

XI.

THE LANGUAGE.

THE language of the Stone differs very slightly from Biblical Hebrew either in vocabulary, accident, or syntax. It possesses some of the most characteristic features of Hebrew, *e.g.*, the *Waw Consecutive* or *Conversive*; thus line 5, רענר, "and he oppressed," and *passim*; and also probably the use of the inf. abs. to emphasise the finite tense; thus line 7, אבר אבר, "perished utterly."¹

Some of the words and forms² on the Stone, though found in Hebrew, are unusual in the Old Testament; but this is hardly a real point of difference; it is

¹ *D*, however, takes the second אבר as a noun.

² See below, (2) (c) (e) (3).

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probable that such words and forms were common in the Hebrew of Mesha's Israelite contemporaries. For instance, the Stone uses the *scriptio defectiva*, omitting silent consonants; thus, line 6, **הא** for **הוא**; line 10, etc., **אש** for **איש**, etc.; but ancient Hebrew was written in the same way, e.g. the Siloam inscription.¹ In view of the limited amount of ancient Hebrew that is extant, it is quite probable that words found on the Stone and not in the Old Testament are really Hebrew.

Where the Stone differs from Hebrew it has affinities with Arabic and Aramaic.

The chief differences are as follows:

(1) *Vocabulary*.—In addition to proper names the following words are not found in Hebrew: line 2, **שת** for "year" = Heb. **שנה**, and may be a contraction for **שנת**; **שת** also in Neopunic inscriptions, *L*, p. 379.

Line 4, **השלכן**, if read; cf. notes on text and translation.

¹ Pp. 77 f.

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Lines 9, 23, אִשׁוּחַ; cf. notes on translation.

Line 12, רִית, usually regarded as a derivative of רָאָה, "to see," and translated "spectacle."

Line 25, מִכְרַתָּה; see notes on translation.

Line 34, שִׁדְק. In the absence of any context it is difficult to suggest a meaning; it may be a proper name.

(2) *Accidence*.—(a) אִנְך, line 1, etc., "I." As elsewhere, the Stone expresses the silent consonant of final vowels, אִנְך can scarcely be אִנְכִי written defectively. The same form is found in Phœnician, *L*, s.v.

(b) The plural and dual are formed by *Nun*, line 2, שְׁלִשָּׁן, etc., as in Aramaic and Arabic; so occasionally in OT.; but מ is used for dual in line 15, צִהְרִים.

(c) The fem. ending is regularly ת, whereas in Heb. it is more often ה. Thus line 2, שֵׁת = Heb. שֵׁנָה; line 26, מִסְלָת = Heb. מִסְלָה.

(d) The root עָנָו for "oppress" = Heb.

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ענה. In line 5, ויענו, and line 6, אענו. But many of the Heb. ל"ה verbs were originally ל"ו, Ges.-Kautzsch, § 75.

(e) The suffix for "his," "him" is ה; line 6, ארצה, ויחלפה, etc.; so occasionally in Heb., e.g. אהלה, "his tent, Gen. 9²¹. This ה is apparently used for "his" even after a plural noun; thus line 8, יומה = his days.

(f) Line 8, מהדבא for Heb. מידבא, *Medeba*.

(g) Line 11, ואלתחם. If parsed as Heb., this must be taken as Hithpa'el, the ת of the prefix and the first radical ל being transposed, a transposition only occurring in Heb. when the first radical is a sibilant. This transposition, however, occurs for all first radicals in the Arabic 8th conjugation, *igtatala*, similar in sense to the Heb. Hithpa'el. See, further, Driver, *Sam.* xciii; cf. line 19, בהלתחמה.

In Heb. the Niph. of לחם is used for "fight."

(h) Line 18, according to the usual read-

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ing (see notes on text), the object of אסחב is a separate הם.

(3) *Usage.* Some of the words, though found in OT., are used on the Stone in senses or shades of meaning unknown or rare in OT.

Line 6, חלה, the meaning "succeed" is Arabic rather than OT.

Line 11, etc., אחז is not used in OT. of capturing a city. קר, "city"; in OT., קיר = "wall."

Line 15, בקע, OT., "burst open," in connexion with the "dawn" only Isa. 58⁸.

Line 16, גבר, גברת, are not the usual Heb. for "man," "woman."

Line 17, רחם; see notes on translation.

Line 28, משמעת, rare in OT., Isa. 11¹⁴ for "a subject people"; elsewhere in OT., "bodyguard."

(4) *Syntax.* Line 3, הבמת זאת; in Heb. in such a phrase the demonstrative would usually have the article.

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Line 11 f., הַלְעַמ־מִן הַקָּר. According to the readings of SS here and in lines 16, 26, the prefixed preposition מִן is used to express the genitive. The readings are challenged in every case (see notes on the text); but SS is probably right here. But here the relation may not be a simple genitive; but מִן may have the sense, quite usual in Heb., of "taken from." A similar explanation would be possible, though less obvious, if the SS readings were accepted in lines 16, 26.