וַעֲתָה בְּרַח-לָךְ אֶל-מְקוֹמְךָ אֲמַרְתִּי

כִּפְּרֹ אֲכַבְּרֶךָ וְהִנֵּה מִנְעֵנָה יְהוָה מִכְּבוֹד : 12 וַיֹּאמֶר

בְּלָעַם אֶל-בָּלַק הֲלֹא גַם אֶל-מְלֹאכֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר-שָׁלַחְתָּ אֵלַי

דִּבַּרְתִּי לֵאמֹר : 13 אִם-יִתֶּן-לִי בָלַק מְלֵא בֵיתוֹ כֶּסֶף

וְזָהָב לֹא אוּכַל לַעֲבֹל לְעַבְרֵי אֶת-פִּי יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת טוֹבָה אוֹ

רָעָה מִלְּבִי אֲשֶׁר-יְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֵתוֹ אֲדַבֵּר : 14 וַעֲתָה

הִנְנִי הוֹלֵךְ לַעֲמִי לָכֵה אִיעֲצֶךָ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה הַיָּזֶם הַזֶּה

לַעֲמֶךָ בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים : 15 וַיִּשָּׂא מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר

נָאִים בְּלָעַם בָּנִי בְעֵר

וּנָאִים הַגִּבּוֹר שְׂתָם הָעֵינַן :

16 נָאִים שְׁמַע אֲמַר־אֵל

וַיִּדַע דַּעַת עֲלִיּוֹן

מִחֻזָּה שְׂדֵי יְחֻזָּה

נִפְלֹ וּגְלוֹי עֵינָיִם :

17 אֲרָאֵנוּ וְלֹא עָתָה

אֲשׁוּרֵנוּ וְלֹא קְרוֹב

בָּנָיו : ² וַיֵּשָׂא בְלִעַם אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיֵּרֶא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂכָן
לְשִׁבְטָיו וַתְּהִי עָלָיו רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים : ³ וַיֵּשָׂא מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר

⁴ נֹאֵם בְּלִעַם בְּנֵוֹ בְעֵד

וּנְאֹם הַגִּבֹּר שְׂתֵם הָעֵין :

נֹאֵם שָׁמַע אִמְרֵי־אֵל

אֲשֶׁר מַחֲזֶה עֵדֵי יְחֹזֶה

נִפְלַ וּגְלוֹי עֵינָם :

⁵ מַה־טָּבוֹ אֶהְלִיךְ יַעֲקֹב

מִשְׁבְּנֹתֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל :

⁶ בְּנִחְלִים נָפְיוֹ

בְּגִנְתַּי עָלַי נִהַר

בְּאֶהְלִים נִטַּע יְחֹזֶה

בְּאֶרְזִים עָלֵי־מַיִם :

⁷ יוֹל־מַיִם מִהַלְוֹ

וּזְרָעוֹ בְּמַיִם רַבִּים

וַיִּרְם מֵאֲגַל מִלְכּוֹ

וַתִּנְשָׂא מִלְכָּתוֹ :

⁸ אֵל מוֹצִיאֵוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם

בְּתַעֲפַת רָאֵם לּוֹ

יֹאכַל גּוֹיִם צָרִיו

וַעֲצַמְתֵּיהֶם יִגְרֵם

וַחֲצִיו יִמְחִין :

23 כִּי לֹא־נִחַשׁ בִּיעֲקֹב
 וְלֹא־קָסַם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל
 בָּעֵת יֹאמֵר לְיַעֲקֹב
 וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל מִה־פֶּעַל אֵל:
 24 הַיּוֹצֵם בְּלִבָּיָא יָקוּם
 וּכְבֹאֲרֵי יִתְנַשֵּׂא
 לֹא יִשְׁכַּב עַד־יֵאכַל טָרֶף
 וְדַם־חַלְלִים יִשְׁתֶּה :

25 וַיֹּאמֶר בָּלָק אֶל־בָּלְעָם גַּם־קָב לֹא תִקְבְּנוּ גַם־בִּרְךְוּ
 לֹא תִכְרַכְנוּ : 26 וַיַּעַן בָּלְעָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־בָּלָק הֲלֹא
 דִּבַּרְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ לֵאמֹר כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־יִדְבַר יְהוָה אֶעֱשֶׂה :
 27 וַיֹּאמֶר בָּלָק אֶל־בָּלְעָם לְכֵה־נָא אֶנְחֶיךָ אֶל־מְקוֹם
 אַחֵר אוּלַי יִישַׁר בְּעֵינֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וְקִבְּתוּ לִי מִשָּׁם :
 28 וַיִּקַּח בָּלָק אֶת־בָּלְעָם רֹאשׁ הַפְּעֹר הַנִּשְׁקָף עַל־פְּנֵי
 הַיְשִׁימֹן : 29 וַיֹּאמֶר בָּלְעָם אֶל־בָּלָק בְּנֵה־לִי בָזָה שְׂבַעַה
 מִזִּבְחֹת וְהִבֵּן לִי בָזָה שְׂבַעַה פָּרִים וְשְׂבַעַה אֵילִם :
 30 וַיַּעַשׂ בָּלָק כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר בָּלְעָם וַיַּעַל פָּר וְאֵיל
 בַּמִּזְבֵּחַ :

CHAPTER XXIV.

1 וַיֵּרָא בָלְעָם כִּי טוֹב בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה לְבִרְךְוּ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל
 וְלֹא־הִלְךְ בְּפִעֻם־בְּפִעֻם לְקַרְאֵת נְחֻשִׁים וַיִּגִּשׁת אֶל־הַמִּדְבָּר

מִשָּׁם אָפֶס קָצְחוּ תִרְאֶה וְכִלּוֹ לֹא תִרְאֶה וְקָבְנוּ-לִי
 מִשָּׁם : 14 וַיִּקְחֵהוּ שָׂדֵה צִפִּים אֶל-רֹאשׁ הַפִּסְגָּה וַיִּבֶן
 שִׁבְעָה מִזְבְּחֹת וַיַּעַל כָּר וַאִל בַּמִּזְבֵּחַ : 15 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-
 בָּלַק הֲתִיַצֵּב כֹּה עַל-עֲלֹתֶיךָ וְאֲנֹכִי אֶקְרָה כֹּה : 16 וַיִּקַּר
 יְהוָה אֶל-בִּלְעָם וַיִּשֶׂם דְּבַר בְּפִיו וַיֹּאמֶר שׁוּב אֶל-בָּלַק
 וְכֹה תִדְבֵר : 17 וַיָּבֹא אֵלָיו וְהֵנּוּ נֹצֵב עַל-עֲלֹתָיו וְשָׂרֵי
 מוֹאָב אִתּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ בָּלַק מַה-דְּבַר יְהוָה : 18 וַיִּשָּׂא
 מִשָּׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר

קוים בָּלַק וַיִּשְׁמַע

הַאֲזִינָה עָדִי בְּנֹו אָפֶר :

19 לֹא אִישׁ אֵל וַיִּכְבֹּב

וּבֶן-אָדָם וַיִּתְנַחֵם

הַחַוּא אָמַר וְלֹא יַעֲשֶׂה

וְדַבֵּר וְלֹא יִקְיַמְנָה :

20 הִנֵּה בָרַךְ לִקְחֹתַי

וּבִרְךָ וְלֹא אֲשִׁיבְנָה :

21 לֹא-הֵבִיט אֵינֹן בְּיַעֲקֹב

וְלֹא-רָאָה עָמַל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל

יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו עִמּוֹ

וַתְּרוּעַת מִלְחָמָה בּוֹ :

22 אֵל מוֹצִיאֵם מִמִּצְרָיִם

כִּתְּוַעַפְתָּ רֹאֵם לוֹ :

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי אֶת-יִשְׁבַּעַת הַמְּזֻבְּהוֹת עֲרֹכְתִי וְאַעַל כָּר וְאֵיל
 בַּמְּזֻבָּה : ⁵ וַיֵּשֶׁם יְהוָה דְּבַר בְּפִי בְּלַעַם וַיֹּאמֶר טוֹב
 אֵל-בָּלַק וְכֹה תִדְבָר : ⁶ וַיֵּשֶׁב אֱלֹהֵי וְהִנֵּה נֹצֵב עַל-
 עֲלֹתוֹ הוּא וְכָל-טָרֵי מוֹאָב : ⁷ וַיִּשָּׂא מִטְּלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר

מִן-אֲרָם יִנְחֵנִי בָלַק
 מִלְּךְ-מוֹאָב מִחֲרֵרֵי-מָרָם
 לְכֹה אָרָה-לִּי יַעֲקֹב
 וְלִכְּהָ זַעֲמָה יִשְׂרָאֵל :
⁸ מָה אֶקְוֶה לֹא קִבְּהָ אֵל
 וּמָה אֶזְעַם לֹא זַעַם יְהוָה :
⁹ כִּי-מֵרֹאשׁ צָרִים אָרְאֶנּוּ
 וּמִגְּבוּעוֹת אֲשׁוּרֵנּוּ
 הַזֶּעַם לְבָרָד יִשְׁבֹּן
 וּבְגוֹזִים לֹא יִתְחַשֵּׁב :
¹⁰ מִי מִנֵּה עֶפְרַיִם יַעֲקֹב
 וּמוֹסַפֵּר אֶת-רֹבַע יִשְׂרָאֵל
 תִּמְתֵּן נַפְשֵׁי מוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל
 וַתְּהִי אַחֲרֵיָי פְּמָהוּ :

¹¹ וַיֹּאמֶר בָּלַק אֵל-בְּלַעַם מָה עֲשִׂיתָ לִּי לְקֹב אֵיבֵי
 לְקַחְתִּיךָ וְהִנֵּה בִּרְכִיתָ בָרָךְ : ¹² וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֹא אַתָּה
 אֲשֶׁר יֵשִׁים יְהוָה בְּפִי אֶתְּמַר לְדַבָּר : ¹³ וַיֹּאמֶר
 אֱלֹהֵי בָלַק לְדָנָא אֵתִי אֵל-מְקוֹם אַחֵר אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶנּוּ

כִּי אָמְרָה נֹצֵב לְקַרְאֹתִי בְּדַרְךָ וְעַתָּה אִסְרֵה פְּעִינֶיךָ
 אֲשׁוּבָה לִי : ³⁵ וַיֹּאמֶר מִלֵּאךְ יִהְיֶה אֶל-בְּלָעַם לֵךְ
 עִם-הָאֲנָשִׁים וְאַפֶּס אֶת-הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר-אָדַבְרָה אֵלֶיךָ אִתּוֹ
 תִּדְבֹר וַיֵּלֶךְ בְּלָעַם עִם-שְׂרֵי בָלָק : ³⁶ וַיִּשְׁמַע בָּלָק בִּי-
 בֵּא בְלָעַם וַיֵּצֵא לְקַרְאֹתוֹ אֶל-עִיר מוֹזָב אֲשֶׁר עַל-גְּבוּל
 אֲרָזָן אֲשֶׁר בְּקִנְיָה הַגְּבוּל : ³⁷ וַיֹּאמֶר בָּלָק אֶל-בְּלָעַם
 הֲלֹא שְׁלַח שְׁלַחְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ לְקַרְאֲלֶךָ לְמַדָּה לֹא-הִלַּכְתָּ
 אֵלַי הָאֲמַנֶּם לֹא אוֹכַל כְּבָדְךָ : ³⁸ וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלָעַם אֶל-
 בָּלָק הִנֵּה-בָאתִי אֵלֶיךָ עִתָּה הִנְכַל אוֹכַל דְּבַר מְאוּמָה
 הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר יֵשִׁים אֱלֹהִים בְּפִי אִתּוֹ אָדַבְרָה : ³⁹ וַיֵּלֶךְ
 בְּלָעַם עִם-בָּלָק וַיָּבֹאוּ קַרְיַת הַצּוֹרֵת : ⁴⁰ וַיִּזְבַּח בָּלָק
 בָּקָר וַצִּיָּאן וַיִּשְׁלַח לְבְלָעַם וּלְשְׂרָיִם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ : ⁴¹ וַיְהִי
 כַּבָּקָר וַיִּקַּח בָּלָק אֶת-בְּלָעַם וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ בָמֹת בָּעַל וַיֵּרָא
 מִשָּׁם קִנְיָה הַעַם :

CHAPTER XXIII.

1 וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלָעַם אֶל-בָּלָק בְּנֵה-לִי בְּנֵה שְׁבַעַה מִזְבַּחַת
 וְהִבֵּן לִי בְּנֵה שְׁבַעַה פָּרִים וְשְׁבַעַה אֵילִים : ² וַיַּעַשׂ
 בָּלָק כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּלָעַם וַיַּעַל בָּלָק וּבְלָעַם פָּר וָאֵיל
 בַּמִּזְבֵּחַ : ³ וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלָעַם לְבָלָק הֲתִנְצֵב עַל-עֲלֹתֶיךָ
 וְאֶלְכָדָה אוֹלֵי יִקְרָה יִהְיֶה לְקַרְאֹתִי וְדַבֵּר מִה-יִרְאֵנִי
 וְהִגַּדְתִּי לְךָ וַיֵּלֶךְ שָׁפִי : ⁴ וַיִּקַּר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-בְּלָעַם

נִעְרִיּוֹ עִמּוֹ : 23 וַתֵּרֶא הָאֱתוֹן אֶת־מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה נֹצֵב
בְּדָרְךָ וַחֲרָבֹ שְׁלוֹפָה בְּיָדוֹ וַתֵּט הָאֱתוֹן מִן־הַדָּרֶךְ וַתֵּלֶךְ
בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיַּךְ בַּלְעָם אֶת־הָאֱתוֹן לְהַפְתּוֹתָ הַדָּרֶךְ : 24 וַיַּעֲמֵד
מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה בְּמִשְׁעוֹל הַפְּרָמִים גָּדַר מִנָּה וַגְּדַר מִנָּה :
25 וַתֵּרֶא הָאֱתוֹן אֶת־מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה וַתִּלְחֹץ אֶל־הַקִּיר
וַתִּלְחֹץ אֶת־רִגְלָהּ בַּלְעָם אֶל־הַקִּיר וַיִּסַּף לְהַפְתָּהּ : 26 וַיֹּסֶף
מִלְאָךְ־יְהוָה עָבֹר וַיַּעֲמֵד בְּמָקוֹם צָר אֲשֶׁר אִין־הָרֶדֶךְ
לְנִטּוֹת יָמִין וּשְׂמֹאל : 27 וַתֵּרֶא הָאֱתוֹן אֶת־מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה
וַתִּרְבֵּץ תַּחַת בַּלְעָם וַיַּחֲרֹאֲף בַּלְעָם וַיַּךְ אֶת־הָאֱתוֹן
בַּמַּקֵּל : 28 וַיִּפְתַּח יְהוָה אֶת־פִּי הָאֱתוֹן וַתֹּאמֶר לְבַלְעָם
מָה־עָשִׂיתִי לָךְ כִּי הִפִּיתָנִי זֶה שְׁלֹשׁ רְגָלִים : 29 וַיֹּאמֶר
בַּלְעָם לְאֱתוֹן כִּי הִתְעַלְלָתָ בִּי לוֹ יִשְׁחָרֵב בְּיָדִי כִּי
עָתָה הִרְגַתִּיךָ : 30 וַתֹּאמֶר הָאֱתוֹן אֶל־בַּלְעָם הֲלוֹא אָנֹכִי
אֲתַנְךָ אֲשֶׁר־רָכַבְתָּ עָלַי מֵעוֹדְךָ עַד־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הֲסִבְנָה
הַסִּבְנָתִי לַעֲשׂוֹת לָךְ כֹּה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא : 31 וַיִּגַּל יְהוָה
אֶת־עֵינָיו בַּלְעָם וַיֵּרֶא אֶת־מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה נֹצֵב בְּדָרְךָ וַחֲרָבֹ
שְׁלֹפָה בְּיָדוֹ וַיִּקְדּוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְאַפְּיוֹ : 32 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי
מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה עַל־מָה הִבִּיתָ אֶת־אֲתַנְךָ זֶה שְׁלֹשׁ רְגָלִים
הַנֵּה אָנֹכִי יֵצְאתִי לְשֹׁטֵן כִּי־יָרַט הַדָּרֶךְ לְנַגְדִי :
33 וַתֵּרֶאֲנִי הָאֱתוֹן וַתֵּט לִפְנֵי זֶה שְׁלֹשׁ רְגָלִים אוֹלֵי
נִטְתָה מִפְּנֵי כִי עָתָה גַם־אֲתַכָּה הִרְגַתִּי וְאוֹתָהּ הַחַיִּיתִי :
34 וַיֹּאמֶר בַּלְעָם אֶל־מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה הֲטָאתִי בִּי לֹא יִדְעַתִּי

מִי הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה עִמָּךְ : 10 וַיֹּאמֶר בִּלְעָם אֶל-
הָאֱלֹהִים בָּלֶק בֶּן-צִפּוֹר מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב שְׂלַח אֵלַי : 11 הֲנֵה
הָעַם הַיֵּצֵא מִמִּצְרָיִם וַיִּכַּס אֶת-עֵינָיו הָאָרֶץ עִתָּה לָכֶּה
קָבֵה-לִּי אֹתוֹ אוּלַי אוּכַל לְהִלָּחֵם בּוֹ וְגַרְשָׁתִּיו : 12 וַיֹּאמֶר
אֱלֹהִים אֶל-בִּלְעָם לֹא תִלְךָ עִמָּהֶם לֹא תֹאֵר אֶת-הָעַם
כִּי בְרוּךְ הוּא : 13 וַיִּקַּם בִּלְעָם בַּבֶּקֶר וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-שָׂרְי
בָלֶק לְבוֹ אֶל-אֲרָצְכֶם כִּי מֵאֵן יְהוֹה לְתַתִּי לְהִלְךָ עִמָּכֶם :
14 וַיִּקְוֹמוּ שָׂרְי מוֹאָב וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל-בָּלֶק וַיֹּאמְרוּ מֵאֵן בִּלְעָם
הִלְךָ עִמָּנוּ : 15 וַיִּסָּף עוֹד בָּלֶק שְׂלַח שָׂרִים רַבִּים
וְנִכְבְּדִים מֵאֵלֶּה : 16 וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל-בִּלְעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ כֹּה
אָמַר בָּלֶק בֶּן-צִפּוֹר אֶל-גַּא תִפְנַע מִהֲלְךָ אֵלַי : 17 כִּי-
כַבֵּד אֲכַבְּדֶךָ מְאֹד וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר-תֹּאמַר אֵלַי אֶעֱשֶׂה וְלִכְהֵ-
נָא קָבֵה לִּי אֵת הָעַם הַזֶּה : 18 וַיַּעַן בִּלְעָם וַיֹּאמֶר
אֶל-עַבְדִּי בָלֶק אִם-יִתֶּן-לִי בָלֶק מְלֵא בֵיתוֹ כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב
לֹא אוּכַל לַעֲבֹר אֶת-פִּי יְהוֹה אֱלֹהֵי לַעֲשׂוֹת קְטָנָה אוֹ
גְדוּלָּה : 19 וְעַתָּה שָׁבוּ נָא בְּזֶה גַם-אַתֶּם חֲלִילָה וְאַדְרָעָה
מִה-יִסָּף יְהוֹה דְּבַר עַמִּי : 20 וַיָּבֹאוּ אֱלֹהִים אֶל-בִּלְעָם
לֵילָה וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִם-לִקְרָא לְךָ בָּאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים קוּם
לְךָ אִתָּם וְאֵךְ אֶת-הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר-אָדַבֵּר אֵלֶיךָ אֹתוֹ תַעֲשֶׂה :
21 וַיִּקַּם בִּלְעָם בַּבֶּקֶר וַיַּחֲבֹשׁ אֶת-אַתָּנּוֹ וַיִּלְךָ עִם-שָׂרְי
מוֹאָב : 22 וַיַּחֲרָאֵף אֱלֹהִים כִּי-הוֹלֵךְ הוּא וַיִּתְּצֵב מִלֶּאֶךְ
יְהוֹה בַּדֶּרֶךְ לְשֹׁטֵן לוֹ וְהוּא רָכַב עַל-אַתָּנּוֹ וַשָּׁנַי

NUMBERS XXII. TO XXIV.

CHAPTER XXII.

1 וַיִּסְעוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּעַרְבוֹת מוֹאָב מֵעֵבֶר לְרֵדְוֹן
יִרְחוֹ: 2 וַיֵּרָא בָלַק בֶּן־צִפּוֹר אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל
לְאֹמְרָיו: 3 וַיָּגֵר מוֹאָב מִפְּנֵי הָעַם כִּי רַב־הוּא וַיִּקְנֶן
מוֹאָב מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 4 וַיֹּאמֶר מוֹאָב אֶל־זַמְּבִיד בְּרֵן
עֵתָה יִלְחָבוּ הַקְּהֵל אֶת־כָּל־סְבִיבֵיתֵינוּ בְּלַחֵף הַשּׁוֹר אֶת
יֶרֶק הַשָּׂדֶה וּבָלַק בֶּן־צִפּוֹר מֶלֶךְ לְמוֹאָב בָּעֵת הַהוּא:
5 וַיִּשְׁלַח מְלָאָכִים אֶל־בַּלְעָם בֶּן־בְּעֹזֵר פְּתוּרָה אֲשֶׁר עַל־
הַנֶּהָר אֲרָרִין בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹ לְקַרְאֵלּוֹ לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה עִם יָצְאָה
מִמִּצְרַיִם הִנֵּה כִסְפָה אֶת־עֵין הָאָרֶץ וְהוּא יִשָּׁב מִמֶּלֶי:
6 וַעֲתָה לְכֵה־נָא אֶרְהִלִי אֶת־הָעַם הַזֶּה כִּי־עֲצוּם הוּא
מִפְּנֵי אֵילֵי אוֹכַל נֶפֶה־בּוֹ וַאֲגַרְשֶׁנּוּ מִן־הָאָרֶץ כִּי יִרְעֵתִי
אֶת אֲשֶׁר־תִּבְרַךְ מִבְּרַךְ וְאֲשֶׁר תֵּאָר יוֹאֵר: 7 וַיִּלְכּוּ זַמְּבִיד
מוֹאָב וּזְמִיד בְּרֵן מֶדִין וְקַסְמִים בְּיָדָם וַיָּבֵאוּ אֶל־בַּלְעָם וַיְדַבְּרוּ
אֵלָיו דִּבְרֵי בָלַק: 8 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם לֵינּוּ פֹה הַלְיִלָה
וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי אֶתְכֶם דָּבָר כַּאֲשֶׁר יִדְבֵר יְהוָה אֵלַי וַיִּשְׁכְּבוּ
שְׁרֵי־מוֹאָב עִם־בַּלְעָם: 9 וַיָּבֵא אֱלֹהִים אֶל־בַּלְעָם וַיֹּאמֶר

HEBREW TEXT.

NUMBERS XXII. TO XXIV.

תַּמֹּת נִפְּטִי מוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְתִהְיֶה אֲחֵרֵתִי כְּמֹהוּ :
(xxiii. 10).

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